

And is not this universally true? If a man does something for the sake of something else, he wills not that which he does, but that for the sake of which he does it.

-- Socrates¹

This is my life's work, and that began with Ann-Ellen Marion and Dan White. Each in their own ways has shown me strength, courage, kindness and passion, the tensions of which ground my every conception. I often remember the fireflies and elderberries and evening crickets, the dogs and the trips to the north country. There, we witnessed otters sledding the steep snowy bank of a deep winter river, each after the others single file on slick brown bellies laid out in wet whiskered dives into the icy water only to gallop back and do it again. This text is testimony to that moment. Were I an otter, I would do it all again. Most dearly missed is Scott Jeavons: sunsets on the lake and skipping school. Good-bye.

.Preface:

Men do not know how what is at variance agrees with itself. It is an attunement of opposite tensions, like that of the bow and the lyre.

-- Heraclitus²

Therefore the sage is guided by what he feels and not by what he sees.

-- Lao tzu³

When the natural world changes, when objects like the ocean and the ozone change, we change. When the weather changes the science changes, never the other way around. Our stories are simply a series of adjustments over long periods of time taken in terms of the always current situation. Much of our situation has always been hidden from us. Many of our old adjustments no longer apply. The instrument for evaluation however hasn't. This is the conscience.

In wondering about the right thing to do, one has three options. There is the consultation of religion. There is the consultation of others. There is the consultation of one's self. As religion is what others say that god has said, the first two amount to the same thing. As every one must consult himself in giving consultation to others, the second two amount to the same thing. In consulting with one's self, there is the conscience.

A man is different from a rock. A man has a metabolic potential above that of things at rest in the world. A man may use his metabolic potentials to move away from rest and into turbulence, into the unknown. A man may discover. He may become otherwise. He may open to the unknown and order it in himself through his experience.

He is synthetic. A rock is not. This is man's freedom, to become himself through the exercise of himself. A rock is not free, and insofar as a man does not exercise this freedom, he may as well be a rock.

You see as we grow, we do not simply embody regularities around us, but we have the capacity to take in disorder and order it along the way. A rock will heat and cool, becoming what it is because of its environment. A rock cannot open to some things and close to others. Persons have a limited capacity to open to the world, or to close off from it. In being open to the world, internalizing disorder and ordering it in understanding, we create structures of thought. We build systems of explanation. We understand. This is the work behind being able to answer any question that begins with "Why...?" We offer this fruit to the following generations. This is wisdom. This is a product of conscience.

To discover effectively we take up and embody what might be called "transcendental logics" or "programs of inquiry." Some might call them "search routines," methodological tools for finding things. And by this I do not mean a toothpick or even a shovel, or a notebook and an ear to the ground. I mean a life which grows into the world as it is revealed, a life active in the discovery of the world. This life becomes the catalyst of the world that builds bridges from dust. The goal of this life is that one may say, at the height of his development, "I *am* a method of discovery."

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.Introduction: Why conscience, why now?

My young friend, let us look within, let us set aside all personal prejudices and see whither our inclinations lead us.

– J.J. Rousseau⁴

It's a long road from law to justice.

– Dar Williams⁵

1) Picture yourself, chained in a cave...

Socrates' life of conscience is history's most famous, and it is his example, above all others, which lights our way from the start of our story. Socrates provides the best example of the conscientious life, not only for what he did, but because he talked about it. Socrates felt that people are essentially good. He argued that a person always does what he thinks is the right thing to do, and that when he does the wrong thing, he is simply the victim of bad information. He understood that people do what they do on the basis of what they understand. So, Socrates spent his time asking why people did what they did, so that they could understand to do better the next time. This is a fitting industry for so famous a teacher. After all, the object of learning is not simply the correction of incorrect information. It is the correction of incorrect action.

Socrates was especially concerned with what the leaders of society thought were the right things to do. He understood that less powerful people are influenced to do as their leadership does. A good leader does the right things, and influences others to do similarly. A bad leader does the wrong things, and influences others to do similarly. So, bad leadership is especially damaging to society. This means that it is especially

important that a leader has correct information. Otherwise, he may do the wrong thing; and, shown such an example, lots of other people will do the wrong thing, too.

Socrates pointed out that anyone can be a good leader. Socrates himself was a good leader. What made him so good? He understood that anyone could lead by doing the right thing at the right time provided a little wisdom and the opportunity to use it. His mission in life was to lead people to gain the wisdom necessary to pursue these opportunities. He inspired people to do what is right by getting them to think about what is right so that they would be ready to do the right thing when the chance presented itself. That's what this book is about, too.

The following text is primarily a work of philosophy. Philosophy is the “love of ideas,” especially new ideas. It is in new ideas that information about what is right comes to light. Without new information, new ideas, new opportunities to do the right thing wouldn't even show up. We'd just keep doing as we always did, and never ask whether or not it was right. Doing the same thing over and over, there would be no need for conscience. Neither are leadership or philosophy necessary in a clockwork world of habit wherein no one asks any questions or learns anything new. But, the world is not a clock, there are lots of questions in need of answers and a lot more to learn; so, philosophy, conscience, and leadership are good things, after all.

Conscience and leadership are about doing the right thing. Doing the right thing involves new ideas. Simply having a lot of information, no matter how special or

specialized, isn't enough when it comes to doing the right thing. This is why Socrates gave the people who claimed to have a lot of special information such a hard time. They were often the worst leaders. Though many even claimed to be "philosophers," or men of conscience, without being open to new ideas, they were neither. Think about it.

It doesn't matter what someone knows if he doesn't get the right thing done by it. That is the problem with most people who claim to be "philosophers" and with everyone else who claims to lead by way of some special knowledge and not by his conscience. Socrates was a philosopher,⁶ and a teacher of philosophy, so he spent a lot of time confronting others who claimed also to teach philosophy but who led people, not to follow their consciences, but with the promise of special knowledge. He thought they were doing the wrong thing. He was right.

The people he had the most trouble with were those who treated wisdom as if it were some sort of commodity, like gold or wine, to be bought and sold. They would claim to have special information, so they would hoard it, and protect it, as if it were an object that could be stolen. They would only share their special information in private, where Socrates would practice philosophy in public. They would maintain that what they knew was not suitable for all persons to know, only special persons, people who could afford to pay. Socrates, on the contrary, spoke with anyone and everyone who was interested in philosophy, about doing what is right and what is good. Socrates was a philosopher. These other teachers were known as "sophists."⁷Sophists led other

people around by holding out their “special” knowledge like a carrot. Once people were chasing this carrot around, the sophists acted as if keeping it safe was a full-time job. Meanwhile, they hid a clear view of their carrot behind special language and convoluted argumentation. They claimed that an adequate appreciation of their carrot required a special education. Then, they kept this special education hidden away.

If someone doubted that the sophist knew anything special in the first place, he was simply ignored. If others merely failed to appreciate the value of the sophistical carrot, the sophists simply asserted that they were not educated well enough to know. From those who presumed that their carrot had value, and could afford it, the sophist extracted a large fee for an education in the special identification of carrots. Then, having seen what the sophist’s carrot looks like, and having learned to identify that sort of carrot as that sort of carrot, these people would lead others around in the same ways with their own secret carrots. Whether or not these carrots were real is beside the point; after all, it may be considered the trick of a very special education, indeed, to find a carrot where there is none! It doesn’t keep people from believing in them, from following fantasy carrots to violent ends and even, especially poignantly, to early graves.

Little has changed since Socrates’ time. A carrot is still a carrot, and I am still at a loss as to why it costs so much to know that. The real issue seems to me to be whether or not the carrot is rotten, granted that it exists at all. In any event, we are best off led by our own senses. When it comes to doing the right thing, this sense is

conscience. This book is about identifying the conscience. The rest is up to you.

But, just to make sure there is no mistaking a conscience for a carrot to be bought or stolen, let's follow Socrates' lead a little further. Socrates was a strong critic of the sophists and their methods, and not simply because they charged too much for fantasies about carrots. One of the worst things anyone could ever do, according to Socrates, is to charge for access to information that doesn't lead to right action. Why? Because charging for something makes it appear valuable, even when it is not. Having spent money to gain access to some teacher with "special" information, the student may begin thinking that now he knows something special, too. More importantly, he may begin to think that simply having this information makes him potentially a teacher of others. He may begin to think that he should be paid for access to this information just as he paid for access to the same information. Finally, because this information cost him so much, he may begin to think that others should value what he has to say and do on its basis, whether his special "knowledge" is really valuable or not. In other words, the erstwhile student may mistake himself for a leader, and hold his carrot out for other people to follow, inviting them to make this same mistake, too.

Repeat this process for a few generations. It is no mystery where such a cycle leads: to the sort of nepotism and inbreeding which plagues leadership, and the academy, today. What troubled Socrates most was that it all starts with "philosophy," with sophistical teachers tooting their own horns and elevating only the students who

would polish them.

This may seem like a minor point, but it is not. It is no coincidence that in a society wherein fundamentalism and intolerance are on the rise, this fundamentalism and intolerance is reflected on the highest floors of its institutions of learning. Simply put, the academy is the birthplace of social leadership. Today's leaders of tomorrow's leaders are today's teachers of today's students. If the right things don't get taught, today, the right leadership does not get the right things done, tomorrow. So, the leaders of an increasingly dogmatic society are increasingly educated by dogmatic teachers to lead in increasingly dogmatic terms. This is no mystery.

Socrates knew this. He tried to teach people how to do the right thing. But, he had limited success, and often wondered whether doing the right thing could be taught, after all. He called the knowledge to do the right thing "virtue." Virtues are such things as courage, honesty, temperance, friendliness, etcetera. All of these virtues apply to specific contexts. On Socrates' count, there is one virtue from which all these others are derived. This mother virtue is practical wisdom.

Practical wisdom is knowing to do the right thing at the right time, regardless of the context. Socrates sought to teach this virtue through philosophy. He did not hold class behind closed doors, or write lessons. He did not limit philosophy to one context or another. He did not charge people to see his carrot. He taught philosophy by demonstrating what it is to live a philosophic life, and he did it in the open. He was

wise, and he practiced his wisdom publicly for the benefit of his society. There is nothing mysterious about that.

The condition of the industry of philosophy is a direct indication of the health of the society in which the philosopher practices. It is no coincidence that we live in an increasingly vicious society full of increasingly narrow minded and vicious philosophers. It is no mystery that contemporary philosophers are increasingly champions of dogma and conservatism, whose influences are confined to dry classrooms under artificial light, and whose teachings offer little hope of solution for the deteriorating condition of human life in the natural world, at all. What is a mystery is how anyone could begin to think that such an education could ever make for a good leader, a wise teacher, or a healthy society in the first place.

What is an even greater mystery is that anyone could miss the relationship between the two. The condition of the society in which we live, today, is in large part due to the misdealings of modern leadership who have pursued paths lit through the lenses of illegitimate philosophies. Meanwhile, to the tortured cries of their neighbors, professional philosophers in a position to challenge the bases for these misdeeds have simply closed their shutters to the noise. In the tumult, champions for the torture and indefinite imprisonment of innocent persons take up the cloak of educator long since left empty by the straw-men of philosophy, today, and the cycle begins, anew, one step closer to the end.

Education, formal and informal, provides every person with the understanding of the world that shapes who he or she becomes through a life of action within it. Socrates understood this. And, this process is nowhere more important than in the case of leadership. A society is only as good as its leadership, and its leaders are only as good as their teachers. This is because all people do the right things by recognizing opportunities to do the right things, but it is their teachers who teach them, and their leaders show them, how. It is the goal of a good teacher to empower his students to recognize these opportunities, and the goal of the good leader to empower his fellows to pursue them. This is why philosophy is so important to the healthy society, today. And this is why, through bad leadership, bad teaching, and a loss of philosophy, we are in the state we are in, now. With few able to recognize a bad thing as a bad thing, bad leaders steal the power to pursue what is good only for themselves, and strip the powers of others to do otherwise.

The recent loss of civil liberties, and the rapid rise of the globalizing police state, places special weight on this point. The great strength of a democracy is that it is a nation of leaders, and the demise of philosophy is the surest sign that a democracy is dead.

Socrates understood this. Early in the famous book *The Republic*, in the second chapter, Socrates tells us that the only just society, the only healthy democracy, is that in which each of its citizens is free to be a philosopher. What he means, here, is not that a

few people are well educated and become teachers, while everyone else slaves in factories, and a few elites become wealthy and famous at everyone else's expense. What Socrates means, here, is that a society is only just when everyone is empowered to lead by looking for opportunities to do the right thing at his own expense. Philosophy is not merely a field of study. It is the way of life that gets the right things done.

Socrates demonstrated this way of life. He understood that the value of knowledge isn't what one already knows, but what one will someday do with it. He showed that every opportunity to do the right thing begins by recognizing that the right thing to do isn't necessarily what one already does. And, he showed that, no matter how much one thinks one knows, there is no guarantee that the right thing will get done by it. This is why Socrates had a reputation for being the wisest man in Athens, even though he ran around saying that he didn't know much about anything at all! He was the wisest man in Athens because he knew that, practically speaking, what people typically count as knowledge is most often merely baggage that gets in the way of getting the right thing done. The wisdom to recognize this fact is something truly worth knowing.

This is another reason why Socrates leads the following story of conscience. Writing a book on conscience isn't like giving step by step instructions. There is no recipe for doing the right thing. The right thing to do differs from moment to moment. Often, the right thing to do isn't anything anyone has ever done before. The right thing

to do often involves doing something new and different, because times change, and changing times call for new and different actions. Socrates' example shows us how to do this best. So, it is very important to understand Socrates' motivations and what philosophy is really all about if we are going to gain an adequate understanding of the conscience along the way. Our story begins with Socrates' story. The most famous part of Socrates' story, however, is the end of his story. Now, let's look at how Socrates' story ends.

Socrates was the victim of a most tragic irony. The wisest man in Athens was executed on the basis of bad information.⁸ Athens was undergoing a period of rapid social change. Mismanagement at the highest levels led Athenians into frivolous and unnecessary wars and equally poorly conceived building projects. The wrong people were in charge for political reasons, because of whom they knew and how popular they were with the wealthy and powerful elite. Their corruption resulted in crippling losses, both on the battlefield, and on the financial bottom line.

Socrates was an old man by this time. He had seen Athens, the pride and promise of liberal democracy in the ancient world, bankrupted by closed-mindedness and secrecy. A lot of people were doing the wrong things on the basis of bad information and bad leadership. Needless to say, this gave him a lot to talk about.

Did Athenian leaders learn a lesson from their failures? No. They continued to mislead publicly, and continued to act to retain personal power privately. They did not

act to empower the generations to come with a secure situation. They acted to keep their own situations secure for the moment. They lived for their own wealth and fame, now, at the expense of others, later. The trick for them was making it look like this was the right way to live, so that they could get the rest of Athens to follow suit. The trick was to make it appear as if they had not failed Athens, at all, but that their way of life was Athens' way of life, and that something else had gone wrong. How did they do that? They lied.

The leaders of Athenian society lied so that they could do what they wanted to do, to make themselves rich, rather than correct themselves, and do what would have been right, to step down from power and follow a better leader. One of their stumbling blocks was Socrates and his pesky pursuit of the truth.

Socrates impugned the leadership for misleading Athens. So, instead of being honest about it, like bitter children, they returned the favor. They impugned Socrates for misleading Athens. They could not allow him to keep on at the truth, because that would mean that they would eventually be found out as bad leaders who did the wrong things. So, they told Athens that he was full of bad information. Then, through power and influence, they got Socrates charged for it.

They lied. They made it look as if a life lived in the open for wisdom, like Socrates' life, was a life lived for wealth and fame in private, like their own.

The leaders of Athens told a story that wasn't true. The jury, however, acted as if

the terms of the story were true. Why? Again, I think the leaders told the story the way they did because they wanted to feel as if a life lived for wealth and fame was the right way to live, even though, deep down inside, in their hearts, they knew it wasn't. As for why the jury believed it; well, we will get to that in a moment.

All of this, however, is beside the point; Socrates' life story ended, and it ended badly for everyone concerned.⁹

Once those who had followed the leadership in their prosecution of Socrates' death discovered that they had been duped to live in terms of a story that was false, the once powerful, selfish and wealthy men who had been leaders of Athens were finally relieved of their power and property and either killed or thrown out. By then, however, it was too late; the one true leader of Athens was dead, and the hopes of its golden age faded with his influence. Hopefully, by making all this clear, we can avoid a similar fate.

2) *Breaking the chains...*

Mistake made, lesson learned, right? We are now free from such corrupt leaders who coerce their fellows to serve their own interests by feeding them bad information. Right?

Tragically, no. Look around. Though we live in the "information age," some of these most famous mistakes of powerful men are currently made at an appalling rate. There are a lot of wrong things done on the basis of bad information at the behest of

current leadership.

Moreover, with the speed and force by which the wrong things are being done, there is little time for the reflection on, let alone the pursuit of, opportunities to do otherwise.¹⁰ There is, instead, the constant escalation of the scale of wrong action on the same terms simply repeated over and over again, no matter how incorrect these actions and corresponding information. Thus, bad leadership continues to mislead, and those they lead continue to be misled. Where is philosophy in all of this? Perhaps this stands in for an answer: Were Socrates alive, today, he would be dead by morning.¹¹

Listen to the current leadership; the message is essentially that which Socrates contested at the eventual cost of his life. The message is the incessant repetition of the same information motivating wrong action in the first place. This is that war is peace, that property is liberty, that freedom is subjugation, that there is only one way of life worth living, only one god worth worshiping, only one tradition which tells us the truth about it all, and that tradition is the one represented by current leadership.

The crux of this story, their story, is that any other story is false. The crux of this message is that any other way of life is wrong. The crux of this misinformation is that there is no reconciling with those who are informed differently. Thus, there can be no peace without war, no justice without injustice, no truth without falsity. This is why Socrates was killed; he didn't think so. This also explains why the "philosophers" who were not targeted for execution were not really philosophers at all. They were

sycophants. Sophists.¹² And the story is no different today.

What does this have to do with us? Few of us claim to be philosophers. So what? What are we doing wrong, anyways? What would Socrates have to say about this?

For one thing, Socrates would have pointed out that we are acting like children. We are at least complicit in the ongoing maiming, murdering, and torturing of others who think differently than we do, around the world, simply because the leadership says so, and as fast as we are able. It is as if we are children alive in a fairy tale world where slaying ogres makes us good people. All we have to do is find an ogre and kill it to guarantee ourselves a happy ending. So, we practice. We pretend. We watch movies, read books, join churches and take sides. Then, when leadership points to an ogre, we hunt, kill, torture and maim, no matter where in the world, simply because we are told to do so. And now, the 800-pound ogre in the room is us.

Maybe this is too simple. We all know that there are no such things as ogres.¹³ We are not children, after all. We should know better, so maybe we are even guiltier than that. Maybe we are torturing other people because they refuse to live according to our own way of life, the way of life we have determined to be the best, and that is what makes them ogres and deserving of such treatment? That said, this is not the first time in history people have undertaken such action. We have all seen this pattern before. We have simply failed to learn not to repeat it. After all, it is in the nature of every

historical imperialism to mistake domination for lawful rule. Is this a mistake we wish to continue making? How can we reconcile this past with a future worth living in?

Effectively, we are stuck in a vicious cycle, and the cycle that we are stuck in goes like this. Some first party forces greater change in some second party than that party can tolerate, and the second party responds to this violence with more violence, and through the escalation more people die. Party one blames party two and party two blames party one and so the violence continues without anyone coming to account. There is, after all, no accounting with ogres, especially ogres with guns during war. And tragically, the last persons to accept responsibility are the first persons responsible; the leaders of either side. After all, wars are not begun by persons, but by governments, by leaders. Persons, generally, don't benefit from wars. The best an individual person can typically hope for in war is not to die.

Meanwhile, the wars continue. Leaders keep starting them and people keep dying. So, we wait. We wait for new leaders to tell us different stories, stories about change and hope. And new leaders come. But, the stories do not change. So, we wait some more. And while we wait, more good people murder and die. New leaders come. But, the stories never change. And we know we have been duped. We have made a mistake, a vicious mistake, and we continue to make it. We are caught in a vicious cycle. Leaders lie; we believe. This is our mistake. It is a tragic mistake, and it is a familiar story.

But, our mistakes do not end here. Even though we may see that this is what is going on, that the story we have been sold is a lie, we continue to live within it. We continue to pick and choose, as if *something* in it all is true. So, we continue waiting. And the cycle continues. And nothing is done, but murder and die and wait, thus proving our greatest mistakes are not in the things we do, but in the things we don't do. After all, even armed with correct information, few are willing to do the right thing because of it.

On the other hand, who's to say that killing people, maiming and torturing, isn't the right thing to do? There is a certain prudence to violence, after all. It is easier to split a skull than to change the mind within it. This is true especially when the mind inside the skull getting split isn't thinking about splitting any skulls, first. And this is not the only expedience providing reason for killing other people. Every petty tyrant, corrupt congressman to dirty cop, understands that the only accounts for the propriety of murder come from the only people left alive to give the account, the killers. The real trick is to make certain that no one misses the story that the murdered may have told. Then, alone, the killers can shape history in any way they favor. And, in every case they will hold that killing, maiming, and torturing was the right thing to do.

Unsurprisingly, anticipating the power to shape history through violence, the first thing that a truly bad man and coward - and leader - will do is to make his victim out to be an ogre. After all, no one misses the ogre's story. The dead are essentially unable

to demonstrate that they are otherwise besides lay there and look very ugly. And, as we all know that ogres are ugly, there is at first glance a certain air of truth hovering over the history that killers create.

It has been said that history is written by the winners. It is more accurate to say that history is written by those willing to escalate to crippling violence. Dead people have no interest in history, people without arms and legs have historically had hard times writing about it, and the threat of becoming dead or disabled is a great distraction for those who might otherwise make a difference. Prudence aside, let's see about getting better informed, so that we may make the necessary difference, and change history yet while we still have life in our veins to get it done.

The first step in changing history is learning from it. For instance, the story surrounding Socrates' execution has a lot to teach us about our current situation. For one thing, bad men and leaders of Athens wanted him dead because he told the truth, but they were only successful in getting him killed because they made him out to be an ogre, first. Let's look more closely at how this came to pass.

What did Socrates do to warrant execution, exactly?

The death penalty is usually reserved for murderers, but Socrates didn't kill anyone. He merely led less powerful persons to believe that they had been misled by more powerful persons. He led people to become good leaders on their own and to do the right things regardless of the stories they have been told. He showed everyone that

the most powerful leader is the good person, and the most powerful force the desire for truth. And the truth, in the end, is the greatest threat to leaders such as those who led Athens at that time. Thusly, through philosophy, Socrates indirectly threatened Athenian leadership. His work shed indirect light on their corruption. And, worst of all for those people in power, he was good at it.

Bur what, exactly, did he do?

A lot. Socrates did more than merely challenge a fact here or an action there. He did talk about these little things, like who did what, when, how, and why, but this was only to get to bigger issues. Socrates' genius was to use obvious little things to build up to bigger questions. He understood that it wasn't one thing here or there which made men believe in every little fact and act out every little action. He understood that people only take things to be facts because of the way these little things fit into larger stories and myths, and that they only act on these facts in terms of these myths. People don't kill ogres merely because it is a fact that there is an ogre. This fact, on its own, doesn't really mean anything. People kill ogres because, so the story goes, killing ogres is the right thing to do.

Socrates' strategy was to question, beginning with individual acts and facts, the myths and stories that gave them meaning. What he was ultimately interested in was the meaning of life, and he understood that it is in terms of stories and myths that lives are made meaningful. It is in asking what is the meaning of life that he came to

question the ways that certain selfish leaders of society lived their own lives. It is in this way that he came to question whether or not their lives were meaningful, and what their lives meant for everyone else. Again, this is a fitting role for so famous a teacher.

But again, how exactly did it get him killed?

Powerful men felt threatened that he challenged their power. Socrates, however, was not a very powerful man. He was old, and relatively poor.

Why, then, did they feel their power so threatened?

They were powerful enough, and the stories which lent them power entrenched enough, that one old man with a lot of questions was not a very big threat. But, Socrates did more than ask questions. He asked the right kinds of questions. He asked questions that shed light on the difference between doing the right things and what the leaders of Athens were, in fact, getting done. Moreover, Socrates set an opposite example. He did the right things, without pretending to be a leader. Thusly, his example challenged their power, but only insofar as their power depended on their apparent virtue. He challenged their ways of life, but he did not directly vie for power, himself. He was, in fact as well as in act, really no threat at all.

