On Becoming Human in the World

An Ontology for Our Time

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PREFACE: Completing the revision of my translations in Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays* led directly to writing the essay that follows, "On Becoming Human in the World: An Ontology for Our Time." Revisiting and rethinking those first of my published Kant translations yielded new insights into his thought and coalesced principles I came to see as guiding my career—teaching, chairing a department, creating an honors college that became the standard by which honors education at public institutions is judged, and, again, at last, to teaching and more scholarship. University professorships are scarce public goods that must focus on long-term political and social goals, value-laden goals that promote personal maturation, citizenship in democratic society, and enhancement of the commonweal. Immanuel Kant never expresses himself in this way, but along with Aristotle's and Martin Buber's contributions, one can legitimately see his writings as in the service of the dedication one must assume in undertaking a professorship. The essays constituting Kant's *Perpetual Peace* bring these points home at a universal level. One owes—certainly, I owe—Kant a debt of the greatest gratitude for having done so.

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Metaphysics is a boundless sea where attempts at progress leave no trace and on whose horizon are no markers that allow one to estimate how near one may be to the goal.[1]

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I have previously written primarily as a student, scholar, and teacher of philosophy, but here I write as a philosopher, not that I won't refer to and use teachings and insights I have found and digested by our predecessors; however, they will serve as elements in the global view, constituting what I believe striving to become human in the midst of what-is-there entails.[2,3]

1. Immanuel Kant, *What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany Since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?* (XX, 259) Except where noted, this and all other translations of quotations from Kant are the author's.)

2. As one reads this essay, please understand that this document uses the sources I have to hand, that quotes are primarily from memory, and that the thinking and writing are syncretic; that is, they bring together sources and views that may not seem at first to fit coherently together, but that I am attempting to present as a coherent whole. Syncretism is generally deplored as unphilosophical, as insufficiently systematic, but if the flow of argument is sound, if on consideration it fits one's experience and reflection, that should be sufficient for its consideration. Furthermore, I do not see how a person such as I, trained to read texts critically and think them through, can but use the ideas upon which he has stumbled and reflected to shape his own thinking and conclusions regarding the matters at hand.

3. I intend the term "what-is-there," strange and awkward as it may seem, to be metaphysically neutral as to the ultimate nature of the real and actual. In using the locution, I intend to emphasize by the position of the demonstrative pronoun, "there," that the I always confronts or relates to something apprehended as spatially separate from and independent of itself. I operate on the assumption that it originally must be present as a

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Properly, philosophical activity can begin only where a finite, rational, reflective free being finds itself, that is, *in media res*. It begins with an environed, embodied I apprehending itself in the world, or, better, the universe, that is, the totality of what-is-there. Metaphorically speaking, that I is so oriented as to sense and experience the environing world and reflect and introspect that it itself is separate from and even isolated from that world, all the while being embedded in it. Philosophical activity emerges only at a relatively late stage of such a being's presence in the world and may arise only incipiently or not at all, for it begins, as Aristotle writes, "in wonder," and thus requires the distance from the sheer immanence of what-is-there that permits and requires reflection. It depends on the ability to isolate an encounter with what-is-there so as to mentally turn it about, examine, and dig into its presence and significance for oneself, others, and its context. That activity's goal is to discover the meaning of what-is-there and one's place in it.

My interest in philosophy and philosophers arose from a need for what I variously thought of as resolution, redemption, salvation, or reconciliation. With what? Early on, the what was (the Judeo-Christian) God, later the world, and then, finally, myself, as in, What is my place and purpose here in the world? Those questions arise for everyone who has the luxury of finding a quiet corner and a bit of time to reflect, who is not caught up in the hardest of hard scrabble lives, which Thomas Hobbes describes as "nasty, poor, brutish and short." I had the good fortune to be able to go at them by virtue of education, profession, and the grace of sheer good fortune.

The unshakable core of my thinking begins with believing, conceiving, and understanding that we humans are such beings as are free to make choices and initiate courses of actions and events, at least potentially, if not actually. In thinking about humankind, one must hypothesize free rationality as, at worst, an emergent property, a property we humans are forced and morally obligated to nurture into full actuality, a task to which we attend, again as a race, only sporadically, and then often without giving it our full attention and effort. We tend more to believe we are free and rational than to understand what being so might actually require in practice. Even then, we tend to focus more on freedom than rationality, on mere belief than appropriately confirmed fact and practice. Further, Hobbes's near-hard-scrabble lives are far more prevalent than lives of leisure, learning, and reflection.

For all that, I, for one, can begin only with abstract free rationality and its possessors' entailed obligation to infuse themselves and their environing world with structures of morality. The various modes of thinking—the intentional attitudes Descartes enumerates upon uncovering the *Cogito*—entail initiation by a subject, an act that sets a course of events flowing. There, in the blink of an eye, one has the presence of it all, a (self)-conscious agent facing a world. Heidegger captures this moment with three word-images: *thrownness*,

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hodgepodge, a chaos, as the Greeks might have put it, requiring the I to sort it out, discover its joints; taking it apart and putting it back together. In the main, the term designates what we refer to as the world once we have got a grip on it. It designates a total abstraction, the state of the I as it first emerges. As side notes, let me say, first, that I came to substitute "what-is-there" for "what there is" during one of my reflective walks, puzzling over the awkwardness of "what there is," particularly in contexts where the term was followed by "is"; second, that "what there is" emphasizes the existence of the what whereas "what-is-there" emphasizes its presence without diminishing the sense of its existence, this latter point harking back to Kant's claim that what we finite knowers are aware of is inherently spatial, a feature that provides for a non-bounded extensible world.

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presence or *being there* (*Dasein*), and *ready-to-hand*. These word images capture the initial moment when we find ourselves in-the-world. That moment may be unrealized or one that is illumined by focal awareness: Here am I in the midst of all this, whatever it may be. A moment of wonder, awe.

That moment is one of awaking with a start, finding oneself again in the midst of . . . what? Its elements are, first, the realization that one is actually in the midst of what-is-there, whatever it may be; second, that one is surrounded by stuff one may or may not make use of, a use that must be discovered; and, third, a kind of disorientation that leaves one with the uncanny sense that one does not comprehend where one is or why, that one's presence there is absurd, that one has simply been cast (out there). This last realization gives rise to the search—the quest—for meaning. The meaning of what? Of one's presence and of what-is-there—both, simultaneously, for the one does not exist without the other and is of the essence of our being in the world.

One's earliest such moments—for emerging into the world, the process of differentiation and exploration, does not occur all in a nonce—can only be a matter of blind groping, but as one begins to parse what is present-to-hand, or, as Plato would say, find the joints at which what-is-there might readily be carved, one comes to have an articulated and articulable world, a theater for action that is, if one chooses it to be so, infinitely extensible. One has before one stuff one cannot readily control; its obduracy forces one's concession to its independence. One nonetheless subliminally appropriates it, sees it as subordinate to one's wishes and desires. Soon enough, however, one encounters entities among what-is-there that resist appropriation, that themselves are engaged in discovering and making a world. How one regards such entities alters one's orientation completely. Sartre describes this experience as if one is experiencing one's world flowing away from one, as suddenly apprehending that what-is-there is not one's own but has been snatched from one. He asserts that finding there to be others engaged in world-making requires a release, a sharing of what-is-there that initially constitutes a kind of hell. In Lordship and Bondage, Hegel describes the dynamic between oneself and this other as a struggle for dominance that is a fight to the death. One can imagine it as such, but one need not.

Return for a moment to that core, unshakable belief that originated in my reading of Kant: We humans are free rational beings. I've sketched a scenario of humankind's emergence into and discovery of the world. I did so for a single free rational being—remember that such emergence is from potentiality to actuality, to invoke Aristotle—but, of course, it occurs in an individual over and over, each instance, one hopes, richer than the last—*and* it occurs simultaneously, repeatedly, and less and more for each and every free rational being. One has to believe a world common to a multiplicity of primordially free rational beings arose, as it were, in a moment.

Accepting that core, unshakable belief in all its profundity, one must also believe free rational beings confront a choice either to see their counterparts as opponents in using and controlling what-is-there, counterparts included, or see the latter as co-equal partners in world-making with rights and obligations to share the goods such a world can provide. That choice has clear, predictable consequences: A fight to the death or a world in which each has the opportunity to be oneself, to seek fulfillment as that very self. In stark contrast

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to the Hegelian scenario of a fight to the death among those who acknowledge the presence of (true) others, Martin Buber, in the opening sentence of *I and Thou*, writes, "For man the world is twofold, in accord with his twofold attitude." Buber clearly accepts the belief that humans are free rational beings, that, as such, can and do approach the world with the capacity, the potential, to view its constituents in either of two ways, or, as it turns out, view what they find there selectively as It, an instrumentality, or a Thou, an incommensurable bearer of selfhood and wholeness, integrity.

The foregoing lays out an abstract sketch of how I understand free rational beings find themselves in a world, one suggesting that choosing how to regard the constituents it finds there can be an explicit, clear-eyed choice of how one will navigate it. But such an account hardly represents the reality. Throughout, the account returns to the caveat that humankind moves from potentiality to actuality, an actuality that remains perpetually unfulfilled, perhaps seeming even further distant following a concerted effort to advance by virtue of having advanced and seeing how much more needs to be done to close the gap between potential and actuality. But also because movement from potential to actual depends in part, as Aristotle reminds us, on the material with which humanity's self-actualizing activity must work, humanity itself, which Kant refers to as the crooked timber that humankind must itself make straight. We are, as Paul reminds us, a race of backsliders, doing what we ought not to do and not doing what we ought to do. *Akrasia* is of our essence.

Why might that be? Precisely because we are free and our freedom is not wholly guided by reason. Again, Kant's insight: "The will stands perpetually as at a fork in the road, having to choose between its material incentive and the morally obligatory thing to do." Temptation perdures. Not because the human person is fallen for the reason Judeo-Christian doctrine suggests, namely, that the serpent seduced Eve, who tempted Adam, who succumbed, but rather precisely because we are free rational beings in the world, beings whose existence depends for sustenance, maturation, and well-being on the goods at hand. We are not fallen but simply in the midst of such as we need and desire. We must choose and provide for ourselves. Our first imperative is to survive as embodied beings in the world. That exigency tends to thwart and override the call to communion with others. David Hume expresses it most eloquently: "There is some benevolence, however small, infused into our bosom; some spark of friendship for humankind, some particle of the dove kneaded into our frame, along with the elements of the wolf and the serpent." (*Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 92) The wolf and serpent are omnipresent. Hume's solution for the human tendency to resolve the problem of the will's perpetual standing at the crossroads is to trust to the benevolence inherent in humanity's makeup to move us in sympathy to respond to our fellows. But ours is a world of moderate scarcity, a world of which he writes, "Few enjoyments are given us from the open hand of nature; but by art, labor, and industry we can extract them in great abundance. Hence the ideas of property become necessary in all [social existence]; hence justice derives its usefulness to the public; and hence alone arises its merit and moral obligation." (Op. cit., 19)

Hume's account of our need to work with, not against, others rests with its utility, that is, with Kant's material incentive, an incentive I believe cannot provide a world in which all might thrive, that is, actualize

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their potential. No matter how useful justice may be and no matter how often and strongly we might be moved by benevolence to come to the aid and support our fellow beings, our self-concern and self-regard will remain insufficiently compelling as a motive to get us to the desired goal. One element of the difficulty is that Hume's account of the human person is altogether passive. He does not have us initiating courses of events but only falling into place as events unfold. One (I) may well be mistaken in one's (my) metaphysics, but one (I) cannot relinquish a felt sense of agency in the course of one's (my) travels through this vale of tears. What is the point, the value, of the first-person personal pronoun if not to indicate that one (I) is (am) a nodal point within the environing context? Events begin and end at that point. Events may impact one (me) but one (I) react(s), yea, even respond(s). One cannot emerge into the world without a sense of nodality, without a sense of being there, without a sense of being able to interact with and have an effect on what one finds there. And that sense of agency, be it illusory or not, anchors the possibility of moral life properly conceived. That life is one in which room exists for each free person to have a shot at full actualization. The moral imperative is that each and every such person be so treated as to be able to seek full actualization. What is the source of such an obligation incumbent on all free rational beings? Free rationality.