Accordingly, the official allegations leading to Socrates' execution had nothing to do with him directly threatening anyone's life or property or personal station.¹⁴ One of their official charges was that he failed to respect the gods of Athens; but, even this was obviously false. Socrates was by all familiar accounts respectful of traditional Athenian

religious rites. He did stand out as a deviant in regard to at least one convention, however. He refused to pressure boys to trade sex for education and influence. This fact did not stop his accusers, powerful and influential men, who by the way suffered no similar compunction to abstinence, from framing the further official allegation that Socrates corrupted the youth. And this is where the real trouble arose.

Why?

Though Socrates bore no direct threat, these men *felt* threatened because Socrates compelled them to question themselves. Socrates' example compelled them to look in the mirror. This was not something they were willing to do. If they had actually done so, they would have seen themselves as they were, and as many of the young people with whom Socrates spoke also came to see them: as hypocrites and bad leaders, vicious men and examples of bad information at work doing bad things. Such a realization would have been difficult to reconcile with their ongoing interest in wealth and power, especially as Socrates set an example that bore no such difficulty. So, if Socrates continued to influence the young people of Athens, then eventually they would have been confronted with a true vision of themselves, and their illusion of virtue would end.

This would also have meant an end to their leadership and power, with unpleasant repercussions. A lot of people suffered because of their wrong actions. If their appearance of virtue was destroyed, and their corruption made public, a great

many people would have been very upset. Thus, through the variable perception of the populace, these men must have felt as if Socrates was purposefully threatening their very lives, and not merely questioning the value in the ways that they lived them. So, they responded in kind. They made it look like *he* was the source of corruption, a vicious man and a bad leader. Because of the possible repercussions for Socrates, execution, they purposefully threatened his very life. It must have appeared, from their point of view, only fair.

To these leaders of Athens, their actions likely appeared just. Socrates showed that their apparently right ways of life were actually wrong, so they made his actually right way of life appear wrong. He showed them to be the ogres that they were, so they painted him out as an ogre. It didn't help that he was, by all accounts, not an attractive man. Physically, Socrates was famously very ugly! So, perhaps he resembled an ogre... And, coupled with the fact that the men who wanted him out of the way were powerful, and he not, this got Socrates charged, and convicted. Such was the state of justice in Athens upon the death of Socrates.

There is a tragic symmetry operative in this turn of events. Powerful men with ugly souls striving for an unjust world murdered a powerless man with a beautiful soul as he strove for a just world. But, there is an even more tragic *asymmetry*. Socrates was willing to die for the truth. *They weren't*.

And here is the lasting power of the Socratic example: he demonstrates the

courage to pursue the truth and live by it. He demonstrates the courage of wisdom. One does not become wise hiding away in a comfortable classroom with his nose in someone else's "special" information. One becomes wise by suffering to live for the truth in the full light of day. And, on becoming wise, Socrates was history's greatest leader. It is for this reason, by the light of the Socratic example, that Plato later tried to show, in *The Republic*, that the philosopher is the one and only true King.

And, as this book ends, we will come to see the truth in this, as well. Socrates, in my mind, was history's greatest leader. Though he in fact led no one, Socrates was willing to suffer so that everyone else could benefit by his example, and by the resulting understanding maybe even do the right thing themselves. This is what made him history's greatest leader. And, in the end, this is what got him executed.

In essence, the leaders of Athenian society executed Socrates because he was a good man, willing to suffer for the good of others, willing to do the right things, willing to follow wherever the truth might lead, while they were not. He led by virtue, they by vice. This tragic asymmetry marks the end of Socrates' story. It also marks the end of ours. As this text closes, we will again confront the fact that bad leaders murder good people who have the courage to do the right things given the necessary information. There, we will confront this fact as an aspect of our current situation, rather than one 2500 years past. Until then, we will learn how to acquire the necessary information, and study what is required to do the right things with it. Perhaps in this way, in the face of death, we

can become the leaders that history demands.

But, how?

Again, we may best change history by first learning from it. Socrates famously maintained that the unexamined life is not worth living. Now, I must confess that when presented with so many egregious examples of vicious ignorance as color our world, and especially our leadership, today, I often wish that his formula amounted to “It is OK to kill people who are ignorant, do vicious things and are proud of it.” But, this is not what Socrates meant. What Socrates did mean was that the value in life derives from the capacity to change the way one lives, on purpose, in light of the right information. A life lived without exercising this capacity, without purpose and the power to pursue it, is not worth living. The unexamined life is that of a slave to ignorance, while the examined is free, for self-knowledge is the root of all power.

The value in life is freedom, and by Socrates' account true freedom is of a very special kind. This freedom is only revealed through self-examination, toward self-understanding. It is the freedom of self-determination, the power to become the person one wishes to become, purposefully, in light of all that one knows.

Furthermore, as Socrates demonstrated, it is the philosophic life that in every case maximizes this freedom, so it is, in the end, the philosophic life that is the most worthy of being lived.¹⁵ In fact, following Socrates, the freedom of self-determination, the capacity to determine for one's self one's own ends and actions, had been the prize

held out by traditional Western philosophy at least until it was bled of this inspiration by the scholastics and the dark ages of Christendom. In fact, to this day this promise is all but forgotten, especially amongst professional philosophers littering today's academies, but this is beside the point. Socrates thought that the value in life is the freedom of self-determination, and that self-understanding through self-examination, through the practice of philosophy, is the key to this empowerment. I think that he was right. Thus, it is with this formula, and with the hope for lives worth living in a world worth living in at its heart, that our story of conscience actually begins. So, onward!

3) *Finding a way out...*

Let's start with a twist on a familiar phrase from the American tradition that echoes the Socratic formula. It is self-evident that each of us is equal, and free. Yet, it is also self-evident that each of us is different, and is bound to different things in different ways for different purposes. How are we to reconcile these apparent contradictions? And, what are we to do once we have reconciled these apparent contradictions?

Every one of us lives a life story, even as he is born into a larger story of the world, a "history," already unfolding. Each one of us looks forward to happy endings, and away from the worst. Each of us does so in terms of the story into which he is born, raised, and takes to be true. The greatest stories of history are those of the world's old

religions. The religions of world history set out the highest determinations within which a person's life story is embedded. They make life meaningful. They give persons reasons for doing things. Sometimes these are good things, like turning the other cheek to perceived injury, and treating one's neighbor as if he were one's brother. They also, however, provide reasons for doing bad things, like starting wars, raping and murdering and stealing in the name of king and country, or in the worst cases by the god-given privilege of religion itself.¹⁶ Religious stories, in short, provide reasons for violence. They provide excuses to shape history through violence. Thus, religious stories, especially, are often the sorts of stories which corrupt leaders protect, which persons who benefit from wars of conquest and who have no compunction against rape and murder champion. Religious stories, though they may make a life meaningful by providing reasons for actions, hardly make a life worth living. So, these are especially the sorts of stories that Socrates set out to question.

Religious stories are about such things as god, justice, truth, love, heaven, hell, redemption, forgiveness, etcetera. The treatments of these terms may differ in different religious stories, but all do provide treatments of these highest terms. And, often enough, even stories which hold themselves out to be non-religious provide treatments of this same set of terms, even if it is only to negate them.

This raises a very interesting point. Though the stories within which we each live and find meaning in life may differ in detail, we all live lives in terms of, in fact bound to,

a set of highest terms common to all of these stories and all of our lives. Even without Allah one lives for justice, even without Eros one lives for love, even without Satan one lives for redemption, etcetera. By way of these common terms, within or without different religious traditions, we all share common aspirations, common horizons, common oceans, and common ends. These are the terms common to all that is epic, tragic, ironic, and comic; these are all terms that we share in common regardless of religious orientation, regardless of the stories in terms of which we live our lives. These are the terms of revolution, tyranny, bounty and famine, life and death, war and peace, terms by which we all succeed or suffer in common. Here, on this planet Earth, we write world history in common terms together, find meaning in our lives in common terms, together, and in fact wage war against each other, murder maim and rape each other, on the sole basis of a set of common terms, together.

What, then, of the different stories in terms of which we live our separate lives? How are these woven together into the single fabric of one world history? Each of our stories is subtly different in its determinations of the world we share. Each makes sense of the world in slightly different ways. Even so, one thing is clear. Beneath all of these different determinations, there is one world in common. It is not flat. Its climate changes. We will all die here. These are all determinations we share. They describe the common world. There is nothing artificial or unnatural about this realization. Clearly, this common basis for all our subtly different determinations is the natural world,

however we make mythological sense of it. Thus, whatever story we tell, in the end it is in terms of the natural world that our lives are essentially meaningful.

Whether created or designed or evolved or otherwise, there is one natural world from which all of humanity's great stories are derived and in terms of which we all share in the making of one common world history. It is this natural world that gives every life meaning. So, why not simply live in terms of this natural world, rather than some mythic derivation thereof? Frankly, because no one has made adequate sense of it, yet. Let me emphasize *yet*. That doesn't mean it isn't going to happen. In fact, once you finish reading this book, you might think that it already has happened. Meanwhile, it is up to us to reconcile the contrary determinations contained within all of these stories, to reconcile the conflicting actions that these stories often enough recommend, if we are ever to share this common world, live in terms of a common history, past and future, peacefully, and without killing each other instead.

It would seem that advances in the natural sciences would bring us closer to such a realization, without the need for philosophy. Sadly, however, this has not proven to be the case. Recently, there has been increasingly cogent criticism of humanity's old religious stories in light of an unfolding natural story determined by natural scientists. Neurologists, philosophers, psychologists, and others have feverishly published texts critical of religion, of religious stories, and of the religious ways of life undertaken in terms of these stories. The crux of the criticism is that the old religious stories trap

practitioners into outdated ways of life, and prevent the rest of us from moving forward. The criticism is that, as the natural world changes, so should our understanding of how to live within it. As the world changes, so should what is determined to be a good life story, what is a happy ending, and what is the right thing to do. The criticism is that we must reconcile the terms by which we have been told to live our lives, god, justice, redemption, etcetera, with the terms of the natural world as revealed by the natural sciences.

The criticism is that the world is changing, and has changed, and religious stories have stayed the same, so we have to change them, too, otherwise we will continue living as if in terms of another world, an old storybook world. Clearly, this criticism strikes close to the heart of many popular religions. The leaders of these religions explicitly compel their followers to live in terms of other worlds, rather than in terms of this natural one, whether merely old or other-worldly altogether. Like I said, recently, these scientists and philosophers have cooked up an especially cogent criticism. But is it right?¹⁷ Let's look a little more closely.

The essential criticism is that our current way of life should suit our situation, now, in terms of our current story, now, and not some situation 2000 years ago, and not that of some alien situation as if on another world. Yet, this leaves us with a problem. In what terms are we to live if not in terms of these great stories from history? This is an especially difficult question to answer, but it is *even more difficult to ask* for those people

who take the terms of these old stories to be the very words of God!

For those of us who *are* able to ask the question, the fact that others *aren't* isn't going to keep us from trying to answer it. The world is a much different place at present than when the various religions of the old world were codified, this much is undeniable. We do not now live in terms of that old world situation, no matter how fondly our old world stories recall it.

No matter how often we repeat these stories to ourselves, they simply do not describe the world the way we understand it, today. We understand our current situation in different terms because we have a lot of new ideas about it. Take, for instance, the story of creation. Nice story. Understates the facts. Not true. Take, for instance, the story that there are virgins awaiting a martyr of holy war in heaven. Nice story. Overstates the facts. Not true.

The story that is adequate to the facts is that we live in a world which is the product of generations of human industry undertaken in terms of old stories, and now we are in a world of trouble because of it. The truth about this story is that scientific stories are not free from this criticism merely because they are scientific stories. Take, for instance, that story that climate change can be effectively controlled through the tax and trade of one gas, carbon dioxide. Nice story. Understates the facts. Not true. Thus, we are put in the very difficult position of reconciling all these stories, scientific and religious (granted that there is indeed any real difference) if we are to uncover

ourselves from the trouble we are increasingly in by way of them.

Sure, there are wars over religion, prejudice over religion, and laws prosecuted from religious grounds. But we are in even deeper trouble than that. The contemporary world is the product of human industry at the guiding hand of old stories, at every corner of the globe, *derived from both science and religion*, and the resulting ways of life which they encourage are ill fit to the natural world in terms of which we all ultimately rest. This goes for the life of the scientist as well as that undertaken in terms of old religion. And so, in the end, the especially cogent criticism of religious stories is equally cogent when applied to the critics, themselves.

Here is where all have gone wrong, whether fanatic of science or of religion or somewhere in between. We have taken stories to be true whose terms under-represent the complexity of the natural world, and we have lived in terms of these stories, instead of pursuing lives adequate to the task. The problem is that the stories in terms of which we live are too simple, too convenient, and, because they are easy and we are comfortable because of them, too difficult to change. We presume an understanding where there is none, just as children growing up within them presume the same, and the cycle perpetuates. Industries undertaken on their terms neglect the complexity of the natural world and of their consequences for it, but their captains press ahead, anyways. They presume control where there is none, and, when coupled with powers of government as is increasingly the case in the West, today, enforce blind obedience

even when their projects are unjust, immoral, and in light of the facts simply irrational. Thus, they prove themselves to be zealots for their own causes rather than prophets for the common good, and whether based in science or religion no more worthy of leadership than any other zealot promising cosmic favor for private recompense.

Why haven't we questioned these leaders, their stories and their determinations? Why have we kept doing as we have done, not learning from our mistakes?

This answer is arrived at easily enough. We have taken these stories to be true because we have been comforted with them, we have pursued these industries because we have become comfortable by them, and we have followed these leaders because we have found their lies comforting. Between the preaching and the production, we have blinded ourselves to the painful consequences. And, where we have not been blind, we have hidden away from the same things for the same reasons.

Where the weather is unmanageable, there is air conditioning. Where the rivers are unmanageable, there are dams and bridges. Where we grow too fat to climb stairs, there are people movers. Where the ups and downs of every aspect of the natural world are too great for human comfort, human industry flattens it out. Human life is consequently undertaken in the space of these flattened terms while we tell ourselves, all along the way, that we have worked hard, through the tough times, up the steep slopes, though every discomfort, due to inspiring stories, inspired industries, and inspirational leadership. Not due to the natural world, but in spite of it.

Today, a characteristic mark of the successful human life is that it proceeds without discomfort, without consequences, without any contact with the natural world, whatsoever. Successful people pay less successful people for that. Successful life, here and now, hides from the natural world in artificial environments, lives in man-made terms, and where able covers over every natural bump and barnacle with concrete and thick black tar. On this lifeless surface, human beings walk in shiny, pointy, high-heeled shoes from resting flat-floored box to traveling flat-floored box to working flat-floored box and back again. This is the story of life in the West. It is simple. It is artificial. It is an idle march at the beat of an old drum. It is ending.

This is the story of human progress, and the story of this progress is the story of human power. Power is control, and control is evidenced in the reduction of the mountainous complexity of the natural world to the flat-land of today's artificial one. The story is that human industry makes the world a better place for the human lives within it. This story, however, is clearly wrong. Autism, extinction, cancer, poverty, obesity, pollution, militarism, global environmental collapse, radiation, drug-resistant pathogens, the death of the bees, all are rising actors in the closing chapters in the unfolding history of human industry. So far, I have yet to see a scientific story, let alone a religious one, which corrects for these mistakes. That is what this book is for; this work is ahead of us. It is the work of reconciling the lies that we have been told with a world worth living in.

The point here is that the stories of our lives are embedded in even bigger

stories, ultimately the story of human progress, human history, which all appear in the end to bless ongoing human industry at the expense, and finally exhaustion, of the natural world. All of these stories point to tragedy ahead, and advise the people who find meaning in their terms to prepare for it. This goes for the life of the scientific critic of religion, as well as for the religious life he criticizes. The near future, on either account, is a terrifying proposition. And it is for this reason more than any other that both are inadequate to the rapidly changing world in terms of which we all currently find ourselves.

Of course, historically speaking, the biggest of all these stories have been religious stories. Religious stories give meaning not only to human actions, but to the movements of stars, the mandates of magistrates, and the fact of man's mortality. Recently, however, scientific stories have been spun to do this same work. This is why many call science the "new religion." Either operate in the same way. Even as the particular determinations of different religious and scientific stories may contradict one another, each provide meaning for the same set of highest terms. Moreover, each, for whatever disparate rationale, more often than not lead on to the same ends... Thus, industry and religion go hand in hand, and have led us together as if one happy family to the current status quo. Look around, here in the West. What we see now is Wal-Mart recruiting evangelists to lecture their employees on the Wal-Mart way of life, evangelists recruiting militants to defend that way of life, and these militants killing

people of other religions and other industries because they do not, and will not, live this way of life. All the killing, however, doesn't make any of these stories any more true. It just makes challenging these stories very expensive. Holding out for the true story may cost you your life. This much, we have already seen in Socrates' example.¹⁸

What is certainly true about these stories is that leaders of human industry have always colluded with leaders of history's old religions to get their collective stories straight. Why? Wealth. Power. Control. Coercion. It is all very simple.

Take, for instance, one aspect common to all of these stories, scientific or religious, which does appear accurate, if not man-made and overtly contrived. We are on the global brink of a fiery warring mess rife with famine and disease and pestilence and the whole nine yards. Good for business? Yes.¹⁹ Good for religion? Yes.²⁰ True story? Apparently, but one with a very unhappy ending, pursued only on the basis of very bad information, as the product of even worse leadership, and through the application of force.

Simply put, there is nothing about the natural world, itself, that makes things this way. We have made things this way, ourselves. We live in a world of our own consequences. If the world is going to end, it is because we have taken it on ourselves to act towards the end of the world. We have done so industriously, both in the terms old religions, and in the terms of new scientific stories which, so far, have only aggravated the situation. It is through realizing this truth that we have a way out. We

must begin to reconcile the dark past with a bright future, else end up in the ditch. That light, ahead, is conscience.

4) The journey out of darkness...

Now, I understand that it is increasingly popular for armchair scholars to cast about over whose religion is worse than whose science and vice versa, but I have neither the time nor the patience for such self-indulgent hogwash. It is not clear that we, as a race, would be better off now than before no matter which old religious or new scientific story might have framed our actions to this point. It is clear, however, that the natural environment which originally shaped the old religions is not better off for their continued practice. It is also clear that the industries undertaken since have not made the natural world a better place for most of us to live.²¹ With increasing global pollution, and with increasing global conflict, it is increasingly time for a change.

The problem remains: what change? Contemporary critics of the old religions are not constructive critics in this regard. They do not tell us how to change. Their aim has been to deny the value in religious ways of life and the religious stories which motivate them, pure and simple. Their aim has not been the adequate replacement thereof. The critics, thus, fall short of offering any legitimate solutions to world problems, religiously fueled or otherwise. Being the leaders of the scientific revolution that they are, they simply cast stones. And, the leaders of the religiously minded are

fighting back. They are returning fire. Thus, the critics and the criticized, both sides leaders, merely throw rocks at each other across an increasingly unbridgeable divide. Meanwhile, there stand you, and me, and a lot of innocent kids, mostly Asian and African kids, stuck in the middle. We are, as it were, caught in a vicious cycle. One side injures another, the other responds in kind, and on it goes.

One very good question is: what are these people thinking? Can a peaceful future be grounded in such a divide? No. Can we live in terms of one side at the cost of the other? No. Of course, that doesn't stop one group from seeking to expunge evolution from science texts and the other from seeking to expunge religious mythologies from everyday life. So, here we are, in real trouble, in light of which the prudence of violence shines especially brightly, except perhaps for those of us caught in the middle of the violence.

For a moment, let's pretend that killing each other simply isn't what we want to do; a life of desperation and murder is not a way of life we want to display for our children. In this case, what we need is a new way of life built from both the new sciences and the old religions. We need a foundation made from a bridge and we need it right away. If you didn't already feel this way, you wouldn't still be reading, and...

Surprise! The following text fills this gap. This text founds a fresh start without all the murdering and raping and pillaging and pissing on each other's graves. Now, we are getting somewhere, but it isn't going to be easy. Reconciliation is hard work, and

what we must reconcile are nothing less than contrary determinations of the very biggest issues ever brought to the human mind. We must, from beginning to end, corner to corner, draw a circle of words around the world if we are going to save it, and from the beginning to the end is a very long way. Hold on for one hell of a ride.

The critics of the old religions have gotten at least one thing right. Old religions do trap practitioners in essentially out-dated ways of life; but taken on their own, these religious practices, no matter how old, are not necessarily destructive. There is nothing necessarily wrong with believing in a God and living accordingly. Take, for instance, the Amish. Here is an example of a perfectly sustainable, environmentally responsible, and relatively old religious way of life. Yes, the terms in which they live appear outdated, but what's really wrong with that?

There is another thing the critics of religions have gotten right. New sciences do update old practices in light of new information. After all, they provide the new information! However, taken on their own, they do not guarantee that what we do in light of this new information is the right thing to do, or even needs to be done. Take, for instance, thalidomide. Or, television. Or, phthalate ridden teething toys, or mercury amalgam fillings, or antibiotics, or processed foods, or factory farms, or deforestation, or fossil fuel dependency, or pollution, or radioactive waste, or chemical weapons, or biological weapons, or the militarization of space, or antidepressants. Take your pick. Science is very dangerous stuff and I, frankly, am *as tired* of the armchair scientist with

his stuffed-shirt superiority who can't tell when it is time to get off his sterile high horse as I am tired of the evangelist who lies in order to keep the truth about the mysteries of his religion from coming to light. Faith is not a bad thing, unless it keeps you from doing what is right, and both sides of the issue are as guilty as the other on this count. This text is here to patch things up. Time to reconcile. Conscience is the tool for the job.

Now, I promised a tough ride, and I meant it. Read carefully.

Deviance from past religious practices and variable interpretations of new scientific results must be tolerated if the experiment that is mankind on Earth is to continue. What the battle between the old religions and the new sciences demonstrates is that we have reached a limit to toleration. One side battles the other side in an increasing dispute over whose story is bigger, when neither will ever be big enough. This text expands this limit by examining the tool for their reconciliation: the conscience.

The problems with any ways of life, scientific, religious or otherwise, arise when lives lived in their terms negatively affect shared living conditions. That is, if you want to do something you think is right and it gets in the way of my doing what I think is right, there is going to be a problem. What we see when we look around the neighborhood today, globally or just down the block, are a lot of these sorts of problems.

The really big problems arise when the religious life, or the scientific life, is also a political life. Big problems arise when the life in question is the life of a leader. When the religious practitioner is also a political power, the constraint of religious tradition is

imposed on the scientist under his yoke. When the scientist is also a political power, the constraint of scientific tradition is imposed on the religious person under his yoke. Either party may complain that the other's is not life in terms of his own tradition, and neither party is going to be very happy about letting go of said tradition and living a different sort of life. So, what are we going to do?

One leading critic of religion, neuro-scientist Sam Harris, has proscribed that those still yearning for religion in light of the results of the new sciences should turn to Buddhism as a replacement for their own inherited religious traditions.

Why Buddhism? Ostensibly, because Buddhism proposes a way of life fundamentally committed to the practical detachment from prior presumptions, religious or otherwise.²² Buddhism aims to minimize the suffering which each person endures as he adapts to life in a changing world. Buddhism proscribes that each individual person should unlearn habits perfected according to prior determinations, because these determinations and any actions undertaken on their bases, as things change, are certain to fail.

Ostensibly, new scientist Harris advocates Buddhism as a replacement to other religions for very old reasons. Religions, of every stripe, are, on the formula of Marx and Hegel before him, pacifying. These are the "opiates of the masses." Buddhism is an especially effective opiate in this regard.

Why? Interestingly, one of the literal roots of the word "religion" is Latin,

“religare,” “to bind fast.”²³ Religion, literally, is that to which one is bound. Buddhism, as a practice, promises to undo these bindings, and so, consequently, minimize the discomfort one feels as he changes his way of life to suit the changing terms of a changing world. It takes the pain away.

Yet, is it the right thing to do, to embrace a way of life merely in order to minimize one’s own suffering as he endures change, the world’s and his own, as he ages and the natural environment collapses around him? Is detachment, now, the right move to make?