Freedom, the raw ability to choose and initiate courses of events, is metaphysically and logically prior to rationality, but its full flowering requires rationality, whose emergence is sloth-slow and subject to backslides that baffle credibility. Aristotle tells us humankind is a rational creature, a pronouncement suggesting we are not simply nascently so—potentially so—but actually so. Any survey of world events at any time, any however brief introspection, irrefutably demonstrates the opposite to be true. Emily Dickinson writes,

> Essential Oils — are wrung —
> The Attar from the Rose
> Is not expressed by — Suns alone —
> It is the gift of Screws —

So is it with rationality. If rationality is humankind's potential, so is it humankind's moral obligation to actualize it. Truly is it the gift of screws. Freedom and rationality are dynamically related; the greater the rationality, the freer. Rationality begins with choice; free choice must initiate, even if but subliminally, the quest for rationality, at first simply by exploring what-is-there, parsing it, finding its joints—an unending, recursive enterprise.

To return to Martin Buber: He tells us that for humankind the world is twofold in accord with persons' twofold attitude toward it. As we find it, what-is-there seems to have two polar domains, the domain of "It" and that of "Thou," standing at the ends of a vast gradient (of stuff) regarding which we must make decisions, rocks, say, far toward the "It" pole, dogs and porpoises approaching the "Thou" pole. In one of his handwritten notes, Kant comes at this point more abstractly, stating that value is of two kinds, worth and dignity. Mapping Kant's "worth" with Buber's "It" and "dignity" with "Thou" is useful for understanding the abstract

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in the experiential and the experiential in the abstract. What, in Buber's manner of speaking, we address as "It" we regard as having worth; what we address as "Thou" we acknowledge as having dignity. Whatever we regard as "It," Kant would tell us, is commensurable with any and every other "It." Those to whom we comport ourselves as "Thou" have dignity and, as such, elicit our respect. Both Kant and Buber understand that how we address what-is-there is a matter of choice, but Kantian thinking suggests that those we apprehend as "Thou" or as possessing dignity deserve, if not require, our respect. That respect is morally required. He writes of the feeling of "respect"—a moral feeling—that it "thwarts our self-regard." Sartre's phenomenological account of this experience is that we have a sense in the presence of an other, of the world being shared, of its flowing away from us out of our sole, discretionary control.

In the foregoing, I have written that freedom and rationality exist in a recursive dynamic, enhancing one another, where rationality is at the abstract outset only nascent and requires those who possess it in that way to choose to hone it so as increasingly to comprehend what-is-there but also to enrich the domain of possibility for freedom, for choice, and for action. Again, we have to accept that humankind has had to claw its way up from a hard-scrabble existence; indeed, much to our shame, most of humanity continues to do so. The opportunity and occasion for ratiocinative activity seem almost a luxury bought at the expense of time and labor. Humankind's working its way up from finding itself in a world of ready-to-hand with the simplest of tools—the hand, the tool of tools—through the Platonic/Aristotelian epistemic hierarchy—*doxa* (opinion), *technê* (ability to perform tasks and make things), *epistêmê* (systematic experiential [scientific] knowledge), *sophia* or *phronesis* (wisdom, moral and comprehensive insight), and *sophrosyne* (excellence of character)—is a long climb indeed, and it cannot be traversed once for all, but must be traveled by each of us, though there are those who get a hand up through the inheritance of culture and the gift of education. Few, if any, make it alone. Many hardly reach the first step on the ladder; others make it further, but we are all subject to forgetfulness and simple backsliding. It's a slippery slope. The task is Sisyphean and may never be completed, as Camus so eloquently wrote. Kant, too, writes of this task in a footnote only a reflective old man might have written:

> Nature has apparently made its decision regarding the duration of man's life with matters other than the furtherance of the sciences in view. For just when the most gifted man stands on the brink of the greatest discovery that his skill and experience can allow him to hope for, old age makes its entrance: His mind becomes dull, and he must leave it to the next generation (that must once more travel the entire stretch that had already been covered) to make a small contribution to culture's progress. ("Speculative Beginning of Human History," XII, 116n)

Necessity and moral purpose require us to put our shoulders to Sisyphus's rock.

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We need, for the moment, to plow once more some of the ground we have already covered. I attributed to Kant the view that one experiences respect in the recognition or acknowledgment of another as Thou. But that is not his view. He argues the law alone elicits respect, that in so doing our self-worth, better self-regard, is thwarted. Here I believe on phenomenological grounds that he is mistaken. Buber never asserts that one's acknowledgment of an other as Thou elicits respect or that one feels bound morally when such an event occurs. I submit, however, that it is precisely the realization that one is in the presence of an other, independent self that transforms the entire texture of what-is-there. On the one hand, an other is a necessary condition for the presence of a world and, on the other, that other is the occasion for initiating a moral life. One is not compelled to acknowledge the other as Thou. Doing so is a choice.

In his writings on human history and culture, Kant coined the phrase "unsocial sociability" to indicate humankind's felt need to congregate so as to benefit from the fruits of the world in which it finds itself; fruits that include such basics as shelter, food, propagation, and ultimately, culture. But in coming together, individuals also find themselves in conflict with one another. This conflict can motivate or destroy, motivate toward positive goals—more perfect unions—or toward negative ones—aggression, murder, and war. Kant regards humankind's unsocial sociability as an important factor in the race's development, as a source of technological, intellectual, and aesthetic development. He is even inclined to see war as a necessary evil that can drive overall cultural advances in technology—think of the enhancements of personal life that can derive from the creation of each more destructive instrument of war, and social organization, as in the adoption of rules for waging war or the development of national and international institutions through which humans govern themselves.

In Kant's philosophy of history, that is, in his conception of humankind's becoming a free rational being properly so called, unsocial sociability is key to the transformation of free rationality. In his view, and I believe he is correct in this, humankind's freedom—its capacity to choose and initiate courses of events—is antecedent to rationality, and it is precisely through unsocial sociability that freedom transforms itself and becomes the goad and means for persons to become rational. Ultimately, the relationship between freedom and rationality is reciprocally mutual. One finds in Kant's writings two terms that may be translated as (free) will, namely, *Willkür* (adjective: *willkürlich*) and *Wille*. One best regards the first, *Willkür*, as designating a native and rudimentary capacity to choose in a disorganized, capricious, and arbitrary way, primarily as a function of (momentary) wish or desire. *Wille*, by contrast, designates one's developed and reflective decision to select among possible options. That is, *Wille* involves an entire array of elements that one can attribute only to experience, knowledge of how things work, acculturation, education, and crucially, reflection.

Recall Kant's claim that "the will stands perpetually as at a fork in the road, having to choose between its material incentive and the morally obligatory thing to do." Imagine oneself in the following situation: Having the ability and responsibility to choose how to distribute an array of attractive, healthful foodstuffs, and being well fed and otherwise healthy but standing in the midst of persons one knows to be hungry to the point of malnutrition, and understanding that the hunger of those persons might cause them to turn on

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oneself or on one another depending on the choice one makes, one has several alternatives for their distribution and use that include the following: (1) simply reserve the foodstuffs for oneself so as to sustain one's well-being, though with the understanding that the crowd might turn on one but to no avail, given one's status and protection from assault; (2) out of prudential regard for one's safety and well-being, distribute the foodstuffs so as best to ensure one's safety; and (3) acknowledging these others as bearers of the same rights as oneself and for that reason as beings understood to have a moral right to fair shares of the goods necessary to their well-being, one sets about fairly distributing the foodstuffs among them. These are but a few of the scenarios one can imagine, but they are sufficient to illustrate in a rough and ready way Kant's claim that the will stands as at a crossroads between its material incentive and moral obligation. The first example shows that one's choice is motivated by a self-regarding desire to maintain one's status, a desire that turns a blind eye to the legitimate needs of others, illustrating amorality at best and blatant immorality at worst. The second example points to prudential choice-making, again self-regarding, but understanding that these are individuals who themselves have needs that one must acknowledge. The third example sets aside prudential self-regard out of respect for the rights of the personhood of those in whose company one finds oneself.

Although crudely sketched, these scenarios help one understand the subtlety not only of Kant's characterization of humankind as a free rational being but also of the role that unsocial sociability plays in humankind (qua potentiality) becoming humankind (qua actuality), to paraphrase Aristotle's more biologically motivated claim that "Man begets man." Both focus ultimately on the strange and puzzling transition from animality to spirituality and on humankind's emergence from being bound by nature, but nonetheless emerging from and even transcending it, even though such transcendence does not permit being constrained by it. In humankind's emergence and even transcendence, I sense a value-laden gap in Kant's and Aristotle's accounts that only Martin Buber's phenomenological analysis of humankind's relationships to what-is-there bridges.[4]

As far as the concept of unsocial sociability might take us as an engine of historical maturation at the collective level, one must understand that it only sets the stage for and even requires individuals to become moral agents. Buber's opening sentence of *I-Thou* sets the stage: "For humankind what-is-there is twofold [has two aspects *or* can be regarded in two ways] depending on the stance it assumes toward it."[5] In this initial announcement, Buber neither asserts that the twofold character of what-is-there is a function of what-is-there itself nor renders that twofold character a purely subjective matter. Rather, he points out that in accord

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4. I believe this gap was first sensed by Charles Renouvier in the mid-nineteenth century. He argued that Kant should have included "personhood" among the categories of the understanding. Renouvier's critique was the topic of my first attempt at writing a doctoral dissertation. But having got into the meat of the matter, mostly by studying Kant more deeply, I came to see that Renouvier had misunderstood the nature and role of the categories of the understanding and gave up the investigation. Kant's categories of the understanding are the foundation of our conceptualization of objects in general and their interaction. They are as valid for humans as for any other natural object. They do not and cannot account for our concept of persons as such, a topic Kant undertakes in his moral, political, and historical works. But although as I shall argue, he does acknowledge that humans have a special, if not absolutely unique place in our experience of what there is, he never quite lights on what that quality or experience may be. Martin Buber does.

5. My translation here, though accurate in conveying the sense of Buber's sentence, is too literal and thus blemishingly destructive of the concision and beauty of the original.

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with the stance one assumes in relating to what one encounters (or finds ready-to-hand, to use Heidegger's phrase), the very nature of the I and what it relates to changes. Conceptually, the twofold nature of what-is-there, the two attitudinal stances we humans can assume, are poles apart. At one pole, what-is-there is "It"; at the other lies "Thou," and ne'er the twain shall meet. Not so: The two poles are extremes, abstractions; in the main, the what-is-there, the world, and its correlate, the I, lie somewhere on a continuum, in accord with the interests and comportment of the I that apprehends what stands before it.

Buber claims of "I-Thou"/"I-It" that each is a primary word pair and that no I, or ego or self, exists in isolation, meaning that no I, ego, or self exists independently and unrelated to what-is-there. An I always and only finds itself in the midst of what-is-there. Its existence as an I, ego, or self has the property of being immersed in thereness. Nonetheless, how the I relates to what is there determines the nature of the I and its correlate. The comportmental stance or attitude is determining. Buber uses two terms to characterize the attitude or comportmental stance one may assume toward what-is-there: *Beziehung*, to be translated as "relationship," and *Verhältnis*, to be translated as "relation."[6] One can discern much of what this distinction intends to capture in the prepositional correlates of the two words, that is, "relationship with" and "relation to," the former suggesting mutuality, togetherness, the latter not. These matters require sustained attention.

Assume that the psychological development of the individual person prefigures, in broad perspective, humankind's history; that both are driven by unsocial sociability. In the earliest stages, the newborn encounters what-is-there as its own. Its initial exigency is to survive and develop and thus to appropriate what is ready-to-hand to that need. What it discovers among its what-is-there are the means to do so, the pap, warmth, and care, all initially only "It." The same is initially so for thought-experiment indigenous group members. Many, if not most, indigenous groups' names for themselves are their words for "human," or, to put the matter differently, whatever word they may use to identify themselves is their word for "human." All others, no matter how similar appearing and acting they might be, are Other and thus not to be regarded and treated as persons, that is, as they would treat themselves.

As the newborn soon discovers, the appropriated context—pap, warmth, and care, the instrumentalities necessary to its comfort and development—are not always at its beck and call, just as indigenous peoples must have found themselves confronted by Others whose language included a naming term designating themselves as human and excluding all others. The two cases are analogous but different in at least one critical aspect. For the child, the pap, warmth, and care are, as it were, instrumentalities, "Its," aspects of what-is-there totally appropriated to its use, even, and perhaps more so, as those instrumentalities come to be less and less at its beck and call. For the indigenous groups, each of which regards itself as human, discovery of the Other can be imagined as yet more wrenching, for although that Other may at first be only It, it will at some point strive to wrest acknowledgment, voluntarily granted or not, from those standing over against them. Nonetheless, much depends on each individual's comportmental stance and openness to what-is-there.

6. These terms and their translations are in Buber and this essay's terms of art, which is to say that dictionaries in neither language sustain their use and elucidation in Buber's writings or this essay.

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Exploration of what-is-there, then, finds the I coming to realize that among its constituents the world generally falls into two great categories, with much of it making up a gray domain. That is, the I finds itself using the primary word (or assuming the primary comportmental stance) I-It in many, if not most instances, and using the primary word (or assuming the primary comportmental stance) I-Thou in others. Over time and given sufficient interactions, using one or the other primary word (or assuming a primary comportmental stance) becomes increasingly conscious and habitual, and at some point, may become a matter of choice. Buber's presentation of how and for what reasons one's comportmental stance comes to be what it is relative to an aspect of what-is-there leaves the matter vague, though he does point out that some of what one encounters warrants the primary word I-It while others elicit and even require the primary word I-Thou. But he does not provide criteria for use of the primary words, preferring instead to provide paradigm cases. So, on the one hand, what one regards as a mere thing, a tool, a piece of furniture—anything one might regard as a mere instrumentality—is normally and properly addressed with the primary word I-It. On the other hand, persons or more extremely, G-d, or as Buber prefers, the Eternal Thou,[7] are properly addressed with the primary word I-Thou. Setting persons aside for the moment, all of what-is-there lying between the merest instrumentality and the Eternal Thou, permits the possibility of being addressed with either of the two primary words.

Let me now suggest that by embedding several of Kant's more rigidly moral insights into Buber's "I-It"/"I-Thou" continuum, one can create a vision of persons as individuals, communities of persons, and humankind in its entirety as emerging and having destinies as moral entities, a vision that motivates both thinkers and the current writer. Three of Kant's aperçus are of particular importance in moving forward: (1) finite free rational beings have both rights and obligations, which fact is to be contrasted with the concept of a nonfinite free rational being that has only rights and no obligations; (2) value is of two kinds, worth and dignity; and (3) "everything in nature works in accordance with laws; only a free rational being has the capacity to act in accordance with its conception of laws."

Kant and Buber differ significantly in their use of the term "God." For Buber, as a person of faith, G-d, the Eternal Thou, exists and persons can encounter and establish a relationship with the Divine, only as Thou, never as It. Any and every attempt to treat the Divine as an instrumentality fails to reach or grasp the Divine, which utterly and completely transcends any attempt at being co-opted. By way of contrast, in philosophical contexts, Kant conceives and uses the term "God" as a heuristic limit by which to juxtapose some concept of another being for purposes of clarification. In the present case, his aim is to place finite free rationality in a continuum that at one pole consists of beings that are neither free nor rational and thus have neither rights nor obligations—they can't do anything, after all—and a nonfinite free rational being that has no bounds whatsoever and thus has rights but no obligations. Such a contrast permits more precise understanding of the position of being a finite free rational being and its relation(ship) to (with) what-is-there.

7. For Buber, the Eternal Thou can only be addressed properly as I-Thou. To assume any other comportmental stance is to misunderstand the primary word I-Thou.

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Kant's distinction between the two domains of value, worth and dignity, lies at the heart of humankind's exploration of what-is-there. What-is-there, as with "I-It"/"I-Thou," constitutes a continuum from worth to dignity, the pole of the former consisting of whatever one regards as utterly commensurable, the pole of the latter consisting of what one regards as valuable in and of themselves and thus to be respected for bearing such value. One may regard the former as instrumentalities to be used at one's discretion, but the latter to be granted the right of self-determination, a right one is obligated to respect. Again, we are writing of a continuum in the examination of which one is forced to make decisions regarding the degree to which something may simply put something to one's use, co-opt its existence and subject it to one's needs and ends, rather than acknowledge its intrinsic nature and worth, therein allowing it to determine how and whether one may so co-opt it. I believe that as one comes to relate to what-there-is in this way, that is, seeing it as lying along a continuum of this kind, one comes increasingly to question oneself as to where along that continuum a given element or aspect of what-is-there lies.

Making decisions of this kind becomes increasingly complex, the more familiar we become with what-is-there, for one comes to understand that even mere instrumentalities have an intrinsic nature and use. One comes to value them for that nature and finds oneself valuing (respecting) them because one understands they have proper and improper uses. One doesn't use a surgical scalpel to cut down trees, just as one does not use a cross-cut saw to do surgery. Spinoza is reputed to have said, "The hand is the tool of tools."[8] Although one's exploration of what-is-there involves the entire organism there in the midst of it all, all the internally and outwardly oriented senses, the hand, as the tool of tools, is what allows us to engage with what is ready to hand, from which one is able to push further and further out, using what comes to hand to explore, enter, and make a world. In so doing one finds aspects of it that are more and less amenable to one's use, and I do not mean just stuff that is hard, rocks, for instance, but, perhaps more importantly, beings that simply resist being bent to one's will, that actively resist one, turn away and pursue a different course, including, of course, attempting to bend one to their will. But I have strayed.

Philosophers in the West have, since the time when such abstract reflection began, focused on figuring out what at bottom is the most basic stuff from which all else derives or of which all else is an appearance. Thales pronounced it to be water: "All is water." Heraclitus believed it to be process: "The upward and downward way are one and the same." Parmenides asserted it to be mathematical equations; Socrates/Plato, amorphous stuff striving to participate in Ideas or Forms. Aristotle, whose view I prefer, announced it to be *hylê*, a very ancient term for wood. It makes sense. Wood, trees, lumber *are* the stuff from which one creates the amenities—homes and furniture, as well, of course, as heat—humankind uses to render its lives bearable and even comfortable. Note that I say this with a certain degree of jest because, as I shall argue as we go along, I believe the quest for the ultimate nature of what-is-there to be in vain, or at least without possible ending. Nonetheless, humankind must explore what-is-there, for there is nothing more immediately present

8. I say reputed, because one often finds the quote attributed to him, but it is nowhere to be found among his published works. However, it does seem the kind of comment he would make.

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and rich into which it can delve. The issue is whether it makes sense to attempt to penetrate or see behind the appearances. I think not, if only because from the outset one becomes entangled in a logical conundrum.

Let's turn now to exploring Kant's claim, "Everything in nature works in accordance with laws; only a free rational being has the capacity to act in accordance with its conception of laws." Just as Kant uses the concept "God" as a heuristic device to clarify what humankind's nature and position might be, so also, I believe, he uses the term "nature" in this brief and fecund sentence.[9] That is, for Kant, nature is by definition law-governed, which is his way of expressing Aristotle's claim that nature natures, that is, proceeds in accord with inherent laws and patterns. The assumption with which Kant begins and never relinquishes in exploring what one takes to be nature is that it proceeds in accord with hard and fast, causal, rules—in a word, laws. Nature's processes are not gappy; things do not happen a-causally or for no reason whatsoever. There's always an antecedent to be discovered, even if one must devote a lifetime to doing so. The point is, nature's invariable lawfulness is not so much a discovered fact as a governing principle one brings to the task of exploring what-is-there conceived as "nature." Because nature is stipulated as law-governed in this way, one may become frustrated in exploring it, but one does not, cannot, give up the investigation. Science, whose goal of revealing the causal processes by which phenomena unfold and reveal themselves, operates on the assumption that nature and its constituents are, as a whole, an It. Because one can regard the elements constituting causal chains, one also might think of them as instrumentalities and means to ends.[10]

If Kant does use his characterization of nature as a heuristic device, one can reasonably assume he is, by contrast, making a point regarding free rational beings, namely, that they must be able to conceive of lawfulness and, with that conception, formulate laws for themselves, laws in accord with which they are then obligated to choose and act. Characterizing humankind as free and rational is equivalent to saying it is, at least potentially, autonomous, individually and collectively. By its philological roots, "autonomy" is the ability to give laws, legislate, for oneself and others. Nonetheless, in this, Kant necessarily follows in Aristotle's footsteps; free rationality resides only nascently in humankind, a potential requiring actualization. Only one being can motivate and bring about that transition: humankind. To be sure, though the potential lies in the species and individual, its actualization can be stimulated, goaded, motivated from either within or without, though it cannot be imposed.

I believe that conceiving there to be a strong relationship between humankind's progress in actualizing free rationality and its discerning among what-is-there those beings that warrant the primary word "I-Thou." I cannot put my finger on precisely what features within what-is-there might initially elicit the primary word

9. As evidence for this view, consider the following sentence from the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Sec. 14): "*Nature* is the *existence* of things, considered as existence determined according to universal laws."

10. I want to avoid giving the impression that I believe the scientist, as defined in the foregoing, necessarily approaches what-there-is through the primary word "I-It." Quite the contrary, in my experience, the best scientists approach nature with deep reverence, that is, as something to be valued in and for itself, thus essentially as Thou. Nonetheless, as one burrows into this revered entity, one must take the attitude that its constituent elements, through whose investigation one is striving to understand it more deeply, are instrumentalities at the service of the whole itself. The physician presents an easily understandable example for meeting a patient from both primary words: "I-Thou" as one who comes for advice, and "I-It" as one whose mind and body require restoring to health. In my experience, the best physicians can address patients from the stance of both modalities.

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"I-Thou," nor can I identify a particular moment or encounter when it might occur, but under normal circumstances, my hunch is that the urge to do so will arise between child and parent, likely the mother. But that hunch may be an artifact of culture and personal experience. This matter need not delay us.

The point for which I will argue in what follows is that although both Kant and Buber identify important features of humankind's presence among what-is-there, neither adequately captures its core elements. Kant's conception is too abstract regarding humankind's interactions with what-there-is, Buber's is insufficiently precise regarding the responsibilities and obligations that properly govern the two comportmental stances "I-It" and "I-Thou." Part of the messiness of their respective characterizations arises from Kant's failure to give a clear account of the meaning and implications of "Only a free rational being has the capacity to act in accordance with its conception of laws . . . ," where what the conception of the laws might be remains unspeceified. The lack of specificity in Buber's work lies in his inability or unwillingness to (be able to) provide a clear account of the criteria for and demarcations of the two comportmental stances. The poles seem clear, but everything lying in between is up for grabs and a matter of discussion. On this point, let me make clear my view: Whatever may lie at the I-It pole permits of being regarded as an instrumentality; it submits to being used. Whatever lies at the I-Thou pole defies mere use but demands, by being apprehended as Thou, one's regard for its dignity, its intrinsic right to respect for its capacity for self-determination.

In comporting itself toward what-is-there from the stance of I-It, humankind co-opts it to its use, and it thereby explores it with an attitude of how it can most effectively meet humankind's needs. That's the abstract, the ideal that's rarely met. Whatever regard humankind may have for the objects of this attitude derives from considerations of their appropriateness for the use to which humankind wants to put them. This is the least controversial domain of scientific investigation and concerns most, but not all, of the inorganic and organic world. Having so said, however, one crashes up against animal life on the one hand and aspects of humankind's created world that constitute art in all its manifestations on the other. But we do not want to bog ourselves down in trying to establish a list of fine distinctions among what may properly be regarded as warranting being regarded as an instrumentality and what not, for, as Buber notes, the domains are more functions of comportmental stance than of intrinsic properties of what-is-there.