If the sole purpose of one’s way of life is to minimize his own suffering as the tenets of his old religion are first disputed and then nullified, and the rifts in the natural ecosystem are first occluded and then cauterized by the increasing heat of the incessant Sun, then Buddhism is an adequate solution.²⁴

If the sole purpose of one’s way of life is to get one’s self out of the way of impending ruin, Buddhism is an adequate solution. On the Buddhist picture, the “self” is merely a locus of regularity; it is habit. Exposed to the same things in the same ways for so long, the body comes to expect that it will continue to be so exposed, in such ways, in the future. The resulting bundle of expectations is what we come to call the “self.” But, that is all it is; there is nothing permanent about it, it isn’t going to last forever, even if one simply refuses to alter his expectations regardless of evidence that he should do so. This is where holding onto the “self” leads to suffering. Thus, on the

Buddhist picture, the notion that the “self” as a lasting thing is merely an illusion, a source of suffering, and as such, something to be dispelled. Once one recognizes that one’s “self” is an illusion, the “self” is effectively out of the way of impending religious ruin, scientific ruin, environmental ruin, all sorts of ruin altogether. Suffering ceases; mission accomplished.

The Buddhist’s aim is the disillusion of the illusion of self-hood. The aim of Buddhist practice is the realization of a state of “no-self.” “No-self” names the state enjoyed upon the realization of this aim. No-self is the realization that there is no “self” to be trapped by ties to old ways of life in the first place. The sense that there is a self, bound to things, is merely habit to be unlearned. Buddhism is the discipline of this unlearning. It is a religious science of detachment. Buddhism promises to get the “self” out of the way of life altogether, but it is especially motivational when that life promises to be a painful one!

If the purpose of one’s way of life is merely the minimization of painful consequences for one’s “self,” then Buddhism is an adequate solution. If the purpose of one’s way of life is the constructive political solution of global environmental problems so that future generations can live securely attached to their own selves and lots of other things, too, Buddhism is not an adequate solution. Constructive political solutions demand that we remain attached to the consequences of our actions; and however you slice it, our “selves” are the primary consequences of our actions. That is unless we

count just throwing up our hands and letting go altogether a “constructive political solution.” That means, first of all, having the courage to discover what is good because, no matter where we end up, someone’s self is going to show up there and suffer for it if we don’t.

Harris has gotten one thing right in advocating Buddhism. This is that we must let go of the way things are in order for them to change for the better, our selves included. We must let go of our selves if we are to become otherwise. However we identify, as Theist, Atheist, Buddhist, scientist or religious person, we must loosen our ties with this identification. The difficulty isn’t in the letting go per se; that part is easy. The difficulty is in the letting go *for what?* How do we reconcile who we are with what we must become when it isn’t yet clear what that might be?²⁵It has been said that “no matter where one goes, he takes himself with him.” However, this does not account for the fact that wherever one goes, he is freed from his old self and becomes someone new. What seems closer to the truth is that “wherever one goes, he will not be the same.” The movement from one place to another, changing along the way, is sometimes called “transcendence.” Transcendence is a religious term; scientists haven’t paid it much attention. That doesn’t mean there isn’t a scientific basis for transcendence. That also doesn’t mean that scientists don’t experience transcendence. They do. It simply means that it is up to us to reconcile this fact. It is in this bridging notion of transcendence that we will see our freedom to let go of who we are and to

become otherwise for what it is: freedom to become bound to different terms, again. Freedom of self-determination.

Think for a moment on transcendence and what it means. Transcendence is the movement from one state of being to another, especially going from a lower form of life to a higher form of life. Often, one pursues this movement through his education. He becomes informed as to how to live a better life. Thus, one can say that he “transcended the limitations of his past” meaning that he became a better man by first learning how. William Dembski characterizes this everyday sense of transcendence as:

The word transcendence comes from the Latin and means literally to climb across or go beyond. To transcend is thus to surpass or excel or move beyond the reach or grasp of something.²⁶

Including, for instance, the limits of one’s prior understanding upon learning something new. That is to say that simply learning something new is basic, run of the mill, everyday transcendence. Even scientists do that, at least open minded ones. This is also to say that life on the basis of this new understanding is the promise of transcendence. Even scientists promise that. Transcendence is the climb from bound ignorance to freedom. Religious myth or scientific discovery, transcendence is the same.

Transcendence is freedom. At first glance, this freedom of transcending prior limitations seems like what philosophers call “radical freedom.” Transcendence appears to allow for the impossible. What is impossible before transcendence is what becomes

actual afterwards. And, any way of life, lived in these terms, appears equally to be an impossibility beforehand. Transcendence seems like radical freedom because doing the impossible, living life in impossible terms is, after all, pretty radical.

But, nothing could be farther from the case. For instance, imagine a specific case of what it is like before limitations of a prior understanding are transcended. Imagine that you are an expert mechanic. You are driving, with a friend, and your car stops. You step out, look under the hood, and see nothing wrong with the car. Imagine that your friend asks "What's wrong with the car?" to which you reply "Nothing." In your expert opinion, it is impossible that this car has quit running. Still, there you are, on the side of the road, standing still.²⁷

Imagine that your friend is an expert driver. He says "I think that you are right, there is nothing wrong with the car. I think that the problem is your driving!" He then goes on to explain what is wrong with your driving, and how it caused the car to come to a halt. All of a sudden, you realize how it is possible that the car has stopped. In order to come to this understanding, you had to move past your own prior limitations. You had to learn to appreciate new ideas, and in turn the possibilities that these new ideas opened up. The car hasn't broken down; it is your understanding which has failed. Impossible? This is an everyday turn of events, hardly a radical proposition.

Understood in new terms, what had appeared impossible beforehand is now possible. This goes for everyday learning. Living in terms of newly acquired

information is a very basic case of transcendence. Freedom from the limitations of prior knowledge, breaking the old bonds to what one had thought was right, makes the impossible into the possible in every case. There is nothing magical about it. Doing the impossible is simple. In fact, for the philosopher, the impossible is the only thing worth doing.²⁸ What we have discovered so far paves the way for realizing how to do so ourselves.

Doing the impossible is nothing new. The impossible has been done before. How many people exclaimed that human flight was “Impossible!” or that instantaneous information-sharing was “Impossible!” or that a global environmental collapse because of human industry is “Impossible!” or that the peaceful reconciliation of fundamentally different ways of life without killing each other is “Impossible!”? How many still do? At least regarding the final question, too many. Let’s see if we can’t make some headway on this front.

5) Getting used to life in the light of the Sun...

People like to have information, good information, so they can get where they want to go and become who they want to be. That much is clear. From the evolutionary perspective, survival of any organism, human being included, depends on that critter being selectively open to that information which does just that. Amoeba move toward the light with the help of photosensitive chemistry, rabbits run from sharp

sounds with the help of big ears, and birds fish from the skies with the help of a good eye for flashing fins under the water. Human beings benefit from similar capacities. But, what exactly counts as good information, and how does all this add up to doing what couldn't have been done, before? Frankly, I may have made a big deal out of doing the impossible, but I have yet to meet a revolutionary rabbit.²⁹

The natural environment is a noisy place. There is a lot to see, and there are a lot of distractions, and little of this information is valuable so far as an organism's continued health is concerned. In order to get by in light of all this noise, organisms filter the information most important for survival from all that is available. Thus, living things open to some of their environment, and close to the rest.

Organisms filter away most of the information to which they are open. Birds see a lot more than flashing fins, rabbits hear a lot more than sharp sounds, but they selectively react to these things by ignoring the rest. Some of the modes of this filtration are learned during the lifetime of the organism. With repetition, rabbits will learn not to run from all sharp sounds, and birds will learn that not all watery flashes are fins. These are modifications of capacities embodied purely as the consequence of adaptation to environmental constraints. They use the same ears, the same eyes with which they were born and bred, only differently. Human beings embody similar limitations. They show up in everyday ways, and it is these we are here, now, to transcend.

Adaptation to the information available in certain environments makes any

organism the organism that it is. No amount of learning can undo this fact. Simply put, information from the environment “in-forms” the organism within it. That is, as the environment comes “in-,” the organism is “-formed.” It embodies what it must to remain healthy in terms of that environmental information. Thus, we may see evolution as an informational process. Organisms adapt, in form, to suit the terms, the information, of the environments in which they evolve.

This is a chemical process. Every critter is a sensitive bundle of moving genetic information. Genetic information is chemical. The environment is chemical. The chemical environment influences how genetic information unfolds, what information the resulting sensitive critter filters, and let’s in. Think of a rabbit in a field of carrots. His eyes are sensitive bundles of chemicals. This unfolded genetic information opens to other information. The rabbit is informed of the presence of carrots. But, sometimes the information is hidden, or misleading. He may miss the carrot, or make one out that is not there. His olfactory apparatus is attuned similarly. He may smell the carrot, fail to smell the carrot, or even fail to smell the rottenness of a carrot, though he is much less likely to miss the smell of rottenness than to mistake the sight of something else for that of a carrot. This works out, as sometimes it pays to chase an illusory carrot, while it never pays to mistake a rotten one. In either case, this is good information, information in the form of chemicals which keeps his own chemical genetic information unfolding, generation after generation. Rabbits, the great carrot hunters, are long eared chemical

search engines...

Organisms are selectively open to certain forms of information. They openly seek this information, and close to, even deny, other information. Some of this selectivity cannot be transcended. Every eye does not see everything, every ear does not hear everything, and every mouth does not open for everything. The organism senses what is necessary for everyday survival within the environment that is the space of its evolution, and where it does not, it either dies, or such sensitivity is not necessary for its everyday survival.

In simpler organisms than you and I, their capacities to survive in different or in changing environments are limited strictly by their own embodied chemistry. To move outside of their native environment is to be exposed to information which is outside their ranges of sensitivity, their capacities to open or to close to this information, and inevitably to bio-chemical death. These organisms are bound to the informational contexts within which they have evolved. These are bounds which they are not free to transcend.

The genetic chemistry of an organism may change to suit an environment, but there is a limit on how the environment informs these changes. The primary limit is generational. The environment influences the way the genetic information of the organism is expressed, and this affects how the organism then performs in the environment. On the basis of this performance, the organism creates the next

generation. It is this next generation which is the expression of the effect of environmental information on the prior generation. In this way, organisms keep up with changes to their environments. They do so as groups. Genetic chemicals do not hunt alone; they flocculate.³⁰

Through selective openness to environmental information, groups of organisms update their chemistry one generation at a time. We can think of these groups of organisms as collections of chemicals of a certain family. The chemicals collect together because they react in special ways with one another. That is, they react in ways which produce more chemicals similar to themselves, chemicals which are also similarly informed by the chemicals in the environment. This is the chemical basis of natural selection. Put some together in situ and shake. Thus, at root, the genetics of evolution are chemical reactions in the test tube niches of the natural environment.

In more complex organisms like you and I, capacities to move outside of original environments are enhanced by more sophisticated capacities to open and close to available information. Human beings even make tools to extend their sensitivities, or to insulate them from overload. It is not the opposable thumb, or walking upright, that makes the human being so flexible in this regard. It is his capacity to open or close to information. If we had to select for one organ within the entire human organism most responsible for this enhanced capacity, it is his information processing unit. It is his brain.

The human brain is the locus classicus of human freedom. This is the organ that breaks old bonds in transcendence and forges necessary chains to new information. There is more going on here than the evolution of a changing mind. There is the adaptation to changing environments, and especially in humans this includes the power to change the environments in which they evolve.

When we are talking about human freedom, we are primarily interested in the psychological mechanisms at work in ordering a noisy natural environment so that the human being can determine for himself the ends sought through action. The problem here is, of course, that there is simply so much information, and so many possible ends for so many possible actions, where does one start?

One of the ways humans free themselves from the unending task of sorting through endless environmental information is by looking for patterns.³¹ Humans are not merely sensitive to bits of information, like a carrot here and there, but to complex patterns of information. They see fields of carrots. They discover order where there may appear to be none, and pattern their actions in response to these orders, thereby transcending prior situations to live in the fuller lights of a world revealed by increased understanding. Thus, human freedom is routine.

The story is simple. Humans see patterns that cannot, literally, be seen. Humans cannot hunt by simply outrunning and overpowering most animals. Humans must anticipate the movements of these animals; they must out-think them. Humans

cannot successfully breed animals by merely mixing the males with the females, but must plot cycles of estrous, the politics of breeding, and the genetics of inbreeding. Humans cannot successfully farm merely by tossing seed on the ground. They must anticipate seasons and alternate crops. Meanwhile, the patterns around which they plot their routines are invisible to other critters; a rabbit cannot hear crops rotating, and a bird cannot see a farmer's plan for next season.

In this way, humans have freed themselves from the bare terms of their native world. In order to free themselves from subjugation to seasonal whims, human beings have plotted weather patterns. In order to free themselves from subjugation to rising and falling tides, they have plotted cycles of the moon. Human beings look for patterns in the world, and they live according to the terms of these patterns. It is proper to say, thus, that even more than other critters, the human evolutionary niche is carved from information we determine for ourselves.

Sensitivity to one type of patterned information in particular is especially important for human survival, and always has been. Human beings embody the capacity to see patterns of information in the environment that look like faces.³² This capacity shows up in an everyday way. Simply imagine what it is like to stare at a tree, or at the ceiling, or at a cloud formation. No matter how inhuman these surfaces may appear at first, shortly we find ourselves patterning faces from the information presented. We see the King of the clouds, or the man of the woods, fear the god of

storms, and the haunted forest. No amount of learning can undo this fact. It is part of the human make-up, a curious limitation of evolved physiology on psychological artifact. There is nothing magical about it.

Faces convey information crucial for our continued survival. The capacity to pull faces from the noisy background of information is especially important for survival in at least two ways. It helps one to act with friends, and to react against foes. It is information which keeps our own information going, from generation to generation.

First, imagine foraging through a dark and noisy jungle environment. There are predators out there. The best way to keep from getting eaten by these predators is to see them before they get the jump on you. So, as you forage, you scan the dark canopy, and your brain pulls from the information at hand any pattern which fits that of a predatory face staring back. This initial filtering allows you to attend to these patterns in order that you might identify a threat before it identifies you. So, though the moonlight reflecting from two well-placed wet leaves may appear to be two gleaming hungry predatory eyes in the dark, and may give a start, so far as the evolved psychology of the human organism is concerned, better safe than sorry. The fear alone, however, makes neither the threat nor the face real. All that is real are the actions taken on the basis of this information. People run from imaginary scary faces, just as they run toward imaginary friendly ones.

Consider this second example. Focusing on the information that friendly faces

provide is crucial to the health and survival of the human being. Imagine that you, along with others of your group, others who share your situation in the natural environment, your *friends*, are foraging in the jungle. Your friends have split up and have gone ahead of you just a few paces. On one side, you see your friend and he is grimacing in pain. On the other side, you see your friend and he is smiling with pleasure. These facial expressions communicate very important information. They indicate what should be your next move. The grimacing face indicates a bad situation; you should avoid this as an end for your self. The other face indicates a good situation; you should follow suit and act to achieve this end for your self.³³

The information gathered from friendly faces ahead goes a long way toward allaying the anxiety associated with moving forward into the dark and often dangerous unknown, noisy place, which is the natural world. Simply imagine the anxiety associated with making moves in a place where the next step could be your last. To make a sound is to encourage a predator or to alert your prey. You could be poisoned, bitten, eaten, or starve. So, you look for guidance, direction, good information from those ahead of you. This is natural. Nearly every move in life is a part of an ages old parade of follow-the-leader. The faces of those ahead inform those who follow behind what the situation will be like when they get there

I say “nearly every move in life” for an important reason. Some people become leaders in the true sense that they follow no one. They go off on their own. There is

such a thing as genuine novelty, someone who deviates from the established path. There is an upshot to novelty. Deviance is evolutionarily favorable. It may be risky for the individual, but it is good for the group. The natural world changes, old ways of life become ineffective, and someone has to explore new ways of life and lay down different patterns of action if others are to do differently, and adapt to the changing world, themselves.³⁴ Some of the oldest stories in history are of a leader battling the darkness, clearing the way for his kindred. All of these stories have one thing in common; they allay fears of the unknown by demonstrating how darkness can be overcome by heroic action and good leadership. In every case, the good leader takes courage and lights the way to a new situation. But, some stories take this trend too far.

Some stories, specifically old religious stories, suggest that there is a good leader who calls followers forward to a comfortable situation after death. Just because there is information in other contexts, in living contexts, about what another situation is like beyond the limits of one's own experience, and just because this information is crucial for keeping a human being alive and adapting to a changing world, does not mean that there is a face staring back from beyond the limits of the changing world, altogether. Just because others have died before us does not imply that they now lead the way to some promised land of the dead. Even to think that there is life after death is to think a contradiction, but it is more than a logical problem. It is only understood when properly conceived as a trick of the evolved mind. The fact is that in life, and in death,

we are all leaders. Let's look more closely at why this is the case.

6) Life in the full light of day...

Human beings are essentially flock animals. They group together with others like themselves. They get along with others whose evaluations mirror their own. They coordinate by following, and deviate by leading away. They do not exist alone, did not evolve to exist alone, and have no capacity to continue existing alone. Even a leader does not exist without followers. Without information from other people about how to live and how not to live, on how to lead and how to follow, a person is a veritable rabbit in the water. It is simply not an environment in which he can survive.

People live in an environment overly rich in information. This is why people like to gossip. What is good information for one is good information for another. It ensures that either has the same information, act in the same ways, succeed in the same terms, and coordinate to common ends without friction, and without confusion. This is also why liars are universally scorned. Liars mislead by giving bad information, and bad information invites failure, conflict, and even death. This is why liars are dangerous, and why giving bad information is essentially immoral. This is also why being honest is always the right thing to do. It has nothing to do with any vacuous principle of reason dictating that one should not contradict himself because it is a crime of logic!³⁵ It has to do with life and death.

If love of gossip is any measure, people already understand that information is crucial; we all already share it, and we do it all the time. We share information because we share a common situation, and as we talk we discover more about that situation than we are otherwise able to see for ourselves on our own. There is symmetry in gossip. If you tell me something, I tell you something. I trade what I have seen for what you have seen, what I have heard for what you have heard; this is the ethics of information sharing. It is a morality of being equally invested in a situation, and in outcomes of actions taken within it. This is understood.

What people sometimes fail to understand is that, in sharing information, we also share our lives. Sharing information has to do with survival; sharing good information means sharing life. Sharing bad information means risking death. My eyes are your eyes, my ears your ears, my life, your life. This is the symmetry of the moral life, life in a group, leading (or misleading) one another. It all starts with good information.

It is in this spirit that the old adage “an eye for an eye” is most meaningful. There are essentially three ways of understanding the implications of this formula. It may be understood, personally, inter-subjectively, or objectively. Only one of these makes sense as a law by which to live.

This formula is not some petty tit-for-tat between independent individuals, as if eyes were personal property to be bought and stolen. It is not up to one’s personal assessment of the value of his eyes should either of them be in need of replacement.

Likewise, it is not merely objective. If an eye is stolen, just any eye will not do! Sure, laws could be construed in these terms, but they would fail to capture the significance of “an eye for an eye.”

This formula is universal moral law, and applies to every member of every group equally. It does not say that an individual is responsible for collecting another individual’s eye. It says: “If you do not look out for one of us, then we will impose a sanction. We will not look out for you.” Only in this way is it motivational; there is no advantage in having stolen a third eye, just in case, on this formulation.

Eyes, and the information they reveal, belong to everyone in a group. This is why “an eye for an eye” is a law by which people live, not merely observe. Eyes, and the information they reveal, are hidden to the peril of every member of a group equally. Eyes, and the information they reveal, are common property, and this is why the group of subjects has domain over them. It is because we share a situation, with each other, as a group, that my eyes are your eyes, my life is your life, my information your information. Your informational limits are mine and mine are yours: do not transgress. Likewise, I see what I see; open your eyes!

This is how we know to survive in the world: together. Thusly, surviving, people have routinely transcended the limits of their own individual experience as a matter of course. They do it together. It is expected. It is convention. It is law. And, at root, it is all about the information. Your eyes mirror mine and mine yours: do not mislead, and

be not misled.

We are all leaders. We all lead because others will mirror our actions to similar ends, or avoid them. Mirroring another's situation is grounded in human physiology.³⁶ Sufficiently complex animals, humans included, have brains with systems of neural structures called "mirror neurons." Mirror neurons are crucial for psychological development from earliest infancy onwards. At this stage, the brain of the baby mirrors affective expressions of others around him and from this experience attaches corresponding significance to those objects which elicit the expressions. This is how we come to feel at home in the world into which we are born. We follow our leaders.

Here is how to see it. Picture a baby lying in his crib. Someone – let's call him Uncle Jeff - walks into the room and smiles. The child mirrors the smile. The infant smiles because, when human beings are very young, the mirror neural pathways are connected to the motor neural pathways, those that potentiate actions.³⁷ Being connected from beginning, affective condition, to end, action, is important; it speeds infant adaptation to the informationally complex world by modeling the complex actions which suit that world as a one-step process. The infant doesn't have to think about it, look for options, study consequences, and finally act. The infant simply follows the lead of those around him, responds in like manner to the clues given, and acts accordingly.³⁸

In this case, Uncle Jeff is the leader. Receptive to Uncle Jeff's presence, the child mirrors Uncle Jeff's expressed affects; he smiles. Then, when the child mirrors the

smile, his brain delivers chemicals which create good feelings. Good feelings indicate successful input/output pathways through the neural and motor systems of the organism. Good feelings indicate a good situation. The body begins to seek situations which prompt smiling states.³⁹ This is a further byproduct of the physiology of human beings. Human beings have this experience in common.⁴⁰

Now, here is where the importance of the mirror neurons in psychological development really shines. Let's tweak the illustration. Picture that same child in his crib. Picture someone – Uncle Jeff - walking into the room, sighting a cold beer on the table next to the crib, and smiling a big smile. The child mirrors the smile, and feels good. Right off, however, he does not understand that it is the beer that does it. He is too busy smiling and feeling good.

Now, picture this process happening again and again. After a few iterations, the child begins to attach good feelings to that part of the world around him, whatever that may be, which is to the trained eye a cold beer. Picture Uncle Jeff repeatedly putting that part of the world to his lips and, at every gulp, smiling ever more broadly. This is how any given thing in the environment comes to have any given significance in terms of the infant's budding agency. Just watch Uncle Jeff, and smile. Feels good.

Developing brains are plastic: they come to terms with different worldly objects by adapting to those states corresponding with those objects. For the infant organism, originally, the world is a continuous stream of information. Nothing is necessarily

distinct from anything else, no objects per se; there is just open-eyed being in the world as a baby. There is an impossible amount to learn, and mirroring others makes figuring out what is worth learning a whole lot easier.

The stream of information which bombards the infant's open eyes, ears and hands is extremely complex and difficult to parse. Touching, seeing, smelling and hearing are all melded together in one feeling of being new born in the world. With repetition, consistent experience, and especially with affective clues from those around him, the infant quickly orients to certain things and away from others.⁴¹ The result is a being more or less at home in the world. The result is largely due to mirroring others who already live there.

Some distinctions between things are native even to the new-born organism without either direct or indirect experience. These distinctions are not dependent on mirroring those states expressed by others alike one's self. Fire burns, walking uses more energy than sitting, and finding order in an otherwise chaotic world feels good. These facts have even deeper grounds than mere mirror neurons. I will briefly digress in order to shade the unseen in the portrait of conscience which is yet to be painted.

A human being is mostly a worm with a fancy endoskeleton. Each has an input and an output, and the Earth – in some form or other – passes through. Thus, men from infancy onwards like worms orient accordingly. What is good goes in front, is to be sought, and what is not, behind. This is the fundamental affective state of every living

organism in the world.⁴² For the worm in us, there is simply no use for fine-grained distinctions. There is simply the good.⁴³ The newly born human organism, as well, is “hardwired” with a sense that the good is to be sought. Unlike the worm, however, there is use for fine-grained distinctions for the infant as he develops. Newly born, there is good, just no sense as to what in particular the good might be. The infant takes its cues as to the fine-grained particulars from other critters like himself.

Let’s go back to the illustration with the infant and Uncle Jeff. With exposure, the infant quickly associates that part of the world - (an object which looks like a cold beer) at which Uncle Jeff smiles (expresses a good feeling) and repeatedly puts to his smiling front parts (input) - with his own good feelings. However, Uncle Jeff doesn’t smile all the time. Picture Uncle Jeff walking into the room and not smiling. That doesn’t feel as good. In fact, it may be painful. It is a let down. If this happens in the right ways, enough times, the infant will quickly learn that an absence of that part of the world which looks like a cold beer is bad. Hereby, the significance of that part of the world which looks like a cold beer is emphasized. A lack of cold beer is a bad situation.

There is a difference between a cold beer being part of the situation, and not. The differences between these situations determine what it feels like to be in one, rather than the other. These differences constitute experience. The presence of a cold beer makes a smile and good feelings. The absence does not. Thus, a cold beer becomes, through experience, a good thing, and the situation with cold beer in it a good situation,

an end to be sought. Everybody knows that!⁴⁴ Now, the infant, whenever Uncle Jeff walks into the room and that part of the world which is a cold beer is present in it, will come to expect a smile. This aspect of the way the chaotic world works is stable. The relationship between smiling and a cold beer is a reliable one. The affect produced by a stable environment is habit. He will come to regularly associate cold beer with smiling. The infant, thus, is habituated in terms of the regularity of Uncle Jeff's expressions, and through them to the very objects of the world around him.