In my view, matters become more complex when discussing what we address as constituting the domain of I-Thou. For Buber, the depth of the relationship of a given domain of what we attempt to address as Thou—there are three, nature, humankind, and "spiritual beings"—is a function of their capacity for response to our addressing them. That is, speech, call, and response, is Buber's core criterion for determining the potential for a complete and fulfilling relationship. Clearly, humankind provide the richest soil for developing our capacity for relationship. Our fellow humans have the greatest capacity for call and response, even when their response may be in the form of disagreement, opposition or denial.

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What is involved in comporting oneself toward the other from the stance I-Thou? Buber provides examples as guides but no rules. By contrast. Kant does offer a rule—the Categorial Imperative,[11] though in several formulations that do not completely cohere—but few straightforward examples of its application. But there are some, and, in my opinion, they are sufficient to illustrate and sustain his view.[12] They are also, by the way, helpful in understanding what Kant means when he writes that only a free rational creature has the capacity to act in accordance with the conception of lawfulness, which is central to the points for which I intend to argue.

In *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* pages IV 422–23, one finds four examples of Kant's attempt to offer maxims for action, the strict adherence to which can be adopted as universal laws governing free rational beings. The examples involve (a) preserving one's life in adverse and extreme circumstances; (b) promise keeping and truth telling; (c) actualizing one's capacities and talents; and (d) benevolence toward our fellow beings. In each example, Kant's point is that failing to do what one is called to do will ultimately result in the undermining of the possibility of creating the only domain within which free rationality can sustain itself and thrive. The foregoing is imprecise and, left by itself, will lead to misunderstandings of the view for which I want to argue. I hereby call upon the reader's patience as I work through some at-times arcane details.

Kant's moral theory is deontological. Deontological ethics and ethicists hold that the descriptors "morally good or praiseworthy" and "morally bad or blameworthy" are properly ascribed only to the motive from which an act is chosen and performed, not the consequences or outcomes of the act. Kant further argues that moral goodness is properly ascribed to such wills as act only from their choice of acts that do not simply accord with duty but solely and strictly from the fact that the act is obligatory or a matter of duty. Nonetheless, choice-making aside, the criterion for an act to be performed by a free rational being is that the act can be willed as a universal law in accord with which such beings can thrive, that is, can attain their personal and collective actualization. I previously stated that Kant stipulates that nature is lawful. One of the implications of this stipulation is that nature is self-sustaining and self-perpetuating, not entropic.[13] That is the implication I intend to follow with regard to free rational, i.e., autonomous beings. Their individual and collective goal is to create through their law, conceiving and making a domain in which each and all together thrive.

The upshot of Kant's view that the moral use of the term "good" applies only to the will and its motive for willing is,[14] in the final analysis, that one is left having to judge others on the basis of one's sense of their

11. Kant's preferred and most rigorous statement of the Categorical Imperative is: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law [of choice and action]." *Grounding*, IV 421 (Ellington trans.).

12. Kant's readers, supporters, and critics alike find his examples less strongly illustrative of his views than one would like. I am among those. However, they are what he gives us, and we have to work with them.

13. Oddly, neither the English language nor its roots has a direct, one word antonym for "entropy." "Negentropy," a term first introduced by Erwin Schrödinger, is a neologism used primarily in information theory. In contexts in which we are working, "harmony," "concordance," and "organization" seem the most appropriate synonyms.

14. "There is no possibility of thinking of anything at all in the world, or even out of it, that can be regarded as good without qualification, except a *good will* . . . it is good only through its willing, i.e., it is good in itself." *Grounding*, IV 393–94 (Ellington trans.).

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motive, their intent. Doing so may be possible, but the circumstances in which one can are few and very much subject to a lack of direct evidence. Although I am inclined to accept much of what Kant formulates regarding the moral life, I want to focus less on motive and more on outward manifestation, on the visible consequences of persons' choices and actions, no matter what motive may have initiated them. My point is, our ultimate interest is with the world, the material, social, and cultural domain in which we live, for which we have ample, direct evidence, such that we can and do make judgments of a moral nature.

Let us turn now to Kant's examples of the maxims for action that might give rise to that world. Let me remind the reader, however, that although our interest here is the formulation of maxims that we might and ought to adopt as universal laws, the moral worth of one's choice-making for Kant does not lie with the laws in and of themselves, but rather with the reason for acting from respect for such laws as can be willed to be universal laws of a free rational being's actions. One finds Kant's own examples of situations in which a person is called upon to formulate universalizable maxims of possible actions in the *Grounding* at pages IV 397–99 and IV 422–23. The two sets of examples are not precisely the same but strongly overlap and involve (1) consistency in the treatment of others, (2) self-preservation, (3) self-actualization, and (4) beneficence; one finds another example concerning (5) personal integrity in "Speculative Beginning of Human History." Rather than providing a detailed account, I shall briefly summarize each:[15]

> 1. A merchant finds her/himself questioning whether to charge a naïve customer whatever price s/he will agree to pay rather than the one fixed for experienced and knowledgeable customers. Upon reflection, the storekeeper determines to charge the fixed price so as to maintain the integrity of the seller-purchaser relationship. That is, the merchant determines that inconsistency in price depending on a potential purchaser's experience and vulnerability will have the result of undermining not only his credibility but also the long-term viability of the commercial system.
>
> 2. A person falls on hard times and finds him/herself in such depression as to consider whether taking his/her life might not be the best way to manage her/his circumstances. Upon reflection, s/he concludes that most, if not all individuals, find themselves in overwhelmingly difficult circumstances, and in a moment of clarity, s/he realizes that if everyone were to take their lives in times of stress and depression, humanity would eventually, if not soon, cease to exist. Choosing suicide is not sustainable.
>
> 3. All persons, even those who either enter the world or in the course of their lives, find themselves to have a variety of talents and virtues whose actualization can render

15. The examples from Kant's writings I summarize below have received extensive, penetrating analysis in the massively extensive literature on Kant's moral and social theory. As I do not intend this essay to be a piece of that literature, strictly speaking, I do not hold myself to its scholarly standards. Although I attempt not to build a straw man of Kant's examples, I will make a somewhat looser use of them for purposes of presenting my own views than I would otherwise.

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their own lives more satisfying and, as well, contribute to humankind's advance and well-being. Each of us has a choice as to whether to devote the time and effort necessary to actively actualize those gifts or simply leave them to emerge in due course or otherwise lie fallow, perhaps dissipating them in passive or active negligence. Here, again, one's choice concerns whether humankind shall benefit from and thrive in actualizing personal and collective potential. Were all persons to let their virtues and talents lie fallow, humankind's existence would remain brutish.

4. One finds another person, friend or stranger, in distress. The encounter immediately presents a choice either to engage and lend such aid and support as is possible or turn away from the other's duress. The choice is immediate and obvious. Leaving others to their own devices is to will that each person must make it as best s/he can on her/his own. Lending one's support manifests one's commitment to the well-being not only of the individual but also of humankind as such. Choosing benevolence, good-willedness, supports and furthers becoming and being freely rational. Early in Dante's *Purgatory*, Cato of Utica instructs Dante with regard to benevolence, saying, "He who waits to be asked already half refuses." One finds in these words the very essence of one's commitment to individuals' and humankind's well-being and destiny.

5. One finds oneself having been commissioned to carry out the wishes of another, a commission to which one has made a commitment, say, the distribution of a substantial legacy to persons not related to oneself, persons who do not know of the legacy or that they are named as its recipients. Further, one finds oneself in need of the legacy's resources, not only for oneself but also for members of one's family. Add to those circumstances that the intended recipients of the legacy have no need for the resources. Moreover, one can do with the legacy as one chooses because the terms of its distribution are not known to and not discoverable by any other person, interested or not. This is a choice regarding personal integrity. Does one choose to do what one has been charged with and committed oneself to, or does one choose to do what may, in fact, alleviate one's and one's family's stress and duress? The choice concerns promise-keeping and promise-breaking, which is to say, one's relationship to oneself and thus to others. For each and all, the choice is the most fundamental that every person can and must make.

In each of these examples, one finds a decision one must make with which a free rational being can abstract a principle that can serve the individual's specific materially motivated and self-interested circumstances, a principle others might adopt in similar circumstances for similar reasons. But a free rational individual can also abstract from the examples principles that can, without modification, serve as universally

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applicable laws of free rational choice-making, choice-making that conduces to humankind's individual and collective actualization of its potential, what Kant calls fulfillment of providence's objective or intent for the species. Adopting such objective or intent for one's own, as one should, for personal self-actualization, is not only compatible with that of humankind's actualization as a whole but also not possible independently of it.

Return for a moment to Kant's insight, "Everything in nature works in accordance with laws;[16] only a free rational being has the capacity to act in accordance with its conception of laws, i.e., according to principles, and thereby has he a will." (Op. cit. 412) Kant's definition of nature is stipulative. It also serves as a paradigm for human choice and action. Nature is a domain of predictability, of knowability, precisely because, first, it proceeds in accordance with laws, and second, it neither hinders nor exterminates itself. Such is Kant's optimistic view of nature in and of itself. Nonetheless, he also asserts that within nature lies the potential for its disruption, namely, a being whose potential is free rationality, by the emergence of which that being separates itself and comes to possess the potential for its own actualization and also for nature's disruption, indeed destruction;[17] though Kant seems not to have considered the last possibility, a function, I believe, of his optimism and, possibly, his faith in providence, if not the Divine.

Returning now to the foregoing Kantian examples, one can readily deduce what they aim at establishing. First, a free rational being's choice-making has far-reaching implications. Although we may well believe our choices are for ourselves alone, on Kant's understanding, they are of necessity choices for all. They are so inherently, though perhaps hidden from ourselves through self-centeredness, selfishness, or lack of full consideration. Choices have far more than immediate and personal consequences. Unbeknownst to ourselves, our choices imply laws we want to govern all free rational beings, not only in the present but also on into the future.

With Kant's stipulative definition of nature in mind, our task is to lay down a set of principles that will not only sustain humankind but also allow it to fully actualize its potential, an aspect of free rationality that further distinguishes humankind from the Kantian conception of nature as such. Thus, the first foregoing example speaks to treating fundamentally similar creatures, in this instance, all customers, the same, that is, charging them fixed prices whether they be naïve or experienced, black or white, of one's nationality or religion or another. In Kant's conception of nature, creatures with the same essential characteristics are acted upon and react to external conditions and forces with similar consequences. Translated to the condition of free rationality, all beings with that characteristic are to be treated in accord with a single set of principles. Honesty and evenhandedness, then, are fundamental to establishing and sustaining the domain of free rationality. The second example explicitly points to the fact that nature is self-sustaining, not self-extinguishing, even taking into consideration that evolution occurs in it, a property of which Kant could not have been

16. Compare with the opening sentence of Section 14 in the *Prolegomena*: "*Nature* is the *existence* of things, considered as existence determined according to universal laws."

17. Nowhere does Kant give an account of how a free rational being came to be. Although he uses early passages in the Bible to drive his speculative account of human history, he does not there, or in any other passage of which I know, straightforwardly assert humankind's creation ex nihilo.