This is an overly simple model, but it does illustrate how a thing comes to have a given significance without any direct experience of that thing. This is the great payoff of the mirror neuron system. People learn more, more quickly, by mirroring the expressed evaluations of others, than by experiencing everything on their own as if for the first time. During development, in mirroring the affective states of others, one affectively embodies the situations of others around him. One learns to live as if one were a sort of amalgam of others' experiences and one's own. Thus, there is nothing essentially individual about being human.

After birth, one is as dependent on others for information about his situation as if still attached at the navel. Human beings are essentially flock animals, and each self, however alone and individuated he may feel, arises only from a group. He individuates himself only in deviation from it.⁴⁵

This is contrary to contemporary Western presumptions. The common

presumption is that a person begins and ends life alone.⁴⁶ The presumption is that a person does things, makes decisions, takes risks, and suffers the consequences alone. On this view, persons are essentially atomic individuals who only come together, as a “group,” for a short time while here on Earth. Some go so far as to presume that each person has an individual immaterial “soul” which individually lasts after the death of the body in one of a number of other places depending on the value of his given individual life. Others go so far as to presume that anarchy is man’s state of nature, and that one’s situation rather than another’s is merely a product of some mysterious force called “luck.” From either view, one’s actions, and the consequences for these actions, are one’s own to suffer. No one necessarily shares them, or informs them, and if they do, it is only while here on Earth, and/or only while one is lucky/unlucky enough to be at the right/wrong place at the right/wrong time.

This is bad information. A person emerges only in terms of others, as different from them. Alone, there is no person. There is merely a human being with a deficiency. Further, each person suffers the consequences of every other’s actions. That is, there is no getting away from each other, at least not in the long run. We all inherit the future of our mutual making. It is, indeed, one world shared.

Why do so many credentialed, (very) highly paid, and (very) highly (self)-esteemed theorists hold to the contrary, conventional view that persons (presumably like themselves) are essentially atomic individuals?

I think that this (mistaken) condition is a byproduct of the physiological changes endured through adolescence. Consider the following tweak on the infant illustration. The infant takes up the evaluations and engagements with objects in the world expressed and demonstrated by others around him. The infant, and then the child, takes these for his own. He embodies them, tests them in action, and experiences life on these terms. During adolescence, however, the organism rejects many of these prior given evaluations and engagements. New operations are experimented with, and the outcome is uniquely one's own to embody as one's own self.

For example, no matter what Uncle Jeff shows to the contrary, some persons come to not like beer. These are the sorts of things which make one and another different, no matter how he felt as an infant. Thus, the "person" arises as a consequence of deviation from others more or less alike, but he doesn't start that way. He starts out part of a family, of a community, of, with, and for others. Realistically speaking, globally speaking, he always *is* part of this family. Even if only to reject it.

Here is where these theorists, atomists about the self, go wrong. Thinking about personhood must, itself, wait for a feeling that one is a person, and this feeling arises as the content of the difference between living as if one were others, and not living this way. It comes as a consequence of adolescence. Thinking about personhood must begin here, with this experience of *different from*; this is certain. The problem is that most thinkers about what it is to be a person stop here, as well. They take it for granted

that personhood leads to difference, when all that is true is that difference leads to personhood.

This is not to say that thinking about what it is to be a single, individual, essentially atomic “person” has no social utility. Separating one’s self from others, one’s ends from others’, and the consequences of one’s actions from others’ carries a great benefit to group success. Felt to be a good thing, it encourages experimentation. This is what happens in adolescence.⁴⁷ Adolescence is a process whereby the membership of a group of organisms is able to update its practices in terms of its changing environment. In a changing environment, old routines must often be recast in order to suit the conditions which are the consequence of environmental change. Moreover, in such a situation, there is no indication as to what the best way of living in terms of the changing objects of the environment might be. Without prior given clues, in the dark so to speak, only through experimenting with being in the world can more effective ways of life be discovered.

During adolescence, new operations are tested on the basis of the rejection of prior given routines. The adolescent period is one in which ways of being in the world different from those given are embodied. Some of these experiments work out, and some do not. As individual persons embody the results of individual experiments, some individual lives work out, and some do not. This is bad for the individual failure, but it is good for the group of organisms as a whole. The group of organisms, thus, updates its

practices each generation as adolescents try new things. The main of the group membership carries on emulating the successes and ostracizing the failures, until further changes open still further opportunities for deviation, and their own hegemony of habit is again overthrown.

I think that, in thinking about person and personhood, (very) highly paid and (very) highly self-esteemed theorists do what the everyday man in the street does. They start with the product of their own adolescent experiences. They start with “I am my self, different, and this is what it is to be a person.” This is natural. To think of a thing is to have some sense of it, and – so far as I understand it - there is no sense of selfhood as one’s own different from another’s in infancy, and no use for the concept of personhood for the newborn baby. The sense of self only emerges as a consequence of adolescence, and deviation from others, and it is this product which is taken to be essential to personhood.

The problem, again, is that people tend to both start with and stop with this experience. This is natural, but not so unique. This is the product of every body’s experience, universally, and a very odd place to find a basis for the essential individuality of the “person!” This, the view that one is essentially an individual, alone like an atom on the billiards table of the world, is naïve. Irresponsible. Adolescent. And, ultimately, wrong.

Yet, people hold onto their naïve view like a prized carrot, and the naïve view

leads to mistaken presumptions, and these lead others, like politicians and economists and judges and jurists, to make even bigger mistakes. Given what is now understood about developmental psychology and its neurological roots, the view that a man is an island of culpability, to gain or to lose on his own, heaven or hell, riches or rags, is no longer tenable.⁴⁸ Even in the cases of *the most flagrant deviance*, this view is wrong.

Think about how people conventionally blame one another for individual actions. When someone fails, people often close off from him, and even ridicule him. This is wrong. We should be grateful. We should love him. Here is why. The group of organisms - that would be us - benefits by the failures as well as by the successes of constituent individuals. Its membership – again, us – learns to avoid becoming like some, and learns to emulate others on the basis of these failures and successes. This is how we get by; we need these people to try new things, and some of them, *lots of them*, are going to fail when they do. No one wants to fail, but sometimes it is the only way to figure out what is going to succeed. Being wrong is half of being right.

This fact carries deep ethical implications. Failures are models of ways of being in the world which are *not* to be mirrored, and this is invaluable information for the rest of the group membership – again, *this is us*. We should be grateful for this information. Our success is the upshot of their failure. The rest of the group - *us* - gets the benefit of the understanding, to not to do as another has done, as a gift. Meanwhile, we benefit, we live successfully, and our gift may have cost someone else his life. A life, a loss, a

suffering face: crucial information that is essentially shared.

It seems difficult with this picture in mind to condemn (or to reward) each person individually for his failure (or success) in a life of ongoing discovery. After all, we all benefit (or suffer) for the experiment that is another's only lifetime. We mirror them, or not. A group filled with failures is a membership with successes to seek, and rightly so. No one wants to fail in life, in what they do, after all. That others have, and do, is good information. The rest of us benefit by it. The future of the group depends on it.

Failures are necessary, otherwise we would merely keep doing as we have always done, and this is a strategy which is sure to fail on a grand scale in the face of a changing environment. With this in mind, the old formula "an eye for an eye" carries with it a new inflection. It is not merely a sanction against liars, but names a positive obligation that we all, every one of us, owes the others. It is the law that I must seek out new information and share it, so that you may do better, and so that we may live happily. Discovery is doing the right thing. It takes courage; it risks failure. The meaning of life is the ethics of this inquiry.⁴⁹ Yet, that one is alone, individually to blame for his failure (or his success) is the common presumption.

Why is this the case? I think that this way of thinking is also partly a consequence of the mirroring functions of the human mind. In mirroring states and seeking situations in which others appear successful in life, one essentially opens to them.⁵⁰ In not mirroring those who appear to fail, one affectively closes off.⁵¹ Sadly, in

closing off from them, one fails to have compassion, to be sympathetic, to feel as if he were they, to be humane. It is this natural, though tragic, byproduct of the human condition, which leads to lasting prejudices of every stripe, from sexism, to racism, and finally egoism.⁵² In these bigoted modes, closed to the suffering of others, one fails to “have a conscience.”

Conscientious persons mirror the affective states of others, display the courage to feel for and with others, even and especially those who fail, and those seemingly without a conscience simply do not. Conscientiousness is being with and for others, demonstrated in suffering through the situation as it is shared, and in seeking the good for all alike. As we shall see, to have a conscience requires courage, temperance, and love: virtue. Meanwhile, to close off from others requires only ignorance. Hardly a life worth living, but all too often mirrored.

In being with others, persons tend to flock with those like themselves just as they seek smiling states. The conscience as understood by way of the following text explains this fact. With experience, and intensions of one’s own, a person feels his expectations frustrated while mirroring another do some familiar thing in different ways, especially if these deviations appear less successful in producing good feelings than one’s own. Living with others more alike one’s self, these frustrations are minimized. Everyone does the same things toward the same ends. This way, tensions in coordination between agents and actions are reduced. This minimization is reflected in

the tendency for persons to flock with others alike themselves even as they seek smiling states.

If this is the case, then why do persons tend to flock with others unlike themselves, as well? The benefit of adaptation to a changing world through different engagements with worldly objects is obvious from the preceding discussion. When one's way of life is drawn into question, as in adolescence, and with sufficiently radical changes in the environment, new and different ways of acting become new and different ways of being successful. New and different becomes a new way of seeing the world, a perspective sometimes far more effective than old ways. New and different becomes a window of opportunity on the world, rather than mere deviance. These opportunities are pursued, just as smiling states are pursued, and human life advances generation after generation.

In the text to follow, I will offer an overview of the means by way of which opportunities for new ways of life are identified, evaluated, and pursued. This is the work of conscience. The overview of conscience to follow explains how new and different are not merely revolutionary change, but eventually become convention, and ritual, and even the rigid tyranny of dogma. At the heart of this exposition is a model of conscience called the "ACTWith model of conscience." This model is a tool for self-examination, for the identification and evaluation of opportunities to do the right thing at the right time, and for the self-determination of one's own way of life. Thus, the

understanding of conscience to follow is a pitchfork for deposing tyrants, a torch in the enlightenment of dogma, and the key to unlocking the chains of religion, old and new.

7) Bringing the truth.

How is this model of conscience to follow supposed to do all this work? It seems impossible, considering the forces of tyranny and countless dogmas from history arrayed against us. There is just so much information, so many conflicting accounts, so many opposing ways of life, where are we to begin?

What the ACTWith model offers is a way of patterning all of this information, of parsing it, and of finding in it what is valuable while filtering out the rest. The ACTWith model is, essentially, what researchers in the field of artificial intelligence call a “search routine.” Let me explain.

A “search routine” is a way for a computational model of intelligence to isolate information necessary to ensure its continued effectiveness in the face of a changing, informationally complex environment. The ACTWith model of conscience stands as a similar method for everyday human beings motivated to overcome similar problems.

Artificial intelligence researchers program computational intelligences on the basis of what they understand about human intelligence. In order to get a computational model of intelligence to do things, to solve problems, as opposed to just sitting there on a desk making heat and sucking up electricity, the model intelligence is

given a motivation. It is not a fruitful model of anything close to human if the agent simply sits there doing nothing.⁵³

Typically, the model agents are motivated to seek sources of energy.⁵⁴ In more human terms, this means programming into the model a sense of “hunger,” or “thirst.” Agents who fail to secure energy stop moving. They “die.” Agents who succeed in securing energy store the information pertinent to their successes in order to more effectively secure energy in future trials. For the artificially intelligent agent, it is never the computation that breaks down, but the mode of its navigation which causes it to come to a halt. This mode of navigation, which the agent stores, and employs in the future, is a search routine.

Artificial intelligence research offers a deep insight into the human condition. It offers a view into the mysteries of the human mind in terms of models built entirely from information which the scientists already understand. On the other hand, researchers in the natural sciences have been unable to understand natural intelligence in all of its complexity. They are limited by how completely they have been able understand themselves and the world at large. Consequently, they have a limited understanding of the medium by which the understanding of self in world is understood, in the first place: the human mind. Thus, these scientists make a lot of, very tragic, mistakes.⁵⁵

Artificial intelligence researchers do not have this problem. They reduce the complexity of the natural world to terms which they already understand, and then make

explicit in computer code. They do the same in modeling the intelligent agents within these environments. These methods provide a fantastic mirror for our own self-examination.

Let's have a look in this mirror. We may think of any environment in general as a "space." An environment within which an intelligent agent is motivated to discover something is called a "search space." In modeling intelligence, a researcher models an agent searching a space for what it is motivated to secure. Here is where things get really interesting. One of the fundamental lessons of artificial intelligence research is that reliably isolating the crucial information from this broader space of information is not an easy task. In fact, to take the entire space simply as information, as a burgeoning set of 1's and 0's, and to sort through it for what is important at every turn, is computationally impossible. The agent quickly runs out of energy as it just sits there doing calculations, sucking up electricity, and making a lot of heat. There is a lesson in all of this.

The lesson is that any effective agency must act. In order to speed up processing, and thus the process whereby successful actions are first identified, then pursued, the agent which reliably survives by securing what it needs takes up what researchers call "search routines." Search routines are ways of patterning the otherwise chaotic environment, so that the agent doesn't waste away sorting through everything in the complex world bit by bit.

After all, most of the environment is not what the agent is after. Most of the environment can be discounted as “noise.” Most of the environment is not a carrot, for example, so the rabbit had better ignore that stuff else the carrot might rot while he just sits there thinking it through. Furthermore, what the agent *is* after comes in packets. A rabbit, for example, doesn’t try to collect a carrot molecule by molecule, atom by atom. He wants the carrot as a whole, in one tidy, tasty package, atoms and molecules all bundled together. There is a pattern to a carrot.

Search routines are ways for agents to rapidly identify that information which is necessary for the timely discovery of what is important, and not much more. Search routines allow the agent to focus on certain patterns, and ignore the rest. An artificial intelligence model of an effective agent, thus, is essentially a model of a motivated search routine. This is an intelligence with a purpose, which is good at getting the right things done in a timely manner.

The purpose which is usually taken to be the most important is basic survival. Most of the environment is merely an obstacle which stands between the agent and its survival. An effective search routine, thus, takes most of the information of the environment as an obstacle to identifying what it needs to identify to survive. The intelligence which survives filters out most of the information with which it is presented at any given time. Otherwise, as with a living organism, it would die staring in wonder at the complexity of the world around it, and nothing else would get done.

However, there is an even deeper lesson in all of this. This is that the agent with an overly rigid search routine survives no better than the agent with none. As the environment changes, if the agent doesn't change what he searches for, and how he does it, he dies off, doesn't wonder why, and that is not very intelligent, after all. The intelligence, which is truly successful, is that which is flexible, keeps learning, and, *above all*, takes up search routines for his search routines, so to speak. He looks for the right ways to find the right things to do and the right times to do them, he doesn't merely do them, keep on doing them, and leave it at that. He seeks to discover how he might discover how to do better, better.

In this text, I am essentially offering a search routine of search routines, the ACTWith model of conscience, in order that others may use this information as a tool to better identify - from all the noise of the natural and artificial world, from all the given routines, patterns, contrary ways of life, and stories old and new that parse, in their own rigid terms, that noisy natural world - what is the right thing to do, and when is the right time to do it. Far from merely giving a recipe for what is the right thing to do, this is a tool for your own inquiry into that this might be, and how and when to do it. In other words, instead of offering a cookbook, with pre-given recipes for right action, I am offering a cookbook for cookbooks, so that you might make up your own recipes.⁵⁶

Together, on this Earth, we make history. I am hoping that with this tool, this ACTWith model of conscience, our shared future history can be made a good one.

There are two fundamental aspects to the ACTWith model. There are the “As-if,” (“A”) and the “Coming-to-Terms With” (“CTWith”). The first, the “As-if,” is the “transcendence” of prior limitations. The second, the “Coming-to-Terms With,” is the adaptation to the new set of limits brought on by the situation into which one “transcends.” As we have seen through the discussion thus far, one of the crucial ways in which we transcend our limitations, each and every day, is through the sympathetic experience, the “affective mirroring,” of what it is like to be in situations other than our own.

In mirroring what it feels like to be as if others in other situations, one comes to understand things of which he may have no direct experience. This simple process, encapsulated in the ACTWith model, has deep implications for theories of learning, as the agent more rapidly builds a library of experience when he may affectively pattern multiple others than if he must experience everything on his own as if for the first time in human history. Mirroring others, thusly, is most effective in developing the virtue called wisdom. Through this process, one learns from another’s mistakes as well as successes, and even learns to look for things of which he has not with his own eyes borne witness.⁵⁷

This process also has deep implications for moral theory. Feeling as another feels in his situation implies feeling that another’s situation, where it is not good, must be corrected as if it were one’s own. This is what philosophers call “moral duty,” or

“moral obligation,” and is the natural grounds of all talk of human rights. Open to feeling as if in another’s situation, conscientious agents do not put others in positions which they would not seek as situations for themselves. This is because affectively mirroring a bad situation doesn’t feel good, so the conscientious person avoids this end for others. Persons seemingly without a conscience suffer no such inconvenience. The ACTWith model encapsulates this dynamic, as well.

To have a conscience is feeling “as if” another, in another place, situated in other terms, and “coming to terms with” that situation. To have a conscience is the essential difference between a being which is by nature alone, and one which is by nature with others more or less alike himself. This is what it is like to be human in a shared living world, rather than a rock, or a psychopath. Conscience keeps moral agents moral by motivating them to avoid putting themselves and others in bad situations. A rock, on the other hand, has no such capacity, and a psychopath simply does so anyways.

The quality of a position, whether it is good, bad, better or worse, is the characteristic mark of what people call “progress.” One makes progress if the situation gets better, and regresses if the situation gets worse. The relative quality of situations is understood on the basis of the story, or narrative, religious or otherwise, in terms of which the progressive or the regressive person lives. It is progress in these terms that qualifies the story of one’s life, as an agent who pushes history ahead, or as an agent who returns the world to the darkness of a prior situation. It is in terms of these stories

that one is a revolutionary, or a tyrant, a martyr or a murderer. Thus, it is in terms of the stories of our lives that there is a measure of what people call “historical progress.” Good leaders pull us ahead, to peace and prosperity, while bad leaders return us to darkness, to war and to poverty. The ACTWith model stands as a tool for the evaluation of current, future, and past leadership.

Historical advance or regression begins with the situation that one generation leaves for the next. The conscientiously led generation makes the world a better place for others like themselves. The conscientiously led generation puts no future generation in situations it would not seek for its own. The generation without a conscience suffers no such inconvenience.

The measure of historical leadership takes place in terms of the stories in which persons live their lives. Freedom to do the right thing, to make the world a better place, is freedom to determine the stories which frame each and every human action and, thus, the terms in which the value of these actions are eventually determined. The following text aims to provide the reader the conceptual tools for the practical realization of this freedom, to escape the chains of prior generations, to unlock the chains to this one, and to forge ties to a future world of his own determination.

It has been said that man is the measure of all things. Men, however, are notably invested in the outcome of their measurements. Any man’s measure is thus suspect. On the other hand, all men have a great and under-appreciated genius, to see and to

White – *Conscience, the mechanism of morality*

feel as if some other, more or less alike themselves, in spaces of life of which they have had no direct experience, and without consciously directing attention to the task. The native ease of this conscientious exercise explains why there are so few who profess to be mathematicians, and so many who profess to know what is right for themselves, for now, and for everyone else at every other time and place. Each man is another man's measure, and especially his own. What follows is a portrait of the measurer, the instrument of measure, the conscience.

BOOK ONE

Socrates: The ridiculous is in short the specific name which is used to describe the vicious form of a certain habit; and of vice in general it is that kind which is most at variance with the inscription at Delphi.

Protagoras: You mean, Socrates, "Know thyself."

Socrates: I do; and the opposite would be, "Know not thyself."⁵⁸

1 Conscience, and why we wake.⁵⁹

While we are tied to this globe, some knowledge of the beings around us and of their operations is necessary; because, without it, we should be utterly at a loss how to conduct ourselves.

– Adam Smith⁶⁰

The moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm.

– Thomas Jefferson⁶¹

When a person changes his life, or changes the world, it is often conscience that calls on him to do so. Conscience is every person's inner voice, and from this podium wields the most powerful influence. It is each person's moral compass. It represents the freedom to do the right thing. It points to the life worth living. It is the guardian of personal integrity, burdens the guilty, clears the blameless, grounds any talk of ethics and informs every true religion. It asserts itself at the most critical moments, and at the most surprising times. It inspires the everyday actions of extraordinary people and the extraordinary actions of everyday people. It separates saints from psychopaths, appears in mantras from classic animation - Jiminy Cricket told us to "Let conscience be your guide!" - has played the central role in every moral philosophy worthy of note since Socrates, was fundamental for the founders of the United States of America, and has figured into many recently popular texts⁶²

However, for all the slogans, for all the books, for all the powers granted and for all the revolutions inspired, conscience is still something of a mystery. What *is* conscience?

The modern use of the word "conscience" can be traced to the 12th century. It derives from the Latin, "conscientia", meaning "knowledge within oneself, a moral

sense." "Conscientia" can be traced to the Latin word "conscire." "Conscire" means "to be mutually aware," from "con-" meaning "with" and "-scire" meaning "to know." It is self-knowledge, and it is also knowledge shared with others. It is knowledge of what one knows (and, properly informed, what one doesn't know), and it is also knowledge of what other persons know, in the sense that one person can be aware of what another person is feeling and experiencing, so that the experience is shared with that person, together. As "knowledge within one's self," it is close to what we call "consciousness," today. As "with-knowledge," it is compassion, sympathy, "moral sense," and close to what we take to be conscience, today.

Interestingly, the term "conscious" shares its origin with "conscience." It derives from the Latin, "conscius," and "conscius" also from "conscire." However, its use as a word arose much later than "conscience," in the 16th century, and even then it appeared to name nothing differently than "conscience" did. This fact carries some interesting implications. Primarily, it indicates that, at least originally, everything of which one can be conscious, and indeed know, is essentially moral, and everything moral is essentially something known, or at least knowable.

Evidence for the lasting influence of this way of thinking is readily apparent in everyday life, today. For example, it is common to distinguish between that for which one is morally responsible from that for which one is not on the basis of knowledge, or more precisely consciousness, surrounding any incident in question. In making this distinction, we recognize that morality is something known.

Recognizing that morality is something known opens the possibility that there might be some sort of *non-moral* knowledge. For example, one might take the potential for a person to do something with moral consequences, yet without awareness of the fact, and find in it a need for a second, specifically non-moral term for self-knowledge. Today, this job is done with the term “conscious.”

Today, the term “conscience” is used exclusively to name moral aspects of knowledge. “Consciousness” covers non-moral senses of “knowledge within one’s self.” However, this was not always the case. The modern non-moral sense of “conscious,” “active and awake” or “aware of one’s own existence, sensations, thoughts, and surroundings” did not arise until the 18th century, long after the inception of “conscious” as a separate term alongside its morally-endowed forbear, conscience.

This shift in usage indicates a commensurate change in the way that morality and knowledge have been regarded. Increasingly since, they have been understood as separate things, even as psychology and philosophy are today taken to be completely distinct areas of study when, originally, they were not. Coincidentally, psychology formally separated from philosophy during the same period, between the 18th and the 20th centuries, as the morally bereft sense of self-knowledge began to gain preeminence in discussions of the human mind, and moral law as the primary personal guide for action became increasingly displaced by the political guidance of conventional law. We will further explore some of the implications that the preoccupation with non-moral consciousness has had on the portrait of the human mind delivered by the

psychological sciences as this chapter proceeds, and begin to explore the relationship between moral and conventional law in the next chapter.

It is interesting to note that the use of the term “conscience” not only precedes that of “conscious,” it also briefly precedes that of the modern sense of “science” itself. “Science” comes from the Latin root “scientia.” And, as before, “scientia” can be traced to “scire.” “Knowledge.” The modern use of the term “science,” “knowledge acquired by study,” can only be traced to the 13th century. Today, “science” also names any “particular branch of knowledge,” or, as we shall come to utilize it throughout this text, a particular *field* of study. So understood, “science” names a scene, clearing, or place wherein objects are made visible or are discovered, are known and become knowable, and so wherein their study may take place. One “science” is only one such scene among many others, each separately digging in their own domains of known and indeed knowable objects.