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aware, though, considered in its entirety, evolution supports his view rather than contradicting it. Why not self-extinguish when circumstances seem overwhelmingly dark and against one? Because adopting doing so as a rule has consequences for all of humankind, not just oneself. There are points to niggle over here—e.g., when ought one to choose self-sacrifice?—but they only point to the soundness of the fundamental principle. That one should choose actualization of one's talents and potential would seem obvious, for if nothing else, doing so enhances one's own life and position, but it also increases one's ability to positively contribute to humankind's current and future condition, i.e., to its full flowering. Kant's commitment to beneficence presents an interesting case: David Hume and his fellow moral sense advocates present benevolence (or benignity) as an instinctual human capacity activated in the presence of our fellow beings. Kant conceives it differently, more in accord with the term's Latin root, namely, as being good-willed, as by or through choice being disposed to support others and alleviate their misfortune and pains. Again, his focus is the collective well-being and ultimate actualization of free rationality. The fifth example goes directly to personal integrity, the choice to be true to one's promises and thus to oneself, without which commitment no other free choice is sustainable, and, thus, without which humankind will not be able either resolutely to persist in its pursuit of full actualization. One must introduce one other choice that each free rational being must make, specifically, to speak the truth as one knows it to be. We might regard this requirement as flowing from the last, and it does, but it plays an essential role in humankind's life: Language, though not humankind's sole means of communication, can be its most precise and effective means of so doing. Unless protected and respected, language, as we know in our current social and political circumstances, can be used to destroy the very ties that make life together possible. This truth is easily trivializable. We can undercut it by arguing about whether it is best to tell one's parent or grandparent the truth about oneself, a truth that might disturb, anger, or deeply sadden them as they leave life, but focusing on such issues when coming to conclusions regarding truth-telling undermines the necessity of adhering to truth plays in establishing society and pursuing ultimate ends.

Freely choosing even-handed treatment of each and every free rational being, persevering in the face of adversity, resolutely pursuing the development of one's talents and potential, responding to others with benignity, guarding one's integrity, and using language always and only in such a way as to convey the truth are principles one can will as universal laws of human choice and action. Although not exhaustive, they constitute the that without which humankind can individually and collectively pursue and attain its true end.

Nonetheless, Kant does not accept abiding by these principles as sufficient for individual moral goodness, that is, for worthiness to be happy. He is far more idealistic and rigorous than that: One must freely choose universalizable principles from respect for them as laws, the sole proper objects of respect. That is, strictly speaking, the moral life consists of performing one's duty, and "duty is the necessity of an action done from respect for the law," (Op. cit. 400) and "respect is properly the representation of a value that thwarts my self-love." (Op. cit. 401) Two aspects of Kant's views on these issues, that laws one acknowledges as appropriately governing the actions of free rational beings, and laws as properly having such value as to thwart one's self-love, one's personal hopes and desires, are certainly conceptually possible and laudable, but I believe they

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are wrong-headed. First, Kant renders judgments regarding one's moral praiseworthiness, one's worthiness to be happy, beyond the ken of human judgment, deferring it to the Divine, and, indeed, he uses that conclusion as the major premise of his argument for a Divine Being's existence. However, rendering moral, not just juridical judgments, is a matter in which all persons do and must engage every day and in every aspect of their lives. We may, indeed, defer final judgment to, as it were, another day, but making working estimates is a necessity of everyday life. Second, asserting that (only) the law properly elicits respect strikes me as just wrong. Agreeing that one should and even ought to obey the law because it is the law may entail that one respect the law, but ultimately one chooses to obey and respect the law for articulable reasons, not from some quasi-emotionally elicited response to it.[18] Choosing to adopt and follow the law is and must be a rational act.

Conceiving a domain of lawfulness, a domain for free rational beings, that mirrors the relevant properties of nature, as Kant conceives it, is driven, underlain by needs and aspirations that arise from, as Kant puts it, humankind's unsocial sociability, a trait from which Hobbes's state of nature arises, human life that is "nasty, poor, brutish and short." Humankind's first and ultimate exigency is to, again to quote Hobbes, "seek peace and follow it." Contra Hobbes, Kant abjures the strategy of finding a ruler who will impose and maintain order. Instead, he seeks it precisely in humankind's free rationality, which is precisely to conceive, adopt, and adhere to such principles as will conduce to humankind's sustainable full flowering of its potentiality in both the individual and the collective. To the question, then, as to why conceive, adopt, and cleave to the set of principles that will conduce to such an end, that is, Why respect the law? The answer is straightforward: Only by doing so can the individual and the community of humankind realize and enjoy free rationality. Doing so is utile.

What or who is diminished by such a view? Nothing and no one. Whose dignity is diminished or enhanced? No one's is diminished; everyone's is enhanced, and preservation and enhancement of dignity are primary values for each and all. I put the foregoing before us because of Kant's own words, "Value is of two kinds, worth and dignity. Things whose value is worth are commensurable; beings whose value is dignity are incommensurable." Kant, as do I, assigns dignity solely to free rationality. Only a free rational being, no matter how rudimentary its degree of that quality is actualized, can exist in and for itself, can choose its own mode of existence. Clearly, one such being cannot be substituted or exchanged for another, because each cannot be for itself an instrumentality for another. It's in the presence of that quality of a being that one must render respect. Further, only another free rational being is able to respect such a being. Kant has delivered us to this point, this recognition, and here we depart.

Martin Buber's announcement that for humankind the world is twofold in accord with its twofold attitude maps onto Kant's distinction between worth and dignity. Both pairs of distinction admit to degrees,

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18. Kant's characterization of respect (*Achtung*) in the footnote to *Grounding*, IV 401, on which I base my account of it here, renders it less as an active, affirmative response than as a passive one. In this, Kant's use of "respect" resembles the moral sense tradition's use of "benevolence," or even Pascal's "The heart has its reasons that reason does not know." Note also that *Achtung* came among Germans during the early part of the nineteenth century to have a rather perverse usage, particularly when used simultaneously with the raised straight-armed salute.

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though (the potential for) dignity stands at one pole and thus lays claim to being absolute. All else is subject to gradation regarding its worth, and is, to a large degree, subject to the needs and inclinations of the beholder. Uniqueness and scarcity constitute one of the properties of proper bearers of dignity, and insofar as an entity possesses either of those qualities, they, too, may be regarded as transcending worth *simpliciter*. How might one render Michelangelo's *David* commensurate with Picasso's *Guernica*, or either with Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, each a landmark of humankind's creative history? Each and every one of their kind is to be approached not only as sublime but also as a bearer of a degree of dignity bestowed on it by its creator as an expression of her/his free rationality. But we've wandered off into the woods.

The paradigm case of beings we must acknowledge as bearers of dignity and thus as commanding respect are those free rational beings whose presence to us elicits being addressed as Thou, that is, other persons. Not just other persons of our kind, however we might so characterize them, but all individuals whose prima facie presence suggests they be so addressed. The predisposition to other the other is so inbred and intense as to lead us to fixate on any, quite literally *any*, quality by which we might be tempted to regard them as different from ourselves as essentially different and thus not to be regarded and addressed as Thou, that is, with respect for their humanity. All human history bears witness to this truth, the truth that one's commitment to humankind's full actualization must counter in every instance and every step along the way.

Every historically verified encounter between cultures whose practices differ provides an example of how humans have striven to dominate and even exterminate one another. Those cultures did not want to consider even the possibility that those they were encountering were bearers of dignity with the right to pursue their self-set goals. There is among us a misbegotten sense that we are primary examples of what it is and means to be human and to deny that possibility to those whom we can discern as differing from us. As Herodotus noted, "They do strange things over there." No physical trait, no behavior, no cultural practice is too small or insignificant to question and even deny personhood to the other.

Our commitment to humankind, our moral vocation and obligation, is not only to overcome this propensity but actively to counter it so as to further the commonweal. Kant's insight that humankind must impose by choice a nature on a being that, because of its potential for free rationality, has no nature is revelatory. Plato and Aristotle saw something of this, but their solution to the problem it raises is inadequate. First, their view was that the paradigm for morally ideal human comportment and actualization was deeply cultural. One was to strive not simply to be Greek but, more specifically, Athenian, though in a pinch Greek would do, even though that notion would have been unknown to them. On the other hand, Plato asserted that one becomes by imitating the ideal. Aristotle modified this notion by eliminating the ideal and putting in its place the morally wise person, the *spoudaious*, the one who makes the right choices at the right time in the right way and for the right reasons. He further asserts, correctly, I believe, that the moral life arises from habituation, his analogue being that the plant grows as one chooses to shape it. One becomes and acts as one habituates oneself.

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If one assumes as bedrock, as I do, that humankind has free rationality as its core and highest potentiality, one must reject Aristotle's claim that the moral life can be a matter of habituation pure and simple. The notions of habituation and free rationality are antithetical. And yet, accustoming individuals to self-regulation must be an essential element in pursuing the moral life, a life that itself must be chosen. Kant's capacity to abstract from the particular is one of his greatest contributions to moral theory. By trimming away the concept of humankind, to see it as an instance of the yet more abstract concept "free rational being," makes it possible to see beyond its physical and cultural instances—regional origins, social, political, and cultural practices, including religion—to an essential core. Disabused of the view that those particularizing characteristics are of the essence of a given individual's existence, one is freed from the temptation to regard it as other. All human temptation arises from taking such characteristics to be an individual's essence, erecting barriers to community of purpose. So, one must attitudinally orient oneself to the world to see what is before one as worthy of respect in proportion to its inherent dignity. So saying, I believe that nothing we ever encounter, stumble across, is completely lacking in worth or dignity, and those with dignity lie beyond one's right subordinate to one's self.

The point, then, at which I depart from Kant, regards the bearer of dignity and the appropriate object of respect. Free rational beings, persons, are the bearers of dignity, and unmitigated dignity commands in and of itself respect, which is to say such thwarting of one's self-love as to act in such a way as to accord it such treatment as every such being, including oneself, warrants. Hence universal laws by which free rational beings can govern themselves. All else violates freedom. Whether nature be self-sustaining or not, free rationality must be, even, and perhaps especially when it is not yet fully actualized. And here the hindrance is not so much with regard to freedom as it is with rationality. One's actualization of rationality releases freedom's true power to serve humankind's potential. There's a circle here, but not a vicious one: Being and becoming human are aspects of the same activity: In becoming we are; in being we become.

Before bringing this portion of my essay to a close, I want to remind us of Jean Paul Sartre's assertion that every choice is a choice for all humankind. The upshot of that claim is that because, collectively, humankind is free, each choice, implicit or explicit, accrues to what humankind is in the process of becoming. What follows is a reflection on that insight. Because he understood that his moral and political theory was abstract in the extreme, and because in my adoption and adaptation of his views I have followed him in that, one may be tempted to dismiss the theory that I claim underlies the moral life and humankind's becoming by simply saying "that's all well and good from a theoretical point of view, but it's just too abstract, too precious, as it were, to be put into effect." Kant wrote at length and convincingly against such a dismissal of his views, but one can arrive at his conclusion, namely, that inasmuch as humankind is free, the criticism does not hold. Nonetheless, one has to commit oneself to the view that humankind *is* free to choose. No knock-down argument can irrefutably establish freedom of will; nor, despite the research and arguments of Robert Sapolski,

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can it be denied.[19] However, the nineteenth-century French voluntarist philosopher Jules Lequier posed a tetralemma that leads to the conclusion that for us who are concerned with the possibility of freedom of the will, only one choice is consistent and coherent: Suppose a two by two matrix; across the top, label one column "free" and the other "determined;" down the sides, label the top row "free," the bottom row "determined." The four matrix boxes yield these four choices: (1) one is free to choose one is free; (2) one is free to choose one is determined; (3) one is determined to choose one is free; and (4) one is determined to choose one is determined. Although the matrix does not constitute an argument, it does point out that only one, (1), of the four alternatives is rationally coherent, namely, that one be free to choose that one is free. Choosing (2) is rationally incoherent. And (3) and (4) leave no choice, though for different reasons. Admitting that we of necessity must confront this tetralemma from behind the veil of ignorance, only a single possibility is open to the reflective person, that s/he freely chooses for freedom and to do so for humankind.