From where does this sense of a “science,” as one part of the world of knowledge apart from others, arise? The “scire” of “science” may have been originally related to the word “scindere,” meaning “to cut or to divide.” From this relationship, we gain the sense of a science as a particular branch of knowledge, divided from others. In fact, this notion, that knowledge of the world can be cut into pieces, is very common today, just as moral is distinguished from non-moral knowledge. However, as its roots in “scindere” indicate, this notion is more a product of method – hacking the world into parts, “carving the world at the joints” - than any necessary aspect of knowledge, or of the world, themselves.

The method that results in such a fractured picture of the world is analysis. Analysis is knowledge by separation. Division. Distinction. To know a thing is to know how it differs from other things. It is this sense of knowledge that inspires the misleading adage, that 'the distinction is the philosopher's greatest weapon,' as if chopping the world into little pieces amounts to understanding it better.

This adage is wrong in two ways. First, it implies that philosophers need more than one weapon. We do not. Jesus of Nazareth didn't carry a sword. Neither did the Buddha, nor Samkara, nor Socrates. This is because philosophers are not primarily interested in cutting things up, dividing people, and maintaining differences. We are interested in putting things together. Things do get separated in the course of doing philosophy: right from wrong, good from bad, virtue from vice. However, these distinctions need not be actively pursued. After all, simply understanding the difference between virtue and vice is no reason to become vicious! Especially not when one realizes that vice, itself, is merely an absence of virtue. Rather than a thing in itself, it is merely something missing that we first of all wish were present.

This leads to the second way that the old adage about armed philosophers goes wrong. Once one understands right, good, or virtue, there is no need to make a distinction between these and their opposites, in the first place. There is nothing gained in stating the negative. Nobody ever became a better person by talking about doing the wrong things. Persons become better by doing the right things. Distinction does not generate knowledge. It merely makes room for ignorance.

No, philosophers have but one weapon, and it is not distinction. It is truth. And the only truths worth knowing tie the world together rather than tear it apart. They are moral truths. And the pursuit of this knowledge is the focus of this text.

However, the notion that knowledge is the product of analysis, the result of separating things from one another, is not easily dissolved. In fact, it appears to be easily confirmed in everyday scientific practice. In practice, the distinction between one sort of thing and another is the first step in the establishment of any field of science. Every science begins with classification, and classification is just the distinction between things of one type from things of another. The basis of a distinction forms the subject matter for a particular field of science, and the pursuit of that science continues in the field determined by the resulting class, with distinctions between classes resulting in the creation of new fields of science, and with distinctions within fields resulting in the creation of sub-fields within those particular sciences. Chemists study chemical things in chemical terms, physicists study physical things in physical terms, physical-chemists work in the sub-field between the two, and so on.

This process is consistent with the Greek origins of the Latin “scindere,” “skhizein,” meaning “to split, rend, cleave.” So, it may appear that there is something to “science” that, from the very beginning, involves cutting the world into ever smaller pieces. How this constitutes knowledge, however, and how it stands as a proper industry under whatever title, well, these are difficult questions, questions better addressed under another cover.

From this understanding of the root word, “science,” we gain special insight into the meaning of our focal term, “conscience.” With the addition of the prefix, “con-,” the meaning of the term “conscience” changes most dramatically from its rending root. “Con-,” meaning “together,” or “with,” implies the inverse of analysis, the opposite of separation, of dividing and distinguishing, of cutting and cleaving. “Conscience,” instead, means “putting together what has been cut apart.” Synthesis. The anti-weapon. The tool of choice in the daily labors of the life worth living. The spinning loom in the creation of a world worth living in. This is what “conscience” is.

However, clarity on the meaning of a word is far from clarity on its namesake. Typically, when persons have questions about the operations at work within themselves, questions about things like consciousness and compassion, they turn to psychology, not to the dictionary. It would seem unusual to ask about conscience without looking to psychology for answers. Psychology is the field that studies psychopathy, the apparent lack of conscience, after all. So, psychology would appear to be the place to search for some clarity on the conscience, itself, as well.

However, conscience has received scant attention from psychologists.⁶³ This focus away from conscience can be traced to the separation of psychology from philosophy, as psychologists began to classify their domain of objects outside of the bounds of the mother science and inside of their own. Since then, psychologists have been concerned with consciousness, in the modern non-moral sense, while the study of morality has been relegated to the field of ethics, a subfield of philosophy.

Consciousness - not conscience - has been the fundamental focus of psychological research since psychology was first founded as a science. It has given psychologists something to point to, something to work on, even as chemists work on molecules, physicists work on particles, and moral philosophers work out 'rights' and 'obligations.' Consciousness is the meat and potatoes of psychology. Conscious is how persons answer surveys, participate in psychological experiments, and pay (a lot) to talk about their mothers and fathers, families, failings and fantasies. Thus, consciousness has become more than a thing to be studied. It has become an industry.⁶⁴

But, where does consciousness come from? And, besides research grants, self-help lecture fees and book sales, what does it add up to? Or, more succinctly, "What is consciousness?" and "Why are we conscious in the first place?"

We can pursue the first question in two ways. First, by way of definition. Consciousness can be practically defined as that part of one's life of which one may at any given time be aware. Two things follow from this definition. First, it follows that there is more to life than consciousness. And second, that awareness must be defined, else we merely trade one undefined term for another.

Awareness can be defined as that to which one may attend. But this is only to demand two further things, that one answer why he may attend to some things and not to others, and that attention be defined. Attention is also a term of art from psychology, and points to the directedness, or intentionality, of consciousness. This, of course, requires that intention be defined. And, it implies two other things. One, that there is more to life than that toward which one's consciousness is directed. And two, that

where one is not directing attention at one moment may provide the space for some freedom in where one directs his attention at another moment. Beginning in this chapter and then throughout the text, we will explore this space of freedom. And, in chapters 3 and 4, we will define intension.

Still, we are left with the question: "What is consciousness?" Consciousness is often referred to as "what it feels like." What it feels like to be something, or to do something, is the stuff of which one may be conscious. It is the stuff of which consciousness is made. Though less than a proper definition, "what it feels like" does give us something to work with. For instance, one feels many things without any necessary awareness thereof, without any attention thereupon and without any intention one way or another. Moreover, "what it feels like" captures the broad scope of emotional life that is the substance of human psychology, while chasing a series of technical terms does not. Every time a psychological subject responds to questioning, recalls repressed memories or vents employment anxieties, the substance of consciousness is confirmed. The subject expresses "what it feels like" to be alive. And this is something notoriously difficult to define.

Where does this "what it feels like" come from? What is consciousness made from? How does it work? What is it good for? And, most importantly, what does consciousness, even life itself, all add up to? *What does it all mean?*

As with any other inquiry, we should begin with what is closest to us, before we begin to ask the bigger questions. In order to begin to understand any thing, from clocks to corpuscles, one must first understand from what that thing is made. In order

to understand the bigger questions about water - for example, why does it expand when it freezes? - one must first understand what water is made from – hydrogen and oxygen atoms bound in such a way that they form enlarged rings when they get cold. In order to understand automobiles, one must first understand engines and oils and undercarriages. In order to understand the English language, one must understand nouns and verbs, words and phrases. The same goes for everything else in the world and the same goes for consciousness, too.⁶⁵

However, at the birth of psychology, scientists were compelled to divert their attention *away* from the stuff of which consciousness is made, and they have mostly spent their time filling in this blank ever since. Why did psychologists originally turn away from searching out the building blocks of consciousness? In part, because of limitations inherent to psychological inquiry in the late 1800's, when psychology was just emerging as a science apart from the mother of all sciences, philosophy. And why is their attention focused on discovering these building blocks now? Because many of these original limitations are, as the physical sciences advance, being overcome. Overcome just enough, in fact, to get us moving in the direction of answering the more important questions raised, above.

The most obvious limitations on early inquiry into consciousness were practical. During the late 19th century, when people like William James were laying the foundation for the psychological sciences, there was no instrumentation available for the investigation of the processes underlying human experience. Unlike today, the only available window into the building blocks of human psychology was the lens of

consciousness, itself. Personal reflection. What was available to James and his contemporaries was conscious introspection, and conscious introspection has some obvious limitations when it comes to investigating the stuff definitively beneath one's conscious view.

But, this didn't stop James from trying. In his seminal work *The Principles of Psychology*, James tried to feel out what lay beneath his powers of introspection. In the tenth chapter, at the limits of his conscious awareness, he found "some bodily process, for the most part taking place within the head."⁶⁶ His word for this process was "sciousness." What did James mean by "sciousness?" He intended sciousness to name the stream of feeling and sensation, the rolling riverbed of embodied operations underlying his more famous stream of consciousness, or "stream of thought."

And, "sciousness" was an appropriate choice of terms to name the stuff of which consciousness is made. Even the word "consciousness" is, itself, made of more basic parts, "con-" and "-sciousness." James simply intended that "sciousness" point to the basic stuff from which consciousness, like its name, is similarly composed. The problem was this: James could not *prove* that sciousness was the basic stuff from which consciousness was composed. He could speculate all he liked, and call it what he liked, but he could explain nothing past that which his own consciousness could clearly reveal. And here, James met with the practical limitations of psychology in his time.

Moreover, his insights faced an even more impassible roadblock than the purely practical. The greatest obstacle came in the form of the ideological limitations of his peers. James' era was dominated by the view that each individual person had

conscious – read here complete, transparent, unimpeded - access to all internal psychological goings-on that mattered. Anything else was considered mere metaphysical speculation, if not outright mysticism, with no purpose in any serious science for any serious psychologist. Thus, concerning the initial credibility of his own speculations about consciousness, he wrote:

Speculations like this traverse common-sense; and not only do they traverse common sense (which in philosophy is no insuperable objection) but they contradict the fundamental assumption of every philosophic school. Spiritualists, transcendentalists, and empiricists alike admit in us a continual direct perception of the thinking activity in the concrete. However they may otherwise disagree, they vie with each other in the cordiality of their recognition of our thoughts as the one sort of existent which skepticism cannot touch.⁶⁷

In James' day, it was believed that all knowledge worth knowing rose from the bedrock of direct conscious perception. This attitude was most famously exposed in the philosophical speculations of Rene Descartes. Descartes described the human psyche, and indeed knowledge itself, in such a way that put consciousness at the foundation. On Descartes' estimation, to be apprehended rationally, in discrete thought, was the best evidence for existence. To clearly and distinctly conceive of a thing was proof of its reality. All knowledge was to begin, here.

This was to apply to any given thing, from the existence of one's shoe, to that of one's self, to that of God's. In fact, it is from Descartes' arguments for the existence of God that he is often misquoted as having said "I think, therefore I am." In fact, he never wrote such a thing. His point was that, of all things that might exist, the thing that must surely exist is thought. Only upon the foundation of the clear and distinct thought of a thing can the existence of that thing ever be confirmed. And, as the clearest and most

distinct thing he could conceive was, by his account, God, of all that might exist God most surely does. On the other hand, without discrete thought, there is nothing, because there is at the same time no concept of existence. Such is the view that all begins with consciousness, and builds up from there. From this perspective, thus, it is easy to understand why James' peers thought that whatever might lay beneath consciousness *must* be unimportant for understanding human psychology. Otherwise, the human subject would be, or at least *could* be, *clearly, distinctly, and directly aware of it.*

It was from the basis of Cartesian rationalism that James' fellow psychologists were ideologically predisposed to allow for the existence of nothing that they could not themselves - serious scientists that they were - consciously confirm. And, as this is exactly where James' insights into consciousness failed, he could not inspire in his fellows any serious interest in continuing the search for it. Simply pointing to some mysterious process was not solid enough ground for the fledgling science. James knew that. So, in his *Principles*, he returned to writing about "those particulars which to [his] own consciousness seem indubitable and distinct."⁶⁸

James could not see beneath his own conscious lights. However, our vision is not so limited, now. Though it made little sense for pioneering psychologists to take James' hypothesis as a basis for their emerging science, the hidden ground of consciousness is an increasing inspiration for today's researchers.⁶⁹ Capitalizing on decades of insights from the cognitive and computer sciences, current scientists have been able to bring interpretive resources to the topic that were unavailable in James' era. One

contemporary researcher, for example, sheds light on James' "sciousness" simply by equating it with the notion of a "black box:"

By definition, we know what goes on inside a black box from its outputs, from the external effects that the processes within the black box produce, and no more directly than that.⁷⁰

With the distinct idea of a black box, we can clearly conceive of sciousness. Equating sciousness with a black box captures the essence of James' thought. It makes the notion of sciousness thinkable without altering the fact that it is essentially hidden from direct inspection. The black box of sciousness is simply those bodily processes of which any person *cannot* be clearly, distinctly, and directly aware. It is evidenced not by its own direct perception, but by its directly perceived consequences. Consciousness, itself.

And this fact makes the black box of sciousness special. Sciousness is in effect like the battery case behind a flashlight bulb, the light of which reveals everything anyone will ever see. However, the conscious light that it powers cannot directly reveal the battery case behind it. This image underscores the limits of James' powers of introspection. He could stare into the light, gain a sense that something was powering it, but he was unable to clearly outline the shape of the source.

Times have changed, however. Science has advanced. It is now possible to produce images of the operations behind consciousness, to indirectly see what is otherwise unseen, in effect turning the flashlight bulb of consciousness back on the battery case behind it. Modern instruments serve as a complicated mirror revealing the mechanisms behind the mask. Their images can then be correlated with their

consequences - consciousness as it has always been confirmed, through the testimony of the subject, answering the question “What does it feel like?” - and through this work, by stitching all these pictures together, an understanding of the insides of the black box of sciousness is slowly emerging. The insides of this black box, in other words, are simply not that *black*, anymore.

So, what is sciousness, and how is it related to consciousness? Being that it is essentially beyond our imagination, it is impossible to simply point at sciousness as if it were a thing and say “There it is!” We can't just draw a picture of it. But, we can begin to understand how it becomes a thing to which we can point if we imagine the process by way of which things come to be things, in the first place. And, to this end, simple pictures can help.

So, let's begin by drawing two simple pictures. These pictures will be line-graphs of the sort everyone has studied in high school math class. These sorts of graphs are extremely common. There is an x-axis and a y-axis, and a line that moves from left to right indicating how x changes in relation to y and vice versa. They are most often used to illustrate how things change over time. They often look like pointy roller coaster rides with dollars or degrees at the left and time – hours, days, weeks, months, years – underneath. For example, they often appear in newspapers and on news casts, wherein weather forecasters use them to illustrate how temperatures rise and fall, and economists use them to illustrate market activity. We will use them to illustrate how sciousness changes over time, resulting in consciousness. (Fig. 1)

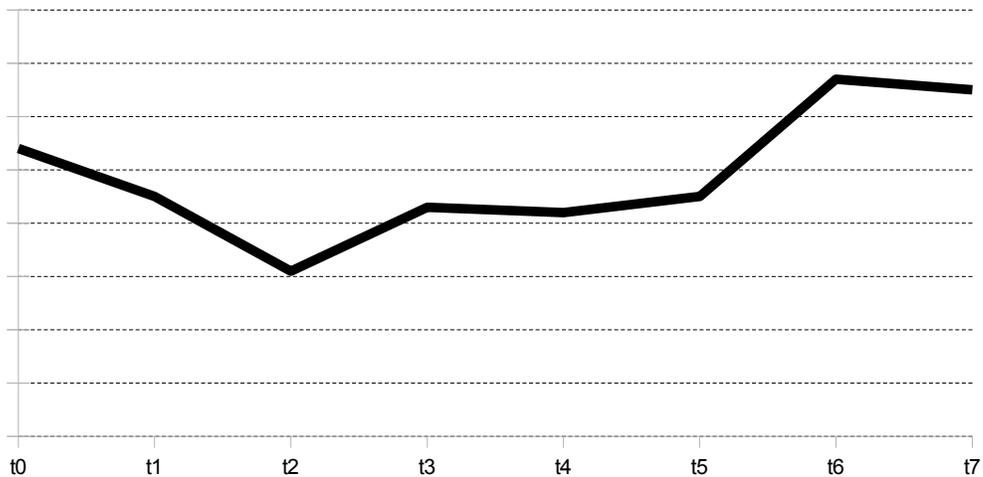


Fig. 1 Example line graph

A line-graph of sciousness looks like a line graph of changing temperatures or trade volume. And, it often feels that way, too. Moment to moment, the line-graph of sciousness rises and falls, registering the changes in one's situation. It moves as one moves, and the world moves around him. It is ongoing, embodied, dynamic, often exhilarating, and integral to survival. Thusly, it better resembles the ubiquitous heart-monitor of medical dramas and emergency rooms - a spiking, beeping, living electrocardiogram (EKG) - than some stale blue graph of the Dow flat-lining before yesterday's close. (Fig. 2)

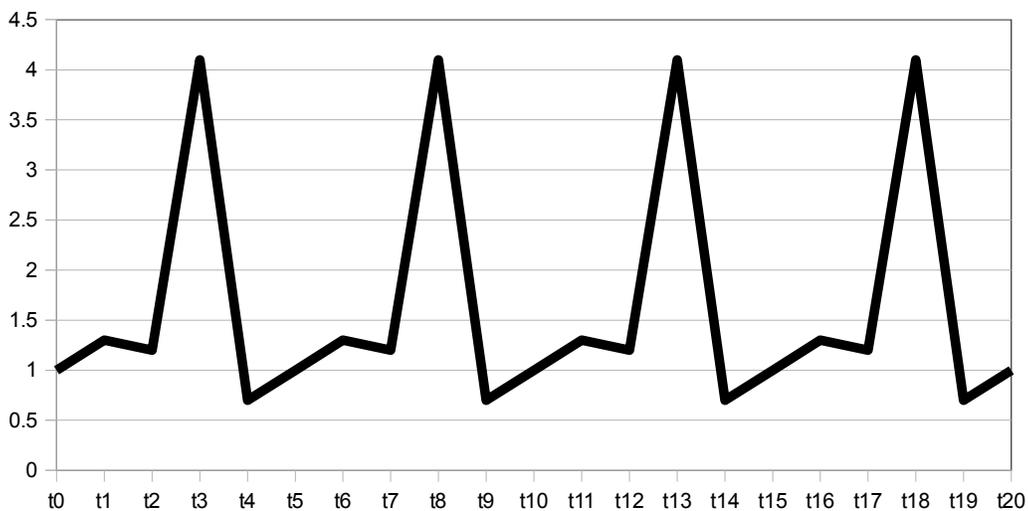


Fig. 2 Example line graph (EKG)

However, this simple line-graph of sciousness also differs from the output of an EKG machine in important ways.

First, instead of a beeping line punctuated by regular heartbeats, the line of sciousness is not necessarily regular, and not usually so dramatically punctuated.⁷¹ It does have peaks and valleys, and sometimes they are dramatic, but sciousness is mostly made up of gradual transitions from routine moment to routine moment, much of which is hardly worthy of note. After all, for the most part, life doesn't change all that much. We wake. We work. We sleep. And we tend to avoid risks for the safety of a well-established routine. Thus, the picture we are left with is like that of the EKG in that it moves along from moment to moment in real time, but it is (generally) smoother, changing subtly - and sometimes unpredictably - rather than in dramatic spikes at regular intervals. (Fig. 3)

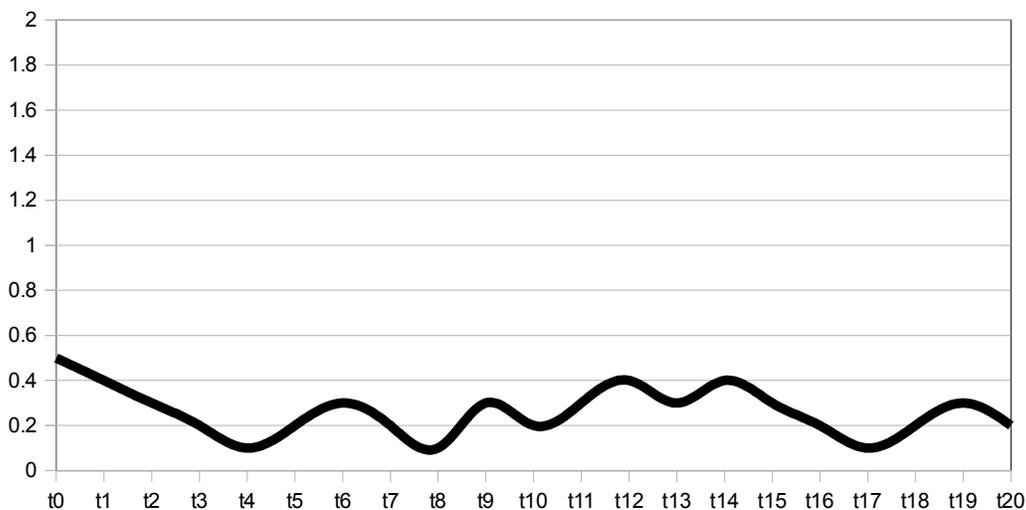


Fig. 3 Example line graph (smooth)

Second, the line graph of sciousness is a lot more complex than that of the EKG. Whereas the EKG represents one aspect of life, a beating heart, the graph of

sciousness represents every aspect of life, including all that goes into making that heartbeat rise and fall, slow and die in the first place. The line-graph of sciousness represents the continuous changes that one undergoes as his body continuously acclimates to the changing world. And, though they may be subtle, there are *a lot* of changes going on!

As one's body adapts to different situations, it takes on different states: moods rise and fall, blood sugar rises and falls, hormone levels rise and fall, and as they do, the line-graph of sciousness rises and falls. When life is routine, one's situation regular and the world peaceful, one's sciousness-graph may hardly rise and fall at all. Nothing demands attention. Still, however nondescript it may be most of the time, this rolling riverbed of sciousness is the stuff from which consciousness arises.

Now, we will use this basic idea to clarify the relationship between sciousness and consciousness by imagining two sciousness graphs, and then conjoining them. First, imagine a line-graph of sciousness that shows what it is like to be in a certain place at a certain time. Put yourself in a familiar place, perhaps waiting for a beer in a local pub. Imagine sitting at a dark corner table. Waiting, your moods shift. Your metabolism rises and falls with the rhythm of the scene, and all without any necessary awareness of this fact. Picture the sciousness-graph of this experience. It should be sort of flat, rolling slowly up and down with the relaxing rhythm of a comfortable scene, not unlike *Figure 3*, above (only a lot more complex!). Hold this complex portrait in your mind. It is picture number one.

Next, think of being in that same pub at that same table waiting for that same beer a little while later, after the waitress walks by without it and your head picks up to notice the fact. Imagine a second sciousness graph of this. It is much like the first, with one spike at the passage of a barmaid representing the piqued awareness that you are still without a beer. This peak may be followed by a shallow dip, showing your disappointment in the fact that the beer that she is carrying is not meant for you.

Now, we have two curves representing what it feels like to be in the same situation at two different times. What we have are two pictures of sciousness as you sit in a familiar pub, waiting for your beer from one moment to the next. One picture marks the beginning, and the next the end of a period of time as the thought occurs to you to check the clock and notice how long you have been waiting.

With these two pictures in mind, we can answer some very important questions. How does the stuff of these states spring to consciousness, rather than remain a hidden stream of sciousness? How is it that one is ever aware of being in a pub, at least for the first few hours, at all? This is the role of the con- of con-sciousness. Simply put, the con- of consciousness adds these two sciousness graphs.⁷² The overlay of the two reveals their biggest differences and amplifies their regularities. This operation produces a new curve, an updated curve punctuated by higher peaks and lower valleys, wherein you are struck by your disappointment, and realize that you have been waiting for too long.

When the peaks and valleys are high or low enough in the right dimensions, they rise to possible awareness (for example, in the simplified graphs above, everything

above a limit of 1). Everything within these limits remains in the black box of sciousness: present, but hidden from awareness. They are not things of which one is conscious. Everything that exceeds these limits, however, may be. This view, thus, coincides with the two attempts at determining consciousness with which we began this discussion: consciousness is that of which one is potentially aware, and the “what it feels like” to be in a place at a time.

Now, one may not be aware of *everything* outside of the black box of sciousness, but one cannot be aware of *anything* within it. So, as you sit waiting in the pub, you pass the time seemingly unaffected by the changing world around you. At times like these, one is free to wander, reflect, or doze off, while underneath it all one’s body quietly acclimates to the changing conditions. The clock ticks on, and the con- of consciousness continues to compound one felt moment with the next, raising some aspects to awareness rather than others, until, finally...