Choosing freedom and thus choosing the inherently moral life in the face of what one observes all around one is so daunting as to force one to question one's sanity. But understanding the profundity of having responsibility for nurturing human potential into actuality can only and must commit one to the task. I cannot but believe that those who have not so committed themselves have not had the opportunity to comprehend the rewards of the task free rationality presents. Two questions arise immediately: Why take up the challenge? and What is the satisfaction to be derived from doing so? To the first question, the concise response is, "You cannot but take up the task, even should you decline or shirk it." The second response is, "Inasmuch as the task is inherently moral, how you fulfill the obligations it presents will, in fact, rest with you, with your self-respect and esteem, and not only will you have to live with that fact, but it will, in the end, become the very self you create." In being responsible for ourselves, we must be responsible for others, and, conversely, in assuming responsibility for others, we fulfill our responsibility to ourselves.

Our foundational need and obligation is to nurture such rationality as will allow us to formulate those maxims for choice that we can will to become universal principles of human doing, first among which must be to affirm, nurture, and respect free rationality, not so much as an abstract conception but rather as a potentiality embedded in humankind. In this regard, respect for others, for *the* Other, is the obligation, the duty, to which we must dedicate our most focused attention and effort. Parochialism is our abiding temptation, one with which we seem to come into this world and which we find unshakably difficult to relinquish, if for no other reason than that we enter the world in a specific time and place and as a member of a given family that is invariably suffused with particularizing cultural practices and values. Odd and difficult as it may at first seem, divesting ourselves of the habit of apprehending those particularizing features of a given individual as of their essence, an essence whereby we may well find strange, off-putting, yea, even morally reprehensible, is our first and, very likely, most difficult moral obligation. We are faced with having to see the person behind

19. Recent conclusions by the Stanford psychologist/theoretician Robert Sapolski run afoul of the question, "If there be no freedom of will, as you have concluded, how can you avoid the counterclaim that all your research, which one would have assumed was undertaken freely, is simply the result of the determination of your path of research and your conclusions from it?"

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the individualizing characteristics and behaviors in order to meet the other as we are ourselves. Moreover, I believe each individual has a duty to initiate such attempts to relate to the other. Let me repeat the admonition Dante receives as he attempts to enter purgatory: "He who waits to be asked already half refuses."

Such initiated acknowledgment of the other as oneself is the first step to creating a shared life and world. This movement toward the other is not simply transactional. It creates a domain in which needs and aspirations are met in such a way as to transcend the merely transactional. I am taking a hard stand here with respect to each person's obligation to respect free rationality and the potential each has to respect and acknowledge it in the other, because holding back and waiting for the other to do so has and will continue to leave humankind in its present condition, a time that Hobbes calls a state of war. One must begin somewhere, and the only time one can begin is now, and the only person with whom it can begin is oneself. One either answers the call to one's obligation to free rationality, or it will never come to full fruition.

What is the potential for the full actualization of free rationality? The creation of a domain Kant calls a kingdom of ends. I conceive it as a domain of free rational beings in which each such being exercises the greatest possible freedom in pursuit of full actualization compatible with the freedom and full actualization of all. Mutuality is of the essence of such a domain. Each free rational individual, each person, each Thou, has the obligation to dedicate their effort and talents to the creation of such a domain, and each such individual has a right to pursue their actuality in it.

That's all well and good, but it just won't work, one might say. Where might one start? Well, if free rationality exists, and we have shown that one cannot but assume it does (even if it doesn't), one starts with oneself. One listens to the call to free rationality and responds with the commitment of self, and one perseveres, never relinquishing one's belief and faith.

The view for which I argue in the foregoing calls upon and uses many resources, particularly Kant's moral theory, but it does not agree altogether with any of them, and, in particular, not with some important elements of Kant's view. First among my disagreements is his view that the proper object of respect is the law. The law does not thwart one's self-love, only the encounter with an Other that one acknowledges as the bearer of free rationality, as oneself is, can elicit respect, for in encountering such an Other, one encounters a being who has a right to self-actualization, a right to which one has a correlative obligation. Each of us is an end for her/himself. Our call to actualization is mutual, shared. Further, Kant asserts that moral worth, which he sometimes calls worthiness to be happy, is strictly a function of the motive from which one acts. Given my construction of humankind's moral vocation, although I acknowledge the purity of Kant's view, I have argued that committing to one's obligation to personal and communal actualization of free rationality involves commitment to the other, but it also includes an element of self-interest, and the two cannot be entirely separated. So an essential element is missing from Kant's view, namely, the grounding recognition and acceptance of persons as Thou.

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II

In presenting my views, I have begun with moral theory without advancing a metaphysical view other than to assert free rationality as my core assumption. I chose the term "free rationality" quite deliberately, not simply because it derives from Kant, but because it denotes at most a potentiality, not an entity and not necessarily a property or quality that one might reasonably infer inheres in an entity.[20] Free rationality is for me the analogue or correlate of Descartes's *Cogito*, except that I ascribe no thing-like properties to it, and, as I shall argue, I neither locate it in nor wall it off from what-is-there. Transparency to itself is among its most important properties and, as I have consistently insisted, it exists more as potentiality than actuality.

These properties primarily have to do with the metaphysical and epistemological account that follows. As audacious as I am in pinning moral responsibility on humankind's free rational responsibility for choice-making and creating the domain in which it can fulfill its potential, I am, as you will discover, modest in my metaphysical and epistemological claims. My being so is a permutation of Kant's assertion that he "found it necessary to deny knowledge so as to make room for faith." Although he was accused of being a skeptic by many of his more perceptive contemporaries, he resolutely denied what he took to be the charge. Whether Kant was a skeptic or not—and I take his denial at face value and have no inclination to deny it—my view is skeptical after the fashion of Pyrrho of Elis,[21] who argue for the view that "One cannot know whether or not one has knowledge [of what-is-there is as it is in-itself]," the bracketed part of the phrase deriving from Kant's term "thing as it is in-itself."

Although Kant did assert that his goal in writing the *Critique of Pure Reason* was to undercut the pretentions of his predecessors' claims that knowledge of what-is-there as it is in itself is possible, either through innate ideas as those denominated Rationalists claimed, or through sense perception, as those referred to as Empiricists claimed, both traditions asserting that, on their respective metaphysical-come-epistemological views, humankind can know and have assurance that the Judeo-Christian God or some other such being exists. That is the specific knowledge claim Kant undertook his Critical project to undercut. To be sure, he never straightforwardly denied the existence of that God. Indeed, his goal was to make room for having faith in such a being's existence, and he went so far as to formulate a unique proof for its existence, an argument resting on the view that were there to be just ends for finite free rational beings, it would have to be meted out by an omniscient, just-in-itself being as mortals leave life. He argued that the Judeo-Christian conception of God met that condition and, on that basis, is to be deemed morally worthy of one's faith in its existence. In following Kant down this path, one must ask whether the sectarian risk of such belief is worth the risk. One would, to be sure, like to believe that justice will be served at some point, but, frankly, all the direct

20. We humans are accustomed to thinking in terms of things with properties or qualities. That is how the world appears to us, or to be more careful, how we constitute it. Doing so is not so much wrong or incorrect as a matter of fact, perhaps a function of our own makeup.

21. Pyrrho is reported to have said, "The things themselves are equally indifferent, and unstable, and indeterminate, and therefore neither our senses nor our opinions are either true or false. For this reason, then we must not trust them, but be without opinions, and without bias, and without wavering, saying of every single thing that it no more is than is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not." (Eusebius of Caesaria, *Praeparatio Evangelica*) The views of many of the ancient Greek philosophers come down to us as quotes in other persons' texts. This is true of Pyrrho's views.

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experiential evidence suggests otherwise. Can one take up the Sisyphean task in the face of such discouraging evidence? I, for one, see no reason why not. Doing so is a matter of belief and resolve: Belief in the potential of free rationality and resolve to actualize its potential. Humankind is a project in process, both terms, "free" and "rational," pointing to essential aspects of its being/becoming.

Return with me to that moment when each of us finds ourselves in the midst of what-there-is, a moment each of us experiences time and again whenever we awake from a profound sleep, find ourselves in strange, never-before-encountered circumstances, or are caught off guard by something unanticipated. If the circumstances are social, where one simply does not know the protocols, one just feels lost, not at home, Heidegger would say, and we find ourselves groping to settle ourselves and begin to find our way. This is how it must have been for our earliest progenitors or, though perhaps to a lesser degree, the newborn. Just as the newborn is challenged to get its bearings in its environment, its home turf as it were, so must protohumans have felt as they first rose to walk on two legs, raising their gaze to the distance and using their hands to explore and steady themselves in their new world. As those early recorders of the wonders felt in their explorations of the territories bounded by the Ionian, Mediterranean, and Aegean Seas began to impose linguistic structure on their discoveries and speculations, they increasingly found themselves weighing their levels of certainty regarding various claims differently. Thus, in Socrates/Plato's and Aristotle's writings, one finds them parsing levels of assent one may properly assign to claims regarding what-is-there. The terms they settle on constitute an epistemic hierarchy that philosophers have historically worked with and revised, to wit: *doxa* (opinion), *technê* or *praxis* (ability to perform tasks and make things), *espistêmê* (systematic experiential [scientific] knowledge), *noesis* (intellectual apprehension of a domain of investigation), *sophia* or *phronesis* (wisdom, moral and comprehensive insight), and *sophrosyne* (excellence of character).

When Kant writes of limiting the domain of knowledge to make room for faith, the two terms from that hierarchy he is working with are *doxa*, from which the German *Glaube* and the English "belief," "faith," and "dogma" derive, and *epistêmê,* from which the German *Erkenntnisse* and its English equivalents, "cognition" or "scientific knowledge" derive. His strategy for denying knowledge so as to make room for faith is to provide an account of cognition that effectively limits its scope to what one can directly and immediately experience. The core of his strategy for doing so begins with reflection on one of Leibniz's claims, namely, relations cannot affect sensibility,[22] a claim that goes to the heart of Leibniz's and, ultimately, Kant's more detailed critique of empiricism in its final version in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The problem that arose for Kant as he reflected on Leibniz's assertion is one that has challenged philosophers since Aristotle. The challenge arises from our experience of the what-is-there as multi-propertied objects, colored, smelly, tactile, light or heavy, small or large, silent or noisy things, all spatiotemporally related to one another. Those who thought about such issues arrived at two solutions to the questions they faced. Aristotle, among the first to articulate a position, hypothesized that among our senses, some provide data or information regarding a single quality

22. I have no reference for Kant's having begun with such a reflection but infer it from the development of his epistemology from 1767 on.

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of things: smell, the nose, for instance, providing awareness of odors; hearing, the ears, sound; while others, touch, the hands particularly, but the entire body, tactility, tangibility, and proximity; vision, the eyes, color, shape and distance; and taste and texture, the mouth. Inasmuch as some of the information the five senses provide is unique, the eyes color and the ears sound, and the nose odor, for instance, and thus cannot be verified by the other senses, while the eyes, mouth, and soma provide information that overlaps with other senses, spatial organization, for instance, our sense of what-is-there is of multi-propertied spatiotemporal objects in which properties appear together so as to be presented as integrated things.

Aristotle's solution to the question of why we experience a world of multi-propertied objects rather than one of free-floating properties was to add to the five physical senses a sixth, mental sense, the *sensus communis*, the sense through which the separately sensed properties are integrated as objects. His is a theory of the mind as active. By way of contrast, David Hume proposed a theory of the mind as a space in which the information from the separate senses entering the mind in temporal proximity with one another associated themselves, yielding a sense of a world of objects with multiple properties. Both solutions are ingenious; both are inadequate. Both fall prey to Leibniz's assertion that "Only substances, not relations, can affect sensibility," "affection"[23] being the hypothesized interaction between what-is-there and what it is that is apprehending it, what one comes to refer to as the self. Apprehender and apprehended arise simultaneously. But if relations, so important to our sense and image of what is there, cannot affect sensibility, how comes what-there-is to exhibit them in our representation of what-is-there and our sharing it with others? Kant attributes this property to the power of the mind to create,[24] or impose the relationality of the apprehended world to imagination, *Einbildungskraft*, an inner power of making images, to translate the term literally. The fundamental relationships imagination imposes on the material rendered by affection present themselves as in time and space. As we apprehend what-is-there, it is present as spatial and temporal, the spatial being temporally organized as we take it up, that is, turn attention to it. Kant's account of an awareness that includes an external, independently existing world, inherently spatial, in which one finds (a) oneself bodily present, (b) a world seemingly independent of it, and (c) a temporally organized interiority with its sense of privacy and direct access, all come together in this doctrine of inner and outer sense and their unification in the latter.[25]

Having in the last paragraph stolen a quick march in T. J. Jackson's manner, I proceed to teasing out some of the more important consequences of Kant's version of the active, esemplasticising mind. Our apprehension of what-is-there as spatiotemporal is for Kant the foundation of another form/aspect of unification to which we subject it, namely conceptualization, concepts in his view being functions of unification performed as acts of judgment. Among the most critical judgments we make are those regarding a given spatiotemporally

23. Kant introduces this term at A68/B93, writing "All intuitions, as sensible, rest on affections [*Affektionen*]," which we infer from our passivity in apprehending them. Inasmuch as such affection occurs out of the domain of direct awareness, and because we who apprehend are passive in our receptive awareness to it, it stands at the boundary or limit of our direct awareness, an assumption necessary to the account.

24. Sammuel Taylor Coleridge did the uptake on Kant's idea and coined the term "esemplastic" to capture the idea of the unification that occurs in poetic imagination.

25. This one-sentence account of how one finds oneself to exist in the midst of being is as quick and dirty, as lacking in detail that I believe one can supply, as is conceivable. To attempt a richer account of so finding oneself would require a separate essay that I cannot include here.

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apprehended slice of what-is-there constitutes an instance of, for instance, an object, a property, a cause, or a substance, all (but not all of the) traditional metaphysical concepts. Kant formulates an account of the reference and proper, verifiable application of these concepts in terms of how one can grasp sequences of the presentationally given, primarily but not exclusively relative to how one **can** or **cannot** apprehend them. Here are some examples:

- Cause and Effect: One properly regards two states, conditions, or objects as causally related only when one state invariably follows another. To use a childhood myth as an example, "frogs cause warts," whose meaning is that invariably when one unprotectedly handles frogs, one will develop warts, normally on the parts of the body the frog has touched. What is involved here is the repeated experience of frog handling followed by wart sprouting, a sequence of apprehensions in which wart spouting follows (temporally) on frog handling. Having accepted the belief about frogs and warts, should the temporal sequence not occur, one begins looking for reasons why, e.g., the frog handler placed a barrier, e.g., a glove, between her hands and the frog.
- Substance/Accident (Object/Property): In spatiotemporal apprehension, the former, substance/object, remains while the latter (accident/property) can change without affecting the basic nature and existence of the former. A white shirt can be dyed blue, such that though its color changes, the shirt remains. In broader perspective, the cuboidal block of Carrara marble can become Michelangelo's *Pieta*, the marble remaining while the form and quantity of substance change. Substance perdures through time, while its accidental properties change. For traditional metaphysics, what substance may ultimately be has remained a disputed question.
- Community (Organism/Organ): An organism is a whole consisting of mutually interdependent parts. Each may be taken or regarded on its own, except that as the organism comprises its parts and maintains an equilibrium of relations among them, it, the organism, any mammal for instance, as such lives. In the case of vital organs, if one fails, the organism fails. The mutual dependence of the parts it comprises, a matter that is spatiotemporally determinable, is of the essence of the time determination of its elements.

One readily sees from the foregoing the sense in which Kant argues that concepts are functions of unity relative to the spatiotemporal matrix one apprehends. The functions of unity—Kant identifies twelve—are the root of our sense of a comprehensible world in which one is able to make verifiable and falsifiable judgments, that is, do science, but, more fundamentally, live a personal life with others.[26]

26. Kant's identification of the specific twelve categories of the understanding is one of the more disputed features of his critical epistemology as laid out in the two versions of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Prolegomena*. I make no pretense or effort to defend either his identification or argument

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One conclusion Kant draws from his presentation of how the mind's activity presents and conceptualizes the content of what-is-there is that, in fact, although we can have an intersubjectively shared and communicable sense of what-is-there, we are not justified in asserting we know what-is-there as it is in-itself. As stated, his view is too strong; however, whether that fact matters is unclear. To defend this claim, one must explore Kant's view from two directions, the presentational and the conceptual. To begin, one must be clear that to avoid begging the question, one must argue from within the context Kant has established. Assume, therefore, that as presented to consciousness, what-is-there is, as Kant asserts, spatiotemporal; spatial when one regards the content as external to and existing independently of the core, apprehending knowing subject. Now such content could possibly be spatial, but, given Kant's view, one cannot justifiably assert its being so as verifiable fact. Furthermore, one cannot know that the geometry of the space is the same as that of space as directly and immediately apprehended. But there is a further consideration, namely, the space of experience writ whole is continuous with an infinitely extensible horizon. This quality of space as experienced is one of the conclusions to be drawn from Kant's 1769 essay, *On the Regions of Space*, where he notes that our spatial awareness does not permit of any but arbitrary, partial demarcations, a quality that, along with the essays' more noted finding that enantiomorphs occur in the space of our apprehension, resulting in his conclusion that human experiential space is a global three dimensional Euclidean space.[27] Two properties distinguish humanly apprehended space: First, it is unlimitedly extensible, that is, always has a horizon one can never reach, permitting, as it were, possible unlimited experiencibility. Second, as humans experience it, it is a product of continuous synthesis into a whole. To fully grasp this latter, we must turn to Kant's account of temporality. Wherever one stands in one's awareness of the world, one is aware of an actual past, a momentary but perduring present, and a possible future, all manifesting spatiality. Our experience is spatiotemporally continuous, a fact Kant attributes to the transcendental unity of apperception, that is, our inherent capacity as apprehenders and carriers forward of a world we ourselves synthesize as a spatiotemporally unified whole. This unity of spatiotemporal experience carried forward through space and time cannot be attributed to whatever might affect us, cannot, as it were, be imposed from without, but must have its source in one actively apprehending consciousness.

The final sentence of the foregoing paragraph would seem to end in solipsism. It could, of course, but not necessarily so. One feature of our awareness is the encounter with others who, as with ourselves, apprehend a spatiotemporal world in which they encounter us. They are ours and we their others. We have, over time, developed means of communication, pointing, hand signals, and language. To each of us, we occupy a

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in support of it here because I do not believe doing so is necessary. The heart of *my* argument is to point out and defend, as I do above, his general strategy with respect to the most important of them. In fact, as I shall proceed to argue, other aspects of his view in this regard are more salient to my concluding points.

27. The way Kant arrived at his account of the role of space in our apprehension of space and spatiality has been much debated in the scholarship, most particularly his conclusion that it is Euclidean, primarily because non-Euclidean geometries had not been fully explored in his time. But he was aware of attempts to show that strictly logical, non-constructionist attempts to develop other geometries did not lead to contradictions, as well as of Leonard Euler's construction of Euclid's *Elements* on the surface of a sphere. In the end, Kant's conviction that the construction of Euclid's *Elements*, and only Euclid's *Elements*, in humanly apprehended global space convinced him of its truth.

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common space that just happens to be filled with content we can indicate by ostension, that is, by some form of displaying, pointing to, or definition.[28] Although each of us may dwell in a personal spatiotemporal sphere, that sphere is such that, occupied as it is by others we recognize and acknowledge to be of our kind, we only very rarely, if ever, feel as if we are incapable or debarred from reaching out to be with others.[29] Indeed, to put the foregoing point positively, the all-too-obvious fact of our lives is that we exist with others, others who place continual demands on us, practical and moral.

We live in a spatiotemporal world that initially comes at us will I, nil I, but also a world we can conceptualize, order, and organize, in which we can and do develop well-founded expectations. That everything of which we are or can be aware converges on—or must be taken up, attended to—a synthesizing and unifying consciousness, for it *is* the object or correlate of that consciousness, and that content is necessarily subject not just to seriatim synthesis, but also to judgment and conceptualization. All consciousness is self-consciousness, which is to say, one is not simply aware; at every given instant, one can either implicitly or explicitly stand back, to speak metaphorically, and be aware that one is, in fact, aware.[30] As all matters of intuition come before consciousness as spatiotemporally unified, consciousness is in a position to examine it for patterns by which it can be organized, or to use Kant's term, judged,[31] and this it can do in accord with those functions of unity Kant denominates the pure categories of understanding. Hence apprehending that direct contact with frogs causes warts, a function of experimenting with frog handling and wart sprouting, provides justification for the claim "frogs cause warts," the invariability of wart sprouting following upon frog handling leading ultimately to the imposition of the pure function of unification, "cause." Each of the pure concepts of the understanding can similarly be cashed out in terms of the invariable spatiotemporal presentations that come before consciousness. They are the very foundation of the orderly shared world in which we are able to have lives.[32]

All of the foregoing can be fleshed out in minute detail, but I believe it sufficiently allows us to move on to the upshot of the position for which I am arguing, a position that places humankind's moral development at the heart of what humankind ought to be up to in this world. Whether what-is-there be spatiotemporal or not, whether it spatiotemporally conforms with the one in which the content of perception presents itself to consciousness, or whether the spatiotemporality in which what-is-there others apprehend it, is of little interest to us because we know, unless we pretend to a self-defeating solipsism, that we communicate and

28. This is an older, more formal use of "ostension" than the one currently in use.
29. I've never come across a defense of solipsism that is convincing. Why argue for one if you believe solipsism to be true?
30. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, one of Kant's aspiring successors, made much of this point, reputedly bidding those attending his lectures as follows: "Gentlemen, think the I!" "Gentlemen, think the I that thinks the I." and so on ad infinitum and ad nauseum."
31. For Kant, the capacity for judging is inherent to consciousness and, in its most important and fundamental form, is the very foundation of knowing or cognition, that is, the basis on which the cognitive agent has the ability to render claims that are intersubjectively communicable and subject to verification by similarly constituted cognitive agents. At one point, Kant comments that the capacity for judgment is irreducible, such that those who lack it are deemed stupid, to use the English translation of his descriptor. One who is incapable of determining that "a" is an instance of "z," where knowledge is concerned, is not able to play the knowledge game.
32. This is an argument against Cartesian skepticism—the evil deceiver—of Meditation I and every form of solipsism. One cannot have a life in such worlds, the first because it affords no predictability whatsoever, and the other because it flies in the face of direct and immediate experience.

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share a world with others. The train has left that station. In encountering that first other, be it It or Thou, the world has, in Sartre's phrase, flowed away from us. It has become shared.

One can justifiably say that almost every German philosopher who came after Kant for the next fifty years either argued in favor of Kant's views or modified, extended, or used them as a steppingstone to the development of their own vision. One exception was Gottlob Ernst Schulze, whose *Aenesidemus* was a skeptical attack on Kant's assertion that his view permitted an independently existing world despite his further claim that we cannot know it as it is in-itself. Schulze made that claim in the mode of traditional Greek Academic Skepticism, which is to say, he asserted Kant's claim was categorical. In turn, Kant claimed Schulze was mistaken, and I am inclined to follow him in that view. On the other hand, I argue that Kant, himself, was too heavy-handed in asserting that his view entails we do not know the thing in-itself, what I have called "what-is-there," as it is in-itself. My view is that of the Pyrrhonian skeptic, namely, that we cannot know *whether* we might know it as it is in-itself. We may, but I doubt it, and one cannot adduce evidence that we do precisely because we cannot see beyond the spatiotemporal horizon of our apprehension of what-is-there. Our utterly necessary spatiotemporal unification of what lies before us when we first and subsequently apprehend what-is-there is the entirety of what, cognitively, we have to work with. We simply cannot get beyond ourselves or stand on some horizon boundary line to look in both directions to compare what we directly and immediately apprehend and an independently existing reality. We exist within our spatiotemporal horizon, and that is sufficient.