WALLAH! One curve is added to the last, and the result is a punctuated difference in the most critical dimension: There is a beer in it! That previously deficient, most important single aspect of the sciousness-curve that is your situation changes most abruptly. Where before there was nothing, now there is a big peak. Tall, cold, and shaped like an icy bottle, it has risen above the necessary threshold in just the right ways. Through the con-junction of sciousnesses, some isolated aspect of the ebbs and flows of your continuously changing situation has finally risen to joyful awareness. It is that for which you had been waiting, most worthy of attention. Thusly, sciousness is the stuff of which consciousness is made.

The con- of consciousness renders discrete objects from streaming sensation. This operation parses the continuously changing world, isolating regularities and anomalies from all the noise and distraction, thereby permitting a person to attend to what is most important. There is a certain economy to this operation. Whatever is within the black box of sciousness is typically not pressing, so the conscious mind is freed to attend to what may be. However, while at rest, through this same operation, in “reflection,” one can become aware of much of what otherwise passes without notice. After all, “reflect” is simply to turn something back on itself. In reflection, one is merely taking advantage of the con- of con-sciousness, amplifying what had been there but that had not otherwise risen to attention. It is thus that reflection serves as the original mirror for self-examination, the original tool for introspection, and the sole instrument with which William James carried out his seminal psychological research.

However, reflection has limitations. Limited to reflection alone, James was unable to clearly see the building blocks of which consciousness is constructed, -sciousness. Still, his initial insight was correct. Sciousness marks the fundamental mode of being in the world, with con-sciousness only arising later, as a sense of sensing, a feeling of feeling, a con-jugation of sciousnesses, which, only upon their reflexive integration, emerge as things for us to talk about.

The process by way of which certain things come to conscious lights while others remain hidden helps to explain why there are as many different ways to see the world as there are different people bearing witness. The world is discovered in terms of one’s own unique place within it. It is because of this unique point of view that a person

comes to be aware of some things and not others, and that he is aware of those things in some ways and not in others. For example, from my point of view, the top of that brown desk looks like a square. From Russell's, it may look like a diamond. From one dark table in a pub, a person may be conscious of a game of darts. From another, he may be conscious of a game of pool. Though this is the same pub, whatever one witnesses, he does so from his own unique place in an ever changing world. And it is only from this place in the world that one comes to know anything about it, at all.

Each person has his own place, alone, to suffer and to secure. There is no escaping it. And, every object of possible awareness arises from this unique perspective. Each of us is his own locus of discovery, his own "me" and "mine." This is the origin of the "I" in "I see," "I feel," "I think," "I am." This "I" is accompanies every moment of one's conscious life. The "I" arises with every moment of awareness. It is the implicit register of location from which a thing is sensed: "I *am* this point of view, *this* place, my *self*, aware of *that* thing, there." As one discovers the things of the world, one literally discovers *one's self* in the middle of them, as their common relation. Accordingly, all discovery of the world is the discovery of one's self within it. All knowledge is self-knowledge, as Socrates is famous for having maintained. Self and situation are the same. One's self is simply the one object in the world that binds all the rest together, the unfurling paper on which all of life's line-graphs of sciousness are drawn.

The essential capacity to bind the world together on the basis of one's self lies at the heart of this text. It is the essential operation of conscience, most prominently

demonstrated in persons of conscience in moments of crisis. We will study some examples of conscientious persons in unifying the world, rather than cutting it apart, in the next chapter. We will study actions and crises of all sorts in the chapters following that. Then, we will have what we need to understand the universal mechanism of morality through the ACTWith model of conscience in the fifth chapter. First, though, we must clarify the relationship between consciousness and conscience.

So far, we have arrived at an answer to the question, "From what is consciousness made?" Consciousness is made from a more basic integration with the world, from "what it feels like" to be in a place, at a time. Situated. Consciousness is made from consciousness. Consciousness bubbles up from adaptive bodily processes, culminating in self-discovery, and indeed culminating in one's self, the "I" from which all thought begins, the "I" which constitutes the contents of consciousness, and indeed the "I" of which one is hardly ever conscious as an object in its own right, at all.

On a sometimes choppy stream of consciousness, a person drifts like a raft for one bouncing off objects that briefly jar his attention, with most of life passing just beneath, unnoticed, unaware of his journey's beginning, often concerned for its end, but typically distracted by the glittering surface as things flash past, emerge from and disappear into the world around him. Thus, we can safely say that consciousness is not as important as its fame implies. For all the attention, for all the bright lights and loud parties, consciousness is a bit player in human experience. What we are aware of is not necessarily what is important, and what we are not aware of very often is. This understanding is so well grounded, in fact, that one contemporary neuroscientist opens

a recent text stating “Your conscious life, in short, is nothing but an elaborate post-hoc rationalization of things you really do for other reasons.”⁷³

What are these reasons? Again, there appear two approaches to answering this question, following those with which we began: “What is consciousness made from?” and “What does consciousness make up?”

The first approach looks for the reasons for why one does what one does in the substratum underlying consciousness. This is the direction that the above quoted neuroscientist pursues. By this line of reasoning, one's doing any given thing is due to the physical mechanics of the body, generally, and of the brain in particular. It follows that one's behavior is effectively pre-determined, that consciousness simply arises after the fact as a not-so-necessary window-dressing, and that this is the end of the story.

This sort of answer seems promising. In the preceding pages, after all, we did find that consciousness arises from something bubbling up from beneath its lower limit, consciousness, and consciousness begins with the body as that body acclimates to its environs. So, we may say that our reasons for action are simply consciousness, embodied responses to forces belonging either to the physical environment outside or the metaphysical environment inside our bodies, and are thus essentially beyond our control.

This view is typically called “epiphenomenalism.” An epiphenomena is something that has no function other than its appearance. On this view, consciousness has no purpose. It is a byproduct of neural processes whose purposes are other things. Consciousness arises. Period. Consciousness is merely a non-functional by-product of

the passage of life, the glimmering of moonlight on a flowing stream of consciousness. So, on this view, consciousness does not enter into the reasons we have for doing things. We may as well be zombies, unconscious, as our lives are directed by processes over which consciousness bears no effect, and practically speaking, nothing would change without it.⁷⁴

However, to simply remove consciousness from the causal loop of perception and action fails to tell us *why* we are conscious. It may tell us what consciousness is made *of*, from what consciousness arises, but it fails to tell us what consciousness is good *for*, what consciousness amounts to. Why do we need it? It fails, in other words, to answer the following question: If consciousness (or any other process or processes fulfilling the same or similar functions) is *sufficient* for consciousness, then why is consciousness *necessary*? Presuming that it is necessary, and not just window dressing, could it be that consciousness is necessitated by something greater than itself? After all, even window dressing has a function, and it is not contained in the fabric that makes it up.

I am reminded here of the history of the human appendix. For years, surgeons excised appendices without second thoughts, as the conventional wisdom dictated that it was an evolutionary leftover. The conventional wisdom was that it was unnecessary - good for nothing but getting infected - a dwindling remnant of days gone by. However, as is common with common wisdom, this was wrong. Today, Western medicine is recognizing that separating the appendix from the rest of the body is not such a good idea, as it performs important functions that may not be immediately obvious. Rather

than directly digest food, it provides a home for bacteria that indirectly aid in the digestive process as well as strengthen the body's immune system. Even though this fact may not be obvious from a study of the organs from which it seems to arise, this is why the appendix is necessary. And, as with the appendix, consciousness appears to be in danger of an overhasty removal at the hands of overzealous brain scientists.

But, this situation may be due to a simple misunderstanding. And, this misunderstanding may simply be due to method. Hacking the world into pieces may reveal the parts that make a thing up, but it cannot show what that thing, itself, adds up to. Answering this question about consciousness, then, simply calls for a change in method, a method that “scientists,” as the root of the name implies, are not inclined to pursue.

In order to adequately understand any given thing, it is not enough to merely know from what that thing arises. One must also know *why* that thing arises. In order to fully understand any thing, from cars to capital letters, one must understand not only that of which a thing is made, but also how that thing contributes to the grand order of other things. In order to understand water – for example, why does water not mix with oil? – one must first understand solvents and solubility, their respective properties and principles, and how water fits within them. Water is polarized where oil is not. Like dissolves like and these two are different. In order to understand English, one must also understand context, just as to understand any given term in any given language, one must understand the expression in which the term appears, and to understand any given expression, one must understand the way of life from which the expression

emerges. The same goes for everything else in the world, and the same goes for consciousness, too.

What does consciousness *make up*? Conscience.

So, *what is conscience?*

This is a very complicated question. In fact, this entire text is dedicated to adequately answering it. But, as with consciousness, we may benefit from some initial over-simplification. In this case, consider the following illustration.

Think of a very common object: an envelope. Envelopes can hold things: they contain them. Containing things, and in fact conveying things all together in one parcel from one place to another, is the function of an envelope. Conscience is like the envelope of consciousness; it contains it. It holds its objects together. It carries it along, and without it, it is missing something. So, think of conscience as a kind of envelope, and consciousness as some of the stuff that fills it up, with consciousness filling up the rest.

Now, imagine that you are writing a letter to stuff into that envelope. Imagine that it is a personal letter in which you reveal very important things about yourself. You are putting important aspects of your situation to paper: "I feel," "I think," "I am." You are searching for the "right words" to say things in just the "right way" to capture the situation as you see it, as you feel it, from your own personal point of view. There is a problem, however. The words that you feel need to be written are often not the terms of which you are immediately aware. So, you search for words. You reflect. Introspect. Extract. You make conscious what had been hidden. You set in ink your feelings, carving the shape of your inner life on a blank white paper, thereby bringing your

situation into the view of anyone else literate enough to read your letter. Then, you stuff this self-report into an envelope, put it in the post, and move on.

In terms of this analogy, think of the paper as consciousness, and the words written on the paper consciousness. The paper is the foundation upon which the words are sketched. The words are what stand out on top. The paper sets the limits of expression at its margins, yet harbors uncounted emotion in its depths. There are more words lurking there, silent, slippery yet in a way hungry to be caught. If only one is patient enough in reflection, and sensitive enough in introspection, then these flitting shadows can be refined. And, in the process, one can learn more about one's self.

The analogy illustrates a ubiquitous process most often overlooked. Discounted as we plod our daily routines. *Thinking*. Especially, it emphasizes the power of thought in self-discovery. One's conscious life, thinking, reflecting, expressing, is an ongoing struggle to make *explicit* what is merely *implicit*, to distill a message from the moment and send it along for future reference. One's conscious life is the life of thought. Consciousness – consisting especially of ideas, concepts, things that exist simply because one is aware of them, things like numbers and names – is necessary for this process, thought. And it is in thought, first of all, that we are free. This point will come to a head in the eighth chapter.

Without consciousness, there are no ideas, no dreams, no aspirations. And this begs the question: What would life be like without consciousness? Can a zombie, without consciousness, picture a better world? Can it paint a mental image red or blue, and compare the two, choosing the bedroom curtains on the basis of this image? Can it

talk about better worlds, justice and lives worth living? Can it, in other words, do philosophy? Be a philosopher? If it cannot, then it is missing something that makes a difference, something that the rest of us enjoy and, in fact, cannot live (well) without. Something that we need. Consciousness.

Consciousness, on the other hand, is not necessary to be a zombie. It isn't necessary to be a thing for a moment, purely subject to some passing state of brain and body. A thing need not be conscious to be a slave to its emotions, habits, or instincts. Consciousness is only necessary for what it means to future moments and to other persons, including that future person who one's present self will, one way or another, become. But, consciousness cannot provide for the future on its own.

Conscience is what makes the future self a possibility of which one may or may not be conscious. Conscience is what makes consciousness a necessity. Conscience, like an envelope, carries the information that consciousness brings from one time and place, one situation, to another. And, in this conveyance, the information it contains and carries has a purpose. It is necessary.

Written, a letter paints a picture of what it is like to be in a given place. But this information is useless if not delivered to another place. It is simply words. It is the envelope that carries the picture, whole, forward, outward, and it is in this movement that the contents of consciousness become useful. This information, injected into a different situation, makes a difference. It changes things. As it is the envelope that gets this information from one situation to the next, it is the envelope that makes this change possible. And, it is in changing things that consciousness is necessary.

Not that things do not change without consciousness. They do. But, one could not envision and engineer change, change things purposefully, according to a plan, coordinating with other people or proceeding alone, without it. This makes consciousness, via conscience, a crucial aspect of the human condition, indeed, and not at all “ad hoc.” For, if one cannot change himself and his world, one may as well be a zombie. This is a fact, and there is nothing ad hoc about it.

Consciousness, carried along from present to future, from self to other, may not be necessary for simple forms of life, but it is necessary for a meaningful life, for a thoughtful life, for a human life worth living. Again, this theme will be deeply developed in the second part of this text, once the mechanics that underwrite the life worth living have been adequately sketched.

Presently, imagine that there were no envelope. Would there still be a letter? There would be ongoing writing, certainly; but one would always be in the middle of it. There might be frantic scribbling, but there would be no message packed away for another place and time. There may be a stream of sensations reduced to words in a series, but each up and down, each here and there would be indifferent to the last. No part of the series would stand apart from any other. One may be aware of things as they pass, but it would not matter. They would simply pass. Capturing this information, containing and conveying what it feels like to be in one situation to and from another is the purpose of the envelope. Without the envelope, it would all meld together, as if one’s life story were written on a continuous roll of paper, each revelation – however momentarily clear and distinct - buried by the next and forever lost to review.

This aspect of our illustration points to another important way in which conscience is like an envelope. Like an envelope, it separates the feelings of being in one situation from others. It holds different situations apart for comparison. In their comparison, one can recognize their differences, realize that some are better than others, and from this understanding act accordingly.

Without conscience, there may be a lot of noise, but no message. Only idle chatter. There could be no reflection on where one might end up, no determined sense of any situation as a distinct position between those before and after, no happy ending to plot and no tale to tell about how one got there. One may be alive, but not live for anything. One may respire, but not aspire to something better.

Without conscience, one may become aware of things, but without ever understanding how they all thread together into one's ongoing life's story, "mine." In other words, without conscience, there may be material *sufficient* for consciousness, but nothing that would *necessitate* it. Thusly, conscience and consciousness are essentially related. They are tied together at the roots.

One may be conscious of the objects which determine his situation, but one only comes to terms with situations, themselves, as one situation relative to others, through the exercise of conscience. Through conscience, the objects of the world are meaningfully arranged around a single unifying theme: coming to terms with one's own unique situation. This single theme provides the thread along which one's entire life is strung. And, it is in finding one's self in the midst of such an arrangement, as an object

amongst other objects, and also as the binding force at the center holding all of these objects together, that one becomes an "I." **"I am here."**

In fact, the best way to read this sentence is as a formula of the form $A = B$. The "I" is the *here*. This is a point that will be ultimately developed in the ninth and tenth chapters, when we are ready to fully understand the implications of this fact. However, it will pay to briefly discuss it now so that we can understand the basic mechanism of conscience.

One's self, "I," is essentially positional.⁷⁵ The self emerges as the single constant in one's always changing situation. And, as one's situation is constantly changing, as one is on the move and as the world moves around him, one's self is always changing. This is because, as *essentially* positional, one's self *is* his situation. Here. There. And in between. One's self is the place where he was, and is, and also the place where he is going. All here, one's self. One's self is the constant and universal locus of change, the site of the ongoing synthesis as past becomes future and one's future self becomes who one is, here and now.

It is this sense of self, not simply as an aspect of a situation, as a living thing within a situation, but *as* the situation, as the integration of situations past, present and future, actual and possible, that is the product and purpose of conscience.

Let's look more closely at how conscience gets this done. Recall our analysis of consciousness as con-consciousness. The con- of consciousness is what makes what is otherwise merely sensed into objects of which one might be aware.⁷⁶ Con- is doing the same work in con-science, except that the basic building blocks of conscience are entire

fields of objects rather than some particular objects within only one of them. These fields, “-sciences,” include all aspects of situations, the physical and metaphysical, real and imagined, merely sensed or subject of focused attention. The scene from within any given a field is *what it feels like to be situated in one field relative to another* rather than *what it feels like to be situated relative to some object of consciousness or other*. We will advance on this theme most explicitly in the eleventh and twelfth chapters.

All that one ever really “knows” is the scene from his place in the world, his situation. This fact reaffirms the following crucial point: *All that one, as situation, ever knows is essentially, ever and only, one's self*. All knowledge is self-knowledge.

But, what is “knowledge?” Knowledge can be spoken of in many ways. Roughly speaking, and avoiding the tangle that is contemporary epistemology,⁷⁷ there is knowledge *that*, knowledge *how*, and knowledge *why*. So far as knowledge *that* is concerned, to know something is to know if a representative statement is either true or false. To know *that* is to know what is true at a time and a place, say at point A. It is sometimes called “theoretical knowledge.” Knowledge *how* is more practical. To know *how* is to know what it takes to get something done. It involves the before and after of a process, how to get from point A to point B. It is sometimes called “practical knowledge.” Knowledge *why* encompasses both of these. To know *why* is to know the purpose of something. It is to know what something is for, and that involves knowing both *that* things are the way they are (and not some other way, misidentified or simply made up), *how* they got to be that way and *how* they might become otherwise. It is called “wisdom.”

For instance, everyone knows *that* paper burns. Some know *how* paper burns, hot and with a spark. Few know *why* paper burns. Paper burns because the universe – or at least our little corner of it – proceeds down an entropic slope with everything moving towards disorder. This slope is often called “time.” Burning paper simply moves a bit faster down this entropic slope than most other things around it. This is why it stands out, and becomes a *what*. Something worthy of attention. Something to talk about. “Did you see that paper speeding by toward disorder? Wow!”

Knowing *why* adds something to knowing that and knowing how. It adds the end, the point toward which the how and what are headed. It is knowledge of what Aristotle called the “final cause.” It means knowing the purpose of a thing. Knowing this means knowing why any given object shows up where it does, when it does, as it means knowing how it got there and what it is doing. Taken altogether, it is knowing why any given scene, consisting of objects including the people amongst them, is arranged the way that it is. Importantly, this goes for one's self as well as for any other thing. It is knowing why things are where they are, were, and should be, one's self most of all. It is knowing the answer to the question “*Why am I here?*”

With this knowledge arises a certain power. This power is the potential both to arrange situations in order to satisfy one's own purposes, and to avoid situations that are so arranged as to deny one's purposes from being realized. What arises is the potential to have an end in mind, to strive for it, and even to share it. What arises, in fact, is the potential to “have a conscience,” and use it to change one's self and the world for the better. What arises is the freedom to climb up the entropic slope along

which the rest of the universe is more or less rapidly sliding. The freedom to think. To dream. The freedom to compose, alone and with others in theory and practice, *higher orders*, situations in which life is worth living, and then to act toward reaching them. This freedom is at once the most cherished, and most forgotten, object of all.

How does conscience open the way to this highest object in life? Consider this. Within every situation is an array of objects. Conscience delivers the capacity to arrange these objects according to some purpose. In fact, to compose a different situation corresponding to some end or aim, some goal, or dream. It does this by holding scenes - *what it feels like to be situated in terms of different arrays of objects* - in comparison.

These situations range from the everyday to the ideal. Everyday situations consist in everyday objects arranged according to everyday life. These arrays are more or less well ordered, but in every case people seek arrangements that expedite the purposes of the persons situated therein. Those objects that get in the way are out of place. Those that are “there” when needed are in the “right” place. Those arrangements of objects that do not expedite one's purposes are bad ones. Those that move one along are good ones. And those that meet the terms of all those invested are the best ones.

For instance, the scene from within a typical living room consists of chairs and tables and television sets, all arranged for the purposes of persons relaxing therein. The purpose that guides the arrangement is comfort, and perhaps especially the comfortable viewing of the television, for instance. This purpose becomes the principle

by way of which the arrangement is evaluated. Where it is facilitated, the arrangement is good. Where denied, the arrangement is not good. Where most efficient in this regard, while facilitating secondary and tertiary purposes, the arrangement is best.

Now, anyone can relax in a living room and remark on its comfort after the fact. But, it takes something more to be able to arrange things in just the right ways beforehand. This is where conscience comes in. Conscience holds out an ideal situation – perhaps one of perfect comfort! - and this is taken as an aim. It becomes something to strive for, to work toward realizing, and also the standard against which any actual situation is eventually held in comparison.

Things are similar in the not so everyday situation. Conscience holds out an ideal toward which to strive through action. Consider the situation of a scientist. For instance, the scene from within the typical chemistry laboratory consists of beakers and burners, principles and processes, all arranged for and by the purposes of the scientist working therein. The purpose that guides the arrangement varies from scientific discovery to material profit. In any event, every object, material and theoretical, must be ready for use when the scientist requires it to further his investigation. Where this purpose is facilitated, the arrangement is a good one. Otherwise, it is not. Where it is faulty, the scientist will turn to perfecting it. He will ask “Why is *this* or *that* not *here* or *there*?” or “Where has my theory led me astray?” He will do this because even the ideas that litter his laboratory can become obstacles to his purpose. And, as this process moves along, they require constant re-evaluation. A physical law cannot be washed clean so easily as a reaction vessel, and where a test tube may play a part in a

single trial, the principles that guide the observations of the reactions within that tube play a part in all of them. Thus, again, what is most important about the situation, here of the scientist, is not the physical objects that surround him at the moment, but the ideally arranged space of his science ahead, and the ideas, objects of consciousness alone, that get him there.

Whatever one's goal, a situation is ideally ordered if engagements with its objects proceed at the maximal efficiency. In the case of chemistry, the objects with which the scientist engages include molecules and elements, forces and mathematical functions. All of these things are arranged through the purposes of the scientist himself. One over-arching purpose – inquiry toward the chemical truth of the world - delimits the “field” of chemistry, the field within which every chemist works. This field is populated by objects equally metaphysical as physical, all equally objects of consciousness. Where the objects of this field are bound without contradiction, principle with process and process with physical parts, so that predictions can be made at will and without error, and inquiry becomes routine confirmation, this field is perfected. This is the space of an ideal science, and it is that situation toward which any theoretical scientist works no matter his area of specialization, from chemistry to ethics. This ideal space is one of ideal comfort for any scientist working therein. It is where the work of inquiry ends, the point at which the scientist can retire to his living room, put his feet up, and remain at leisure. Without doubts.

A similar process, and a similar drive, underwrites the arrangement of living room furniture. The perfect living room arrangement is the one in which the purposes

entertained therein proceed without interference. Nothing in this room is an obstacle. Nothing gets in the way of conversation, or trips up a sleepy walker in the dark. The inquiry toward the realization of this situation could be called a science, perhaps some specialty within the field of ergonomics, the purpose of which would be to answer questions like “Why is the sofa here?” Where these questions are easily and without contradiction solved due to the adequacy of guiding principles practically applied, the field may be judged, alongside its product, perfected. The only work left being the production of coffee-table books filled with this last recipe for leisure.

The ability to hold up such a situation for consideration, as an end, is the product of conscience. Conscience is at work in every instance, from the everyday to the ideal. In every case, the “-science” of “con-science” presents the scene from within any given situation, whatever one's purposes, from theoretical chemistry to interior design, from actual to potential, from present to ideal, while the “con-” of conscience holds these scenes apart and permits their relative evaluation. Thusly, con-science reveals differences between situations. Good, bad, better and worse.

Most importantly, conscience reveals the differences between where one was, and where he is going. It does so by holding in comparison the “what it *would* feel like” to be in possible situations. This operation is essentially evaluative. Situations are better or worse because they *feel* that way. There is no other basis for their evaluation. And, because the basis of the evaluation of relative situations is *what it feels like* to be in them, the contents that enter into these evaluations are not limited to those objects of

which one may be aware. A situation either feels right, or it does not, regardless of the objects that litter its physical or theoretical field.

These feelings of right or wrong orient a person. They generate the feeling of where one is in the world, in history, in life, and where one must go or whether he is best off staying put. They reveal whether a person is in a better situation or worse, if one is going the right way or if he needs to change course. They provide direction, giving a person a place to go, setting out the situations worth seeking as well as those best left behind. And, all of this arises by way of “con-science.”

How is it possible, however, that even radically different situations can be so readily held against each other, with their differences reduced to a single dimension, right or wrong? On what basis are the relative values of different situations compared such that every person, regardless of race, culture or convention, proceeds through life by way of the same logic?

Personal integrity. Integrity is wholeness, health and happiness. Continued integrity is the central concern universal to every living thing. Integrity comes down to one thing for most organisms most of the time: survival. Surviving means staying alive, and staying alive means surviving the situation in which one finds one's self. This means not putting one's self in situations in which one cannot survive. After all, situations are simply the “where” of life, and every organism seeks situations in which living will continue. One's own, or, denying that, others'. And, ideally, one achieves not only a situation in which life can continue, but a situation in terms of which one can live well.

Living well involves living in the greatest comfort, and comfort implies suffering no threat to one's personal integrity. It means security. The security of extra food, water, all the necessities of life and more. There is no anxiety over survival in a comfortable situation. And, equally, there is no more *uncomfortable* situation than the one that kills you. This is a logic universal to all life. And, it is the logic by way of which conscience facilitates the evaluation of any possible situation.

Simply surviving in a changing world is often good enough for most persons, plants, and other animals. And survival, as exciting as it sounds, is often a purely passive operation. One may have no choice in the matter: adapt or die to the present situation, or seek another and adapt or die, there.

But, conscience permits something more than mere survival. Conscience holds out the possibility of an ideal world, a life worth living in a world worth living in. It holds out these ideal arrangements as possible ends. In so doing, conscience holds out the possibility of something better, a better life lived in terms of such arrangements. These states then take on names such as justice and liberty, and in the process they become things toward which to strive through action. A person of conscience, thus, need not merely survive, passively meeting the terms of the world as given. *A person of conscience can live on his own terms, instead.* A person can do otherwise, live otherwise, changing himself and the world to suit. *A person can be free.* Conscience is the source of this power, universal to all creatures with the ability to evaluate relative situations, and strive for those that they feel are best. Let me explain.

Every living organism is constantly struggling to maintain a complicated balance. It's survival depends on the ability to adjust to a constantly changing environment, to balance what it needs with what it can get, its requirements with available resources. This activity is called "homeostasis." Homeostasis functions to maintain equilibrium between factors internal and external to the organism. The integrity of a thing is maintained where a balance is possible, and potentially violated where it is not. If the equilibrium tilts too far in either direction, then integrity is violated, and the survival of the organism may be denied.

Homeostasis is typically associated with the physical environment. When the weather turns cold, for instance, a human body will shiver in order to generate more heat. When food is scarce, on the other hand, that same body's metabolism will slow to save energy. However, factors affecting human equilibrium are as often *metaphysical* as they are physical. The terms that must be balanced as a human seeks equilibrium range the full scope of human life. This scope ranges from material to fantasy, from the quality of the air to the requirements of religion. Accordingly, maintaining human integrity is more complicated than that of a bacteria or an oak tree. True, as with any other living thing, human beings must acclimate to the physical world or fail to survive. However, they are also able to set out terms they would rather meet, instead. Human beings give weight to things like gods and demons, good and evil, and this affects the equilibrium to which they are consequently drawn. Human beings give weight to things of which they may be conscious, but which, otherwise, do not exist on their own. Sometimes, balancing these figments with physical reality comes only at the cost of

one's life. It is not uncommon, for example, that a person sacrifices himself for a principle. It is far more common, however, that persons kill in order to rid the world of ideas that differ from their own.

Persons live and die by their ideas. Objects of consciousness are often very real threats to survival, one's own and others'. Humans balance metaphysical terms that feel heavier, move faster, and hit harder than any purely physical thing, often at the cost of their own physical integrity. Other living things do not share this burden, at least not to the same degree. A rabbit will as easily run from a shadow as will a corrupt man seek refuge within it. Both act without principles, but only one can be found deficient in them. Thus, though the terms which determine their respective situations differ, the processes that move either to meet them do not. Both seek to balance the inside with the outside, to live another day, and to maintain their integrity however it is understood, for all that it is worth.

Human beings are not essentially different from other living things in this regard. Moreover, living things are not different from any non-living object in this regard, either. Everything from rock to rabbit to rocket scientist balances in and out, resisting violations of integrity. In minerals as well as men, the tendency is expressed in the energy necessary to break bonds between atoms, and to overcome forces holding atoms together, for instance the energy required to liberate an electron from an atom as given on any periodic table of the elements. With a big enough spark, however, and with enough coaxing, even a scientist will burn.

Even in coming to terms with good and evil, god and devil, there is no process at work that is not also at work in every other natural object, living and not. The process at root is known as “equilibrium.” And, where homeostasis describes the natural tendency of living things to seek equilibrium, humans included, the tendency toward equilibrium is not special to living things at all. Moving to equilibrium is common to every naturally occurring thing, living, dead, or otherwise. *Every thing in nature, from man to molecule, moves to equilibrium in terms of its environment. Men only differ from molecules in the capacity to affect the terms of this arrangement.*

Human beings enjoy a limited potential to determine, for themselves, the terms which define their environments. In this way, they are able to affect the terms toward which they move in seeking equilibrium. And in this way, human beings, more than other things in nature, are burdened. This is the burden of a most valuable gift, freedom. Beginning with the conscientious evaluation of relative situations, a human being can determine for himself toward which terms he will aim in action, and to which he will come to terms with as a consequence of action. Beginning with the conscientious evaluation of relative situations, *a person is free.*

Even though this freedom *may seem* unique to human beings, there is truly nothing mysterious or supernatural about it. It is only an extension of the tendency for all naturally occurring things to seek equilibrium, made apparently special by the fact that human beings seek equilibrium in terms of objects the appearances of which are sometimes fully within their control. This control is their freedom, but this freedom

comes at a cost. The cost is responsibility. Culpability. It is morality, and all that this means.

There is no morality without freedom, and both begin with conscience. Conscience sets out the possible ends to action, and provides the mechanism whereby these situations become sought or avoided. The fulcrum between the two, ends to be left and ends to be entered, is a position universal to every person at every moment at every opportunity for action. It is always in the middle of a complicated balance, between terms set and terms sought, that a person finds himself. Consciousness is the vehicle that presents these terms. One can be aware of his position, conscious that this or that object is here or there. But it is through conscience that these relationships are rendered more or less significant. It is conscience that holds in balance the situations, themselves, as the seats of all of the objects that fill them and all of the terms that make them up. After all, every action ends in a situation, not in a singular object being closer or farther away. Thusly, conscience makes it possible for a person to do more than lust after one object, while fleeing in fear from another. Conscience makes it possible for a situation to be an object in itself, regardless of the objects which stand out as its characteristic marks.

Through the mechanism of conscience, an array of objects is turned into a place to be. This mechanism involves comparing one place with the next, recent or far removed, real or only possible. Thereby, conscience does more than show a person where something is. It provides a person with a place to go. Rather than isolating one object among many, conscience permits the isolation of one *situation* among many.

Then this situation becomes in itself an object to seek, then to explore, and in its exploration the source of new objects to discover. In the process of discovery, one has the opportunity to learn about the objects of the world. One becomes wiser. And one has the opportunity to learn about one object most of all. One most important object. One's self.

No matter where one goes, one takes one's self with him , and will live or die by the result. Freely sought or merely suffered, in every possible situation one's self is the foremost constant. This is a universal fact of life. And, it is the basis of universal moral law.

Often, the situations that conscience holds out in comparison are already one's own. They are "mine" with "me" only one object at the center of many within them. But, these ends may also be someone else's, with one's self traded equally for another self, and with their relative value ascribed according to the universal logic of conscience. They might be "yours," with "me" taking your place. It is here, in the conscientious comparison of situations, in the comparison of one's own situation and another's, that we find the grounds of morality. It is in the universal value of personal integrity that we find the grounds for universal moral law.

However differently one person may appear from another, however lonely one may feel in a crowd, the constitutions of every person are all essentially the same. Accordingly, what is a good situation for one is good for any other, and what is bad, bad. Any situation without air in it, for example, is a bad situation for any one, as is any situation without love, without health, without hope or happiness. The specific terms in

which these situations are realized may differ. Things may *appear* differently. But, persons, and the situations that they seek, are all essentially the same.

From within any person's situation is the scene, the view over the space of his own life. Others have a similar view. One becomes aware of this space in terms of his position relative the things within it. Others are similarly aware of their own situations. One becomes aware of himself in terms of his own unique position relative to other positions, his own and other's, actual and purely possible. Others' self-awarenesses are similarly composed. One seeks only those situations in which his integrity can be maintained. Others are similarly motivated. One seeks only those situations in which his purposes can be realized. Others, likewise. In every way crucial for survival, one's own situation is the same as is any other's. These aspects of our lives are universal. Conscience permits the comparison of situations in terms of these aspects, and the weighing of their relative worth in these universal terms. So, its evaluation is equally universal. Thus, from these grounds, from this mechanism of conscience, emerges the first rule of morality: *Do not put another in a situation which you would not seek for your own.*⁷⁸

This is the formula from which all other moral laws and (justifiable) legal codes are derived. Where these codes facilitate the realization of this principle, they are good. Where they do not, they are more than bad. They are *wrong*. *Unjust*. In chapters eleven through fifteen, we will apply these results in the examination of some aspects of the codes and conventions in terms of which we all currently live our lives. Therein, we will find confirmed a feeling that so many persons of conscience share. Something

must be done. To ensure that the right “something” gets done, however, we must proceed stepwise in order to adequately understand just what this “something” might be. “It is a long road from law to justice.” But, it is the only road worth taking.

In the next chapter, we will look at persons who have taken this road in life. We will review the phenomena of the conscientious objector, of the sort of person who puts the first rule of morality, the fundamental moral law, into practice. Conscientious objectors act according to the voice of conscience, do what is right rather than what is easy, overcome obstacles to moral action and so keep the fire of hope burning so that they and others might live meaningful lives. The next chapter will focus on the methods of one man, in particular. His employment of the power of words to unify the world most clearly demonstrates the constructive potential of conscientious action. This man is Martin Luther King, Jr.

The third and fourth chapters will expose the anatomy of action, generally, and uncover the role of conscience in doing any thing, at any time, right or wrong, overcoming obstacles to moral ends or otherwise.

Then, in the fifth chapter, all of this will be distilled into the ACTWith model of conscience. The ACTWith model consists of four modes which, when set in motion, become the “beating heart of conscience.” In this, the living mechanism of morality, we will have finally found an adequate answer to the question “What is conscience?” We will have seen what makes it up.

The rest of this text will respond to the “Why?” question of conscience, “To what does conscience add up?” *A life worth living. A self worth becoming. A world worth leaving behind.*

2 Conscience, and why we live.

I became aware of the lie of our life, thanks to those sufferings to which my wrong road led me ; and, having acknowledged the error of the way on which I was bent, I had the boldness to go, first in theory, then in reality, wherever my reason and conscience led me, without any deliberation as to whither they were tending. And I was rewarded.

– L.N. Tolstoy⁷⁹

Nothing dismayed, Gilgamesh set out on the road through the mountains, and the darkness increased in density every hour, but he struggled on, and at the end of the twelfth hour he arrived at a region where there was bright daylight, and he entered a lovely garden, filled with trees loaded with luscious fruits, and he saw the "tree of the gods."

– Epic of Gilgamesh, 9th tablet

Common sense tells us that behind every action, good or bad, there is a conscience, good or bad, and a person – not merely some small part of his brain, but a *whole person* - more or less committed to the execution of that action, all the while chanting "My conscience is my guide!"

As guide, conscience leads persons to do what they feel is right. However, conscience plays an equally important inhibitory role. Rather than setting out ends to be pursued, conscience warns of ends to be *avoided*. This is the most recognizable form of conscientious expression, a role played by of the infamous "voice of conscience," infamous at least because it leads to the phenomena of the conscientious objector.

A conscientious objector is a person who follows conscience rather than human convention, who acts according to the moral law rather than conventional law. The pursuit of this road in life comes at a cost. When a person does as conscience rather than as worldly authorities demand, there are consequences. Foremost is that

conventional law is often broken, and those who produce, enforce, and benefit by said conventions persecute the conscientious “offender.” Thus, in the interest of convention, rather than in what is right, conscientious objectors are often mistreated, ostracized, abused, imprisoned, tortured and even assassinated.

Why are enforcers of conventional law are so ready to violate the moral law? Because the principles that guide their actions have nothing to do with morality. What is right and good is not their object. Instead, they are oriented only within the array of legal objects that compose the field of conventional law. And they understand the world accordingly, dividing those who think and act by their stipulations from those who do not, with their leadership trumpeting the logical extremes of this attitude: '*You are either with us or against us.*'

Of course, there are tragic consequences to hacking the human world into pieces. Through application and analysis of conventional law, torture has become standard operating procedure in the contemporary United States. In violation of fundamental moral law, it is now a matter of course to put others into the opposite of situations one would seek for his own. Thus, enforcers of conventional law act in a field of value that is the *inverse* of what is moral. They may claim to do what is “lawful,” but they in fact succeed only in doing what is *wrong*.

This fact, that so many people today live and act within an inverted field of value, indeed within an inverted world toward immoral ends, will receive increasing attention as the text continues. Finally, the assessment of this state of affairs, and especially of our potential to change it, will be complete only in this text's closing pages.

Presently, we will review some examples of persons who have refused to act contrary to the moral law regardless of the conventional forces arrayed against them. We will examine the sorts of situations to which persons of conscience object, and we will find a deep pattern within them, a pattern increasingly matching the situation in which we now live. In every case, conscientious objection involves healing a rift, bridging opposites and nullifying conflict, if only within one's self. At the very least, it involves becoming an obstacle to the realization of immoral ends. Often enough, this entails standing up to conventional authorities in order to challenge injustice. And, in rare cases, conscientious objection can change the way of the conventional world, altogether.

This chapter will culminate in an analysis of perhaps the most famous example of a man who did just that, Martin Luther King, Jr. King did more than object to conventional law - he opened the way to something better. He did it at his own expense. He did it for us. We will find in King a potential, the cultivation of which is our ultimate aim. Should we wish to do similarly, we should first study his methods. The rest of this text will show us how best to apply them.

It has been said that life is a journey. If it is a journey, it is a journey whose beginning and end is always one's self. Whatever lies ahead is always laid out and met by one's own mortal coil, sprung from a distant and sometimes forgotten beginning. It has also been said that life is a story, a story written and rewritten along the way. But, if life is a story, then its terms are largely inherited, with whole chapters composed long before one can ever hold a pen. Nonetheless, each of us is at least partly his own

author. And, even as his story plods along, one is sometimes free to stop writing, reflect on the line he has plotted, and even start again from a blank sheet, anew.

But, what could compel a person to change the course of his life in a single action? Conscience, of course.

Every journey, every story, every life, long or short proceeds one step, one stanza, one action after another. When there is no doubt that whatever one does is the right thing to do, one proceeds in “good conscience.” There is no hesitancy around what might happen next. There is no anxiety over a road not taken. There is only the sense that the right thing is getting done. Acting in “good conscience,” one feels that what he doest fits seamlessly into his life as a whole. Each action follows smoothly from the last.⁸⁰ Accordingly, philosopher James Childress has written that “We often describe a good conscience as quiet, clean, and easy and refer to this state of affairs as one of peace, wholeness, and integrity...”⁸¹

But, life is not always quiet. Integrity can be threatened. A person sometimes feels that he is not doing the right thing. At times like these, conscience warns us that things are going wrong. These are times of crisis. There are many kinds of crises. When the voice of conscience rises up and compels a person to make a change, to act from conscience rather than convention, it is called a “crisis of conscience.”

In a crisis of conscience, one simply cannot proceed in certain ways and retain his sense of integrity. There is a fork in the road of life, and one simply cannot take up the situation at the end of one or more of the possible paths. A crisis of conscience presents the possibility of an irreparable rift within one's self. Should one pursue a

conscientiously forbidden course of action, one cannot remain “one.” Instead, one's identity is fractured, and integrity – the feeling of peace and wholeness that follows from being a single, indivisible person – is lost. Thus, a crisis of conscience is more than a simple choice of one possible action over another. It is a matter of survival. And, as James Childress reminds us, it feels that way:

Agents who appeal to their consciences to explain and justify their conduct often indicate that they would suffer a severe sanction--the loss of integrity or wholeness--if they violated their moral limits. They frequently express this fear in dramatic ways: "I couldn't live with myself if I did that." "I have to answer to myself first." "I must protect my sense of myself." "I could not look at myself in the mirror." "I would hate myself in the morning." "I couldn't sleep at night."⁸²

In a crisis of conscience, some possibilities are forbidden. Other possibilities, however, are encouraged. Conscience prompts one to act *towards* becoming a person he can approve of, even admire, rather than merely avoid the opposite, self-disgust. Consider for example the recent actions of University of Utah student Tim DeChristopher. On December 21st, 2008, DeChristopher attended a federally sponsored auction of public lands to private industry, a last-minute gift to corporate sponsors from the George W. Bush administration. This auction promised to open 150,000 acres of pristine Utah wilderness to exploitation by oil and gas interests. Realizing an opportunity to stop some of these lands from being despoiled, DeChristopher bid on - and won - rights to 22,000 acres, keeping them out of the hands of oil and gas companies, and away from the danger of being ruined by pollution.

Going into the auction, DeChristopher had no intention of bidding on property. He was in disbelief that the auction would actually proceed, as it was organized so

hurriedly and did not conform to approved regulations for the sale of access to public lands. It was not only immoral, it was also illegal, and as he told Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now*, he felt it would be stopped:

I'd been hoping that someone would step up and someone would come out and be the leader and someone would put themselves on the line and make the sacrifices necessary to get us on a path to a more livable future. And I guess I just couldn't wait any longer for that someone to come out there and had to accept the fact that that someone might be me.

So, DeChristopher did what he could. He could not stop the auction, but he could keep the worst of its potential ends from being realized. Presented with the opportunity, he protected 22,000 acres from possible destruction, and kept open the path to a "more livable future."

Later in that interview, DeChristopher explained his actions in terms of the sense of integrity that Childress' analysis would lead us to anticipate. He spoke of how large the problem of environmentally insensitive policies has become, and how doing everything he could do on a daily basis, like riding his bicycle rather than driving, or trying to change political policy through letter-writing, was simply not producing the necessary change. There was a fork in the road of his life, and though he was traveling in the right direction, it still was not leading to an acceptable end. In seizing the opportunity to act during the auction, however, he was able to regain the sense of integrity that seemed to be slipping away. DeChristopher put it this way:

My actions weren't aligning with my sentiment of how serious this threat was, and I knew that. And so, I felt that kind of conflict within myself. And when I stepped it up at this auction and was putting myself out there and winning all these parcels was really the first time I felt like my sentiment—or I felt like my actions were aligning with my sentiment. And I felt this tremendous sense of calm when I started doing that, because for the first

time that conflict within me was gone, and I knew that when I was, you know, standing up and risking going to prison, my actions really were aligning with how big of a crisis this is.⁸³

Interestingly, all results of the auction have since been set aside due to the illegality of the auction in the first place. Those responsible for holding the auction, and of attempting to defraud the public in violation of conventional laws have not been prosecuted. However, the vindictive Obama administration has indicted DeChristopher on 2 felony counts.

This turn of events only serves to underscore the tragic difference between conventional law and moral law, and the equally tragic difference between persons respectively motivated. Persons of conscience act according to the moral law. Others act otherwise. And, tragedy ensues.

Consider in this light the tragedy that is war. War violates the universal moral law on the grandest scale. This is why conscientious objection is most often associated with war. War puts countless numbers of persons in bad situations, situations, situations that warmongers do not seek for their own - as evidenced most clearly by the fact of their uniform lack of direct involvement. These are situations in which one's own and/or another's integrity is under constant threat, in which one is on the constant brink of survival, resulting in bodies and brains blown to pieces, hearts and minds ripped apart, irreparable rifts incurred in self and other, with whole lives, whole nations, and ultimately the whole world destroyed.

The fact that no person seeks such situations for one's own, warmongers included, explains why the first thing that a warmonger does in promoting war is to

dehumanize the victims of war. This way, those ending up in bad situations aren't afforded the moral concern that human beings naturally feel for other human beings.

First, the warmonger casts his intended victims of violence, the appointed "enemy," in less than human terms – "maggots," "slants," "commies," "gooks," "terrorists," "insurgents," and so on. No longer "persons," their situations are no longer "situations." They no longer fall within the bounds of moral law. In this way, the warmonger tries to skirt the logic of conscience, and trick others into doing things that – otherwise – conscience would forbid.

Meanwhile, the persons that he intends to trick, his soldiers, are recast through training, drugs and group pressures, to think of themselves in less than human terms, as well – "killing machines," "grunts," "troopers," and so on. Those who fail to completely divest from morality, and who are thus subject to qualms, second thoughts, and indeed crises of conscience over the immoral actions demanded by warmongers, are – rather than conscientious human beings - branded "inadequate soldiers." Rather than find in these men and women unshakable moral fortitude, they are found to suffer mental and emotional defects which preclude servitude. They are punished for being unable to take part in systematic oppression, invasion, occupation, and of course theft, rape, and murder. In this way, warmongers seek to take conscience off-line by removing persons still available to the voice of conscience, leaving no situation to evaluate as an alternative end to action besides that demanded by military authority, and with no competent "person" as defined by conventional law to challenge otherwise.

This dehumanization does not stop at the edge of the military organization. In sufficiently militarized societies, it becomes a matter of civil law. For instance, during recent years in the U.S., innocent persons abducted under the guise of the “war on terror,” and subsequently imprisoned, tortured, crippled or murdered, *without charge*, have been denied the status of person under conventional law altogether. As officially recognized *non*-persons, they inconveniently have no standing under the conventional law to seek redress for the crimes committed against them, even though their brains and bodies have been destroyed by years of inhumane treatment. *Conventional law has become the warmonger's most advanced weapon of mass destruction.* Through its application, the dehumanization of anyone who resists has become official, *legal*, and as one's shattered integrity after years of torture might attest, complete.

No one seeks such a situation for themselves, and no one of conscience would knowingly put another in such a situation, either. This is why, simply in order to motivate persons to fight in them, “all wars are started by deception.” Typically, this involves manufacturing conditions that otherwise do not exist. In short, warmongers make up a story, create villains, cast themselves and their followers as heroes, then, lacking any true villainy necessary to get the war started, they do what is necessary to get the war started, themselves. While dehumanizing their intended victims, soldier and enemy alike, warmongers set about to conjure the necessary conditions “on the ground” to substantiate their dispersions, thereby creating a false sense that armed conflict is “just” and “necessary.” They stage false-flag attacks (incidents leading to WW1, WW2, conflict in Vietnam and the current “war on terrorism” are all prime examples, here), and

link these attacks to their chosen enemy. Finally, otherwise peaceful and conscientious people are tricked into invading and occupying foreign lands, only to lose limbs, lives, and minds in a fiction. All the while with only one party, the warmongers responsible for the lies in the first place, having done anything wrong, and them safely away from the conflict.

The story tends to go like this: “They attacked us,” “They put us in a terrible situation,” “They are terrible,” “They deserve to be in a terrible situation, too” so “Let’s go to war and put them in one.” “It is the right thing to do!” And the war begins. The defender is painted as the aggressor, the aggressor the defender, and good people kill and die for all the wrong reasons. Of course, this is nothing new. Mark twain once described the process thusly:

Next the statesmen will invent cheap lies, putting the blame upon the nation that is attacked, and every man will be glad of those conscience-soothing falsities, and will diligently study them, and refuse to examine any refutations of them; and thus he will by and by convince himself that the war is just, and will thank God for the better sleep he enjoys after this process of grotesque self-deception.⁸⁴

However, as inescapable as the twisted logic that leads to war may appear, it can be short-circuited. When a person somehow discovers the truth, he can stand in its way. A person can deny his role in the warmongers' fairy tale, and live for other ends, for a more livable future, instead. Even if it means being branded an “inadequate soldier,” losing rights and wages, risking imprisonment or even execution, a person, especially a soldier, can do the right thing.

When the deceptions employed to trick people into war are obvious, and the inhumane treatment of prisoners and civilians are obvious, a soldier not only *can* object

He *must* object. To contribute would not only break the moral law, but also international law, and make him a de facto “war criminal.” Thus, even in the military, *especially* in the military, a person not only has the power, but has the *obligation*, to say “no” to immoral ends.

Consider in this light the famous case of Lt. Ehren Watada. Watada enrolled in the U.S. armed forces because he was committed to the mission in the Middle East as it was initially represented by the Bush administration, roughly according to the brief outline above. He worked his way to a number of promotions, qualifying in the top 25% of his group upon reaching the rank of Lieutenant. Eventually, he was commanded to deploy to Iraq and to pursue the mission to which he was originally committed.

However, along the way, Watada studied the proposed grounds for the conflict, and learned that they were deficient. He learned that the reasons given for the invasion and ongoing occupation were deceptions, in violation of established protocols governing the invasion of a sovereign state. He learned that the war in Iraq was not a “just war,” and that the invasion and occupation were in fact *illegal* under international law.⁸⁵ Thus, he came to realize that entire nations of innocent persons were being destroyed for all the wrong reasons: lies. And, with some publicity, Ehren Watada became the first U.S. Officer to conscientiously object to the Bush administration's invasion and occupation of Iraq.