Our horizons are replete with content, which is to say our opportunities to explore what-is-there are endless, particularly inasmuch as the space and time of our spatiotemporal horizon are, of necessity, infinitely extensible and contractible, affording us a domain whose limits are always just beyond our reach. They are as asymptotes, such that we can ever more nearly approach the limits but never actually reach them, something we feel urged, even compelled to do precisely because we seek wholeness and completion. That urge motivates both science and religion; science because it is the means by which we systematically explore what-is-there in an intersubjectively communicable, systematic, and verifiable manner, and religion because its objects are ultimate, first and final causes or reasons, both natural and moral.[33] One conducts scientific investigation, investigation using schematized pure concepts a priori of the understanding, always and exclusively within the spatiotemporal horizon of what-is-there. But one can free those same concepts from their spatiotemporal constraints and use them speculatively to transcend those bounds. Such use abandons the criteria for intersubjective verifiability and communicability, and ends up having presumptive meaning, though they be in John Duns Scotus's term, *flatus vocis*—empty words, or as we might say, hot air.[34]

"I have had to abandon knowledge in order to make room for faith." Thus Kant. The knowledge he argues we have to give up is cognitive knowledge of anything that might conceivably lie beyond the spatiotemporal

33. In this, one is reminded of Aristotle's statement in the first sentence of *Metaphysics*, "All men desire to know," an inextinguishable desire.
34. Scotus does not use this term in the current context, but rather in reference to terms regarded as universals. Nonetheless, I regard the term as particularly appropriate here.

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horizon. The simple reason is that beyond that horizon, we lack the conditions for applying our pure concepts of the understanding to whatever might be the subject matter we seek to know and discuss. On the one hand, we cannot avoid attempting so to transcend the horizon, but on the other, we must constrain ourselves. When Kant invokes the terms "knowledge" and "faith," belief, he is taking up a set of distinctions formulated by Socrates/Plato and examined in minute detail by the Western philosophical tradition. That set of distinctions is as I have previously laid it out: *doxa* ([mere] opinion, or belief, or faith (in the current instance); *technê* (practical knowledge or the ability to perform a task), *epistêmê* (knowledge, science or scientific knowledge); *noesis* (overall comprehension); *sophia* ([moral] wisdom). In the sentence with which this paragraph begins, Kant uses the term "knowledge" in the sense of *epistêmê*, scientific or criteriologically verifiable knowledge, and the term *doxa* in the sense of mere belief or faith, and the subject matter to which he is referring is that whose very nature forces us to transcend our spatiotemporal horizon, the ultimate cause and end of what-is-there. The raison d'etre of the Critical enterprise, the Critique of Pure Reason in particular, was to place science, criteriological exploration of the spatiotemporal horizon, on a firm foundation but render all discourse of whatever might lie beyond that horizon *flatus vocis*, matters of belief and faith.

For the Western philosophical tradition, the Socratic/Platonic set of epistemic distinctions has served as a guide to just how adamantly one may hold a set of views, particularly those falling in the *doxa-epistêmê* range, such that matters of mere belief are not to be regarded as firm foundations for choice-making and action, while matters of cognition or scientific knowledge do provide such foundations. The profound irony of the human condition is that persons seem far more likely to cling resolutely to their beliefs and give up or at least doubt, criteriologically verified knowledge. One hesitates to say so, but belief is easier, and this is especially true when it concerns ultimate matters. The fact is, science and its foundations, mathematics, are difficult to master and require a certain dedication and application to approach and enter into. But, in fact, they are no less difficult and require no less dedication than the scholarship required to do theology or any serious humanistic study. One difference is that one is born into a culture that, at its heart, normally includes a set of cultural references and beliefs that one imbibes with mother's milk. One is rarely inculcated from the outset with the axioms of logic, the foundations of mathematics, or the proper application of, for instance, the concept of cause. In this domain, one's normal instruction concerns how properly to perform a particular set of tasks, sometimes even fairly complex ones, that is, to operate at the level of *technê*, the discovery of whose steps is as much a matter of repetition as exploration and discovery of causal sequences. Advancing to that level, the level of science, requires commitment to a distinct and new mindset. Compare that with the cultural norm for religious or spiritual education. First, one is taken to church, synagogue, or mosque where one hears espoused a particular version of what is often a more general set of doctrines by which a given faith is defined. Those doctrines constitute for the individual being introduced to the culture a *doxa*, a set of beliefs to be accepted as *ipsissima verba*, nothing more, nothing less. They constitute the matter of a faith and are expected, if one is to be a proper member of a cultural community, to be accepted as such. Even within a broad community of faith, Judaism, Islam, or Christianity, versions of the faith differ significantly

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and expectations that one will truly study and otherwise examine a given version of the faith are low and rarely enforced strictly. Yet one is expected to hold fast to the faith, to defend it ardently, often violently, as human history records. On what basis and to what end? Well, the issue(s) are, one is led to believe, of ultimate concern, as Paul Tillich tells us. They concern our immortal soul, which, to be sure, stands just beyond the infinitesimal horizon of the spatiotemporal horizon as Yahweh, God, and Allah stand just beyond its infinite horizon.

Given the foregoing, how are we to relate to matters of faith? What are the epistemic and moral limits of our right to act on them? For my part, given the way they function in our cultures, given the way in which persons normally acquire them, our moral right to act on them in such a way as to affect the lives of others, especially those who hold different beliefs, negatively, that is, do them harm or constrain their right to free choice and expression, lacks justification. They provide the least possible justification for harming others, much to the contrary of common practice. Action is justified by knowledge, by criteriologically verifiable facts gathered in the course of systematic exploration of what-is-there. So why make room for faith?

Faith transports human consciousness to matters, questions, of ultimate concern to us inasmuch as humankind has been thrown into or abandoned amidst what-is-there so beautifully illustrated by Marc Chagall's triptych, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* or, as Kant expressed the yearning, our concern with God, the Soul, and Immortality. These concerns haunt and drive us, arising from the very elements that constitute the horizon within which we conduct our lives. At the very best, we find ourselves in a domain that, if we apply ourselves, we can manage with mathematical analysis and criteriologically founded and applicable concepts. These are sufficient for personal *and* communal life, for intersubjectivity and caring for oneself and others. Some argue that the moral life requires something additional: enforcement, rewards, divinity. Here, again, I stand with Kant's deontology, his view that an act's moral praiseworthiness, neutrality, or blameworthiness is a function of what motivates an act. Moral merit and demerit are obliterated by being motivated by reward and punishment, mere self-interest, or the attempt to achieve some end, e.g., the greatest possible happiness. Attainment of such ends external to properly moral acts is similar to attaining Aristotelian happiness, eudaimonia, by indirection and side effect of a life well lived rather than a goal directly to be pursued.

The sole proper motive of moral choice and action can only be relative to the other regarded as Thou. We do so only by respecting the Thou for what it is in itself, whether it be an other we apprehend as possessing free rationality, as we think of ourselves as enjoying, or an animate or inanimate other with inherent potential, properties, or qualities that warrant actualization. Respect,[35] self-abnegating care, is the foundation and key to the moral life. Such care for the other midwifes its full actualization, which is to say, denies one the right to its co-option, allowing it to emerge and flourish. Engaging in such activity prohibits arrogating

35. Kant defines "respect," *Achtung*, as a moral feeling by virtue that thwarts our self-love. The thwarting of self-love is the key here.

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whatever it may be to one's self-willed needs. The most egregious acts of arrogation concern our relationships to other persons. All acts of co-option converge on and affect other persons.

Among his handwritten notes, in one of his attempts to figure out what it means to be human in the moral sense, Kant heuristically draws the following contrast: God[36] is to be conceived as a being that has only rights, whereas humankind has rights and obligations. In our interactions with other persons, rights and obligations are complementary. Each ultimately enjoys the same fundamental rights as the other, and each bears the same fundamental obligations to the other. The most fundamental of those obligations is not to interfere with the other's self-actualization and also to do all one can to promote it. Our shared goal is to create a kingdom of ends in themselves, in which the greatest freedom compatible with the greatest possible harmony comes to prevail. Such a domain requires not only that we respect other persons but also the bounty we find among what-is-there. We are to be faithful stewards of the bounty within our horizon.

The faiths humans hold are primarily matters of cultural heritage. The Abrahamic faiths do have a single root: The Jewish people's desert existence and their encounters with the voices and calls there, committed to writing; Christianity co-opted those writings, added its own, primarily to provide them with new meanings; Islam arose from its co-option of Judaism's monotheism and prophetic tradition. Each names the divine differently. Each claims different commands from its named divinity. Christianity and Islam seek to convert others to their conception of the divine and their commands for humankind. Throughout history, each has been politicized, disagreements arising and being fought to the death, both internal and external to a given faith. All of these differences are and can only be matters of belief, and thus lack intersubjective, criteriological verification and communicability. The obduracy of faith can be a function only of the fact that it can never be subject to the normal criteria for verifiability. One thus concludes that not only can one hold to a given belief, no matter what consideration might be brought against it, but one must do so. That is the essence of the true believer.

To the contrary, however, one must, because of its lack of verifiability, hold that belief as gently and carefully as one would a newborn or a chick. If persons would hold and state beliefs solely as matters of belief or faith, if only they would say, "This is what I believe, even adamantly, but there is room for doubt, revision, and abandonment," far less reason and room for conflict would arise. Although history records myriad instances of committed believers resorting to violence, even unto death, it gives us no instance of a ravening pack of skeptics initiating acts of violence. Such are much more likely to be its objects at the hands of believers. A world of believers cannot but be violent; it cannot be a morally praiseworthy domain, a world in which humankind's moral destiny can come to fruition. That is possible only in a world in which each and every person, each and every object, is afforded the dignity and respect appropriate to its kind. What-is-there is discovered, uncovered, by us, and is there and must be regarded as the domain in which we must and can make and have lives. Having a life implies that the life we have is a matter with regard to which we have rights

36. In this and any number of other instances, Kant uses the term "God" heuristically, as a device for reflection, not assertorically.

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and obligations to choose, rights and obligations deriving from and imposed on us as free rational beings. Rights permit having a life; obligations impose limitations on choice. Our encounter with such others compels limitations on choice precisely because they enjoy equal and equivalent rights and obligations. As one encounters what-is-there, one also discovers what-there-is, which is to say, comes to see differentiations in what must present itself as undifferentiated, if not chaotic, that allows one to produce "a world of made," to use e. e. cummings's phrase. In doing so, one comes to live in a shared world of objects and a world with whom one shares those objects. This is the domain in which one becomes human, the domain in which rights and obligations arise.

Regarding objects, obligations arise to the extent that they serve the needs not only of a spatiotemporally local community, but also a rationally anticipated free rational community through which humankind will become fully actualized. The world of objects, of resources fit to support humankind's full actualization is, in Hume's phrase, a domain of limited scarcity, a domain sufficient to meet the requirement of free rational beings over time if used prudently, but one exhaustible by indiscriminate use, i.e., appropriation for such wars of conquest as arise from self-serving greed or attempts arising from dogmatic faith to co-opt lives.

Room does exist for a particular kind of faith, namely that free rationality has the potential for full actualization, not so much in the individual but in the long, drawn-out retrograde advance of knowledge, increasing moral awareness and commitment to creation of the kingdom of ends in themselves. A very few moral precepts flow from this commitment: Respect and otherwise value without exception free rationality in yourself and every person. Act only in accord with such motives as conduce to free rationality's preservation and actualization. The foregoing are sufficient for progressing toward the creation of the kingdom of ends in themselves. However, that one ought only use what-is-there/what-there-is so as to support full actualization of free rationality reminds us that doing so is a necessary condition of creating the kingdom of ends in themselves, the full actualization of free rationality.

As a final safeguard of free rationality's full actualization, let us constantly remind ourselves that, regarding matters one cannot verifiably affirm or assert, one must act on one's beliefs hesitantly and never with the intent of belittling or otherwise harming the other.

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