As an officer in the military, under international law, Watada would bear personal responsibility for his actions should he follow his orders and take part in an illegal occupation of Iraq. An officer, in other words, must exercise his or her own conscience

under international law. Knowing what he knew, if he participated in the occupation of Iraq, then he would have been guilty of internationally recognized crimes of war, including the unlawful invasion of a sovereign nation, the illegal use of banned weapons of mass destruction against civilian populations, and - as has gained increasing attention in the years since the invasion began - the abduction, rape, torture and murder of innocent men, women, and children.

This was not an end that Ehren Watada could live with. It was not a person that he could become. So, he refused his orders to deploy to Iraq. In November of 2006, he confessed to Veterans for Peace:

If I am guilty of any crime, it is that I learned too much and cared too deeply for the meaningless loss of my fellow soldiers and my fellow human beings. If I am to be punished it should be for following the rule of law over the immoral orders of one man. If I am to be punished it should be for not acting sooner.⁸⁶

Rather than follow orders, and do what was strictly “legal,” he chose to follow his conscience and do what was “lawful.” Although he was *legally* bound by domestic convention to follow the orders of his commander in chief, he was *morally* bound by conscience to act according to a higher law, the moral law, first.

The distinction between conventional legality and moral law is critically important in understanding conscientious objection. This is especially true in the military, where one is often expected, far more than any free citizen, to do as he is told rather than what he feels is right. Professor Richard Swain of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point confirms this fact. According to Swain’s interpretation, conscience is the ultimate guide,

trumping rank no matter the authority, and it is every officer's responsibility to act accordingly:

Right or wrong, if an officer is convinced an order is immoral or illegal – there is a distinction between legal issues and moral issues -- if there is a violation of laws, of a principal of law, an officer is not under obligation. But you have to be right or an officer will be held accountable. Moral issues -- what I personally cannot do -- this is a moral dilemma. You have to do what conscience tells you to do, and you must be ready to be fully accountable.⁸⁷

Swain cites a fundamental distinction, that between the moral and the legal. Even in the military, where strict adherence to written regulation is crucial for survival, an action cannot be undertaken without the final authorization of conscience. Where there is a conflict between laws of conventional powers and conscience, the spokesman for moral law is evidently supreme, "you have to do what conscience tells you to do."

This does not exempt a conscientious objector from persecution, however. Watada, for example, has been the target of dubious "legal" prosecution, with the shadow of possible charges still hanging over his head even after his case has been heard and the courts freed him without fault. Other conscientious servicemen and women who have refused deployment have sought refuge in Canada and other countries, but many have subsequently been hunted down and imprisoned.⁸⁸ Why? Not because they did anything wrong, but because they refused to.

In the preceding examples, we have seen that citizens of ostensibly "free" societies are persecuted when they actively interfere with the designs of conventional authorities, however illegal, immoral or unjust. And, we have seen that they are subject to sanction when they follow conscience rather than orders of military authorities,

however immoral or unjust. What follows is an example of a citizen persecuted for simply refusing to contribute to a “lawful” institution that remains the hallmark of injustice, immorality, and the most poignant reminder that legality has nothing to do with right and wrong. This convention is human slavery.

Consider the case of the U.S.'s most famous conscientious objector, Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau's communion with nature and avocation of a simple life over increasing materialism drew a lot of popular attention in his day. He became famous, however, for his civil disobedience. He refused to follow the authority of the American government in its unconscionable endorsement of slavery. He disdained these “laws,” felt even less regard for their advocates and enforcers, and acted from his own conscience rather than according to their immoral impositions. So, refusing to become immoral through complicity, he did what was right. He acted against conventional law by refusing to pay taxes that helped to finance the institution. He was imprisoned, and ironically branded “criminal” for doing the right thing, instead.⁸⁹

It has been widely reported that Thoreau's friend, the famous philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, visited him in jail. Thoreau had once been a student of Emerson's, and Emerson had gained a deep respect for Thoreau's abilities. Emerson, the great transcendentalist thinker, believed that Thoreau should put his mind to work on larger issues, metaphysical and spiritual issues like those that drew his own attention. So, there, from the free side of the bars, Emerson is reported to have asked "Henry, what are you doing in here?" To this question, Thoreau is to have replied, "Waldo, the question is, *what are you doing out there?*" Thoreau's point amounted to this: if you

acted according to your conscience, then you would be in jail, too. There is no greater work to be done than to do what is right, and in an unjust world, if you are not persecuted for your actions, you are not doing it.

We benefit most from Thoreau's convictions, today, not only because he had the courage to do the right thing, but because he was able to write about it. For this reason, his example lives on, is open to our review, and he continues to be an important influence for people the world over who refuse to give up on the promise of a better world.

Thoreau's most influential written work is the essay "Civil Disobedience." Originally published as "Resistance to Civil Government," in this short text Thoreau reveals the lessons of his experiences, and reflects on why some people act freely to do the right thing while most others merely follow the "legal" orders of for-profit politicians and salaried bullies, the police. It is a sort of letter to conscientious persons everywhere, testimony that, no matter if conscience takes you outside the conventional law, whether to jail or to the gallows, you are never wrong in doing the right thing:

Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right.⁹⁰

Thoreau's commentary reinforces our distinction between conventional and moral law. Moreover, it is distinctly in line with the spirit of the original designers of U.S. Constitution. So far as they were concerned, any State repression of conscientious

freedom, however strictly “legal,” stands in direct contradiction to the legitimacy of the State, itself. It is a self-nullifying proposition.

In the mind of James Madison, for instance, freedoms of conscience were to have been *guaranteed* by civil government, not gradually encroached upon in the name of national security, taxation, or any other thing. Madison held that “Conscience is the most sacred of all property...”⁹¹ and that:

Government is instituted to protect property of every sort; as well that which lies in the various rights of individuals, as that which the term particularly expresses. This being the end of government, that alone is a just government, which impartially secures to every man, whatever is his own.⁹²

Protecting an individual’s property - most sacred first of all! - is the first job of government. It is, in fact, the purpose in its institution. Where government fails to protect the property of the individual, particularly rights to act according to conscience, it not only fails in one aspect of its industry. Not only does it fail to be just. *It fails as government altogether.* Thus, according to the spirit on which all subsequent U.S. law is founded, there exists the overpowering obligation to refuse the arbitrary conventions prosecuted by an unjust government, rather than any obligation to pursue them.

The value of conscience to the framers of U.S. law in resisting violations of government cannot be over-emphasized. Today, rights held away from government encroachment are now thought to be protected by the Bill of Rights, amended to the original Constitution. However, in the mind of Madison, at least, a Bill of Rights was not even necessary. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson dated October 17, 1788, Madison reveals that, according to his vision, the Constitution was purposefully designed to

protect the liberties of conscience through the restriction of government powers, rather than through the positive enumeration of rights associated with conscience. In fact, he feared that any exposition of rights associated with freedom of conscience would limit conscientious action, rather than protect it. Considering the Bill of Rights, and what form it should take, Madison expressed to Jefferson:

I have favored it because I supposed it might be of use, and if properly executed could not be of disservice. I have not viewed it in an important light—1. because I conceive that in a certain degree, though not in the extent argued by Mr. Wilson, the rights in question are reserved by the manner in which the federal powers are granted. 2. because there is great reason to fear that a positive declaration of some of the most essential rights could not be obtained in the requisite latitude. I am sure that the rights of conscience in particular, if submitted to public definition would be narrowed much more than they are likely ever to be by an assumed power.⁹³

What “use” did Madison envision for a Bill of Rights? As a positive statement of the rights of citizens, it would provide an obstacle for usurpers of government in overstepping their legal powers as clearly delineated in the Constitution. Accordingly, in a telling forecast of current events:

Perhaps too there may be a certain degree of danger, that a succession of artful and ambitious rulers may by gradual & well timed advances, finally erect an independent Government on the subversion of liberty. Should this danger exist at all, it is prudent to guard against it, especially when the precaution can do no injury.⁹⁴

Sadly, Madison's forecast has come true, and even the amended Constitution has served little protection against the series of “artful and ambitious” - need we add deceitful? - rulers who have long since usurped the U.S. Government. And, as tyranny

has risen, so have arisen increasing abuses of power against the “rights of conscience,” abuses that Madison was so concerned about guarding against.

Consider in this context the case of author Arthur Miller. Miller was a famous man, and an admitted pacifist, stating so in answer to a survey for the short-lived magazine *The Marxist Quarterly* in 1937. Later, Miller was called before a panel investigating communist activities in the United States during the so-called “red scare” post World War II. He was under investigation as an “un-American” agent, and during the inquiry was pressured by the U.S.’s own brand of 50’s fascism, “McCarthyism,” to violate his conscience.

Some others also suffering under the persecution of McCarthyism were his friends and business associates. Government authorities demanded that he openly name these people, even though it was likely that the committee members already knew the identities of anyone he might have mentioned. His cooperation in this regard would have guaranteed him kinder treatment, but his complicity could have condemned his less famous colleagues to much worse, opening the way for the “authorities” to persecute them under partial cover of Miller’s testimony. Finally, in the face of threats of repercussion, he refused to incriminate these people, and did the right thing instead.

But, why? We cannot ask Miller this question directly. However, what we have learned about conscientiously motivated persons thus far should allow us to reconstruct possible motivations.

If the suffering of other persons can be felt as one’s own - if his friends’ ends were felt as his own through the capacity of conscience to hold these ends out for

comparison - then Miller would have been motivated by conscience to avoid these ends – then he would have avoided these ends as if they were, in fact, his own. In everyday language, if his actions brought other persons to bad ends, then he would have felt “responsible” for their suffering. Here, think of “responsible” in its original sense: having the ability to respond. Leading others to bad ends meant leading others to ends that he did not seek for himself, simply in order to maintain his own relatively comfortable position. Such was not a position from which he felt able to respond when it came time to answer, “What are you doing in here, while those others are suffering over there?” So, like Thoreau, he chose to become responsible for doing the right thing, instead. In the end, Miller refused to violate the moral law. He held the authority of conscience above abuses of conventional law, and in so doing he did what he could to save others from suffering those abuses.

By the exercise of this same logic, conscientious persons often act to keep others from harm’s way. Sometimes, they even put themselves in harm’s way simply to allow others the opportunity to escape it. They actively put themselves in bad situations in order to open the way to better situations, and the course of history often changes for the best. In fact, today more than at any other time in memory, it is on such actions, and such persons, that any hope for a more livable future now hangs.

Consider in this light the case of Rosa Parks. She did not enjoy the freedom that someone like Thoreau enjoyed, or the level of recognition that someone like Miller could count on, to guarantee her own safety. Thoreau was able to go out into the wilderness and find a world that suited his terms, a natural rather than a conventional situation,

largely avoiding those aspects of the situation that he found objectionable, and Miller, because of his fame, was called to testify before high officials where his voice could be heard rather than secretly beaten and imprisoned to silence it. Rosa Parks was unable to escape injustice so easily, and had no invitation to testify. No one in government cared what she had to say. She was simply oppressed. She was trapped, and had to face injustice, alone. As if already jailed, her only option was to sit. She simply refused to do what she was told to do, so she did the only thing she could. She stopped. And, even in taking this sole recourse, she changed the world.

Parks disobeyed conventions that we now recognize as arbitrary, and resoundingly unjust, lasting consequences of the same bigoted conventions against which Thoreau had objected long before, encroachments of the sort which Arthur Miller also resisted. However, where Thoreau faced prison for his actions, and Miller faced black-listed loss of fame and fortune, Rosa Parks faced much worse. She said “no” to injustice under the implicit threat of her life. Only weeks before, an African-American man had died from police abuse after arrest from the same bus line whose bigotry she disobeyed. She also might have been murdered without consequence for having the courage to act according to conscience. But, she acted anyways. She faced death to do the right thing. She broke the shadowy chains of injustice, proving for others that their own are only as strong as their complicity. Even now, after her death, Rosa Parks exemplifies how a conscientious person *must* live in the face of injustice: courageously. Not according to conventional law, as it is enforced, but according to the spirit of the law

from which it arises, the conscientious spirit that James Madison sought so long before to protect.

No matter their role in life, or their place in history, conscientious objectors are clues to one thing in particular: injustice. They defy conventional law because it is unjust, and act instead on the basis of moral law. In so doing, they not only point out injustice; they demonstrate the necessary response. They exemplify the freedom, universal to persons, but silenced in shrouds of routine, to do the right thing. They exemplify a way of life consistent with conscience. And their examples are threats to members of the conventional order who profit from the unjust status quo. Should others follow their examples, the status quo would change, those who profit from that status quo would lose those benefits, including the power that comes from them, and the world would change for the better.⁹⁵

Yet, regardless of their station, few people have the courage to confront unjust convention and those who profit by it, let alone to stand up to the paid thugs of injustice, themselves, members of conventional law enforcement. Few people, in other words, have the courage to have a conscience, especially in times of crisis.

Conscientious persons, rather than serve conventional powers, serve the moral order. Where the military, and the (increasingly militarized) police forces,⁹⁶ enforce conventional law, persons of conscience enforce the moral law. They are the brave men and women of *moral law enforcement*, and they are a very rare breed, indeed. Still, they are extremely influential. In enforcing the moral law, they are able to prove that many of the conventions that keep things the way they are can change, and indeed

must change, if we are ever to make the world a better place. They are able to show the immorality of these conventions, and the immorality of the people who enforce them. For this reason more than any other, they become targets of persecution.

Perhaps there has been no more courageous hero of moral law enforcement than Martin Luther King, Jr. King famously spoke out, and acted against, systematic inequality and corruption in the United States. As his influence grew, his efforts expanded to include the unjustly staged Vietnam War. He was persecuted by conventional law enforcement over both issues. However, it was only when his message gained popularity with white Americans, and his influence grew to challenge the profiteers of the brutal American war machine, that he was assassinated. Gratefully, before that happened, he was able to provide a lasting lesson on the power of conscience to carve out the space of a livable future, a world worth striving for.

Let's look closely at King's methods so that we can best employ them in carving out the space of our own future as the text moves on. It has been written about Martin Luther King Jr. that "one of [his] great achievements as a leader was to give the nation "a vocabulary to express what was happening in the civil rights revolution."⁹⁷ King was a practitioner of nonviolent resistance. His aim was to change things, and to do so without violence. In order to make this aim a reality, he had to help others to speak about it, to talk their way into a better world, to forge agreements, to build communities rooted in understanding rather than tear at each other, and at the unjust world in which they found themselves trapped. So, he set about putting words to the frustrations that might otherwise have led people to violence. He gave people a voice. He gave them a

vision. He gave them somewhere to go. Rather than trapped, they found themselves free to shape a better world. And increasingly, for a short time, the people of his nation found the courage to act from conscience rather than convention.

King provided an example. He was able to show how nonviolent resistance could change unjust conventions. Some, however, resisted his efforts. They liked things the way they were. They were prejudiced. "Prejudice" means "pre-judging," making a judgment before understanding the facts. It is a kind of ignorance. King was confronted, initially, with racial prejudice, the same ignorance against which Thoreau and Parks objected, and a similar brand to that which assailed Arthur Miller. His method was to confront racists as Socrates, and Christ, and others before him had confronted persons corrupted by all sorts of ignorance through history. He met ignorance with wisdom, and countered violence with words.

Why words? The fact is that words lie at the root of every form of prejudice. Different people live in different situations, and they learn different languages that suit their different situations. They learn to define the world in terms that match up with the situations in which they live, rather than in terms matching up with the situations in which others live. Accordingly, they learn to define themselves in these terms. The problem is that, in finding one's self in some terms rather than in others, a person can begin to see himself as essentially different from others rather than as essentially the same. He becomes, by his understanding, different from others, not by accident, or chance of birth, but by *definition*. Thus, the terms in which one lives his life become barriers, walls of words between himself and others.

Rather than serve as a medium of common language, a bridge between different people to dissolve their differences through mutual understanding, the terms in which persons live their lives often do the opposite. They cement differences. Deny change. Make understanding impossible. These terms become a means for isolation rather than for communication, just as four walls become a home, a home a castle, and a castle a fortress. King's method was to dissolve these barriers between men by showing them for what they are. Distinctions without substance. Divisions carved from the air. Mere words.

But, dissolving walls of words is not easy work. It means overcoming the tension that leads to their construction in the first place, and somehow showing people that sharing a world is better than cutting it into pieces. And this means more than changing words. It means changing the way that people live.

People are born into and often live their entire lives in a world already divided. Living in different terms, different people live as if in different worlds, when in fact they share a neighborhood, an office, or even a bed. Mutually exclusive determinations of what is, at root, a single shared world divide people, creating a barrier across which communication is often impossible. In the frustration that follows the constant failure to communicate, with either party unable to appreciate the value in the other's position, violence often presents itself as the only option. Unable to communicate, unable to compromise, unable to live in the same world together, it often seems to come down to one or the other. Thus, the failure to bridge the gap, to communicate and to compromise, can culminate in crisis, conflict, and even war. Some, as we have seen,

fan the fires of these divisions, profit on conflict and pursue violence as their chosen end. That has been the story the world wide since the dawn of time, and King set himself to work against it.

Considering that language is presumed to be the vehicle for understanding rather than the vehicle for the sort of ignorance that leads people to war, that words can lead to such tragedy is an irony. However, just as gaps between languages can lead to crisis, bridging these same gaps with words can overcome crisis.

This is the great lesson of King's revolutionary vocabulary. As early as 1955, King sensed crisis looming. He felt "that local and national catastrophe were just around the corner."⁹⁸ He anticipated the need for methods to overcome this impending catastrophe. His method was to begin with the language that described the situation that the people of his nation already shared, and from this to paint the picture of a new home ahead. He began by reevaluating the value of terms that conventionally emphasized divisions. He found within them with the promise of reunification that lay at their intersections. There, in this middle ground, lay the hope of a peaceful future.⁹⁹

King changed the world by first using language to change how people found themselves in it. His method was to show people that they did not live at opposite ends of seeming contradictions. Instead, he was able to demonstrate the power of language to reconcile parties in opposition. Thereby, he was able to uncover the peaceful space of life hidden in the middle. Then, with his powerful capacities for public speech, he was able to hold this middle ground high above the struggling poles. With words, King was able to change the world, first by lifting the civil rights revolution to this hidden moral

high ground. From this high vantage, people could see over the barriers that had seemed so impenetrable between them. This was the promise of King's method.

However, in his effort to change things for the better, Martin Luther King Jr. became a target for others who were at home with things the way they were. For example, King was jailed for leading a nonviolent march in Birmingham, Alabama, while demonstrating against the local government's violent enforcement of systematic racial prejudice. The reason officially given for his arrest was failure to obtain a permit for a parade, an obvious tactic to circumvent the constitutionally guaranteed rights to free speech and assembly. Such an injustice, alone, would have been burden enough, but King was saddled with additional tensions. He was attacked by representatives, not only of his government, but also of his God, above. Local church leadership endorsed his imprisonment. These religious leaders championed enforcers of the conventional law over King's moral law enforcement. They condemned King for seeking to change their own comfortable status quo in a damning statement:

Just as we formerly pointed out that "hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political traditions," we also point out that such actions as incite to hatred and violence, however technically peaceful those actions may be, have not contributed to the resolution of our local problems. We do not believe that these days of new hope are days when extreme measures are justified in Birmingham.¹⁰⁰

These clergymen from Alabama issued their statement as King sat in jail, imprisoned on false charges. Imagine the tension their condemnation would have added to his situation. Unjust applications of conventional law enforced by a bigoted government already stopped his march, in effect shackling his feet. Now, in this letter, the clergy's unfair characterization – King incited neither hate nor violence - condemned

him for the courage to enforce moral law, in effect shackling his hands. These clergymen put King in a very bad position, indeed.

Feel the tension in the contradictions that King was saddled with reconciling as he sat all alone in that jail cell. Terms like “hatred and violence” are coupled with “technically peaceful” to describe the same actions of the same man. These sets of terms represent polar opposites, extremes, and the Reverend Doctor King was to have been responsible for them both. He was saddled with the seemingly impossible task of responding from both prongs of their indictment. He would have to answer for both extremes, however incommensurate, if he was to demonstrate that prejudice could be overcome without violence. It was up to him to reconcile these poles of contradiction within himself, alone, from his own resources, else how could he ever pretend to lead others to do the same?

The clergymen’s condemnation prompted King’s famous response, his *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*. The scene in which this famous *Letter* was composed is one of the most compelling images in all of history. It simply begs for poetic embellishment, as the great victories of the great champions from history always are embellished. So, picture this. Dr. King, champion of universal freedom, is jailed in Alabama. He is a solitary hero. He had come to free others, and instead sits, alone, confined and isolated. Though his actions were “peaceful,” he sits accused of “hatred and violence.” He had not come to incite violence, but to protest injustice, because “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” He had come, in particular, to “Birmingham because injustice is here.”¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, the injustice remained in Birmingham, and his

imprisonment was the surest testimony to that fact. Now saddled with the urgent need for both his own liberation, added to the needs of those others still depending on him, he sits imprisoned without resources except a pencil, a prepared mind, and a local newspaper reporting that he is now jailed. So, hero that he is, he crafts the revolutionary language for a new world order in the side margins of that same paper. In effect, from inside the jail, he finds freedom outside the walls built from the black words cementing his confinement in the blank space between the lines.

For a person in a normal situation, the space around the words is empty, devoid of meaning. However, in situation like King's, this otherwise empty space holds potential. It is history as yet unwritten, and the space of promise. King is caught by contradictions, but in the space around them lies the opportunity to contain them, to envelope them, to put them together, force their reconciliation, and march on.

King captures the polarity of the contradictions he was facing in his *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*, and contains them in the word "tension." It is in *tension* that all parties to conflict find themselves in common. It is in tension that contrary positions prove that they are, in fact, two sides of the same coin, inseparably bound in the space of one critical moment. It is on the common ground of tension that King is able to reconcile the contradictions in which he has been trapped.

King begins the *Letter from the Birmingham Jail* by challenging the clergymen's characterization of his actions as "unwise and untimely." When is the right time for change, after all? When tensions mount, and crisis demands it. King, himself, was invited to Birmingham by the people of Birmingham to help them deal with the crisis set

upon them. He only answered their call. Answering the clergy's further charge that his actions amounted to "extreme measures," King writes: "Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily." Accordingly, any action requiring that the situation change will inevitably be seen as "extreme." His actions only appeared unwise and untimely to prejudiced men comfortable with the status quo. Their resistance to change was the greatest source of tension. King only added to the tension by making this fact explicit.

People who are comfortable in terms of the situation as it is resist change. They refuse to talk, to negotiate, to compromise. They refuse to recognize the need for change, because, after all, to change is only to invite discomfort. Instead, they use force to deny change, to maintain their comfortable situation, force in the form of conventional law and conventional law enforcement. The words "law enforcement," themselves, literally mean, "the giving of force to the law." Police batons, the perpetual threat of police violence, and the conventional "justice" system simply give force to the law. This is, inherently, a resistance force. It is force deployed in the resistance to change. This is a force that escalates as tensions escalate, an escalation that turns violent as change becomes imminent, the resistance fails, and the resisters become desperate.

King, on the other hand, sought to counter the threat of violence. He sought to force change through the equally tenacious threat of escalating non-violence. He put force into the *moral* law to counter the violent defense of immoral law, and to push past the resistance toward a state of affairs more consistent with the moral law. After all,

non-violence, the method of moral law enforcement, does not mean “without force.” It means without *violence*:

Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue... Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create the tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analyses and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create a kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

In every action, there is force. This goes equally for violent action as for speech action as for any other action, whatsoever. The great power of violence is that it uses such force, and forces change so rapidly, that the thing forced to change suffers injury or breaks completely. The upshot for violent persons, especially those who exercise or threaten violence to gain and maintain political power, is that it is often easier to injure or to kill people than it is to control their actions through reason or affect, while they are alive and healthy. Dead people don't challenge authority, contest injustice, vie for scarce resources or provide contrary examples, and people crippled by torture, broken by imprisonment, or burdened with the scarlet letters of politically motivated prosecutions seldom regain their potential to change the world through the influence of their examples, either.

The upshot for non-violent persons, however, is that one need not be alive to challenge authority, contest injustice, and provide an example contrary to bad leadership. One must be alive to control the world through violence, but even the dead can change the world through nonviolence. As we have briefly seen, already, many

examples of persons of conscience remain powerful long after their deaths. Living persons simply take up their examples, do as they had done. But, the power to change the world, even in death, is most pronounced when the exemplar in question is able to account for his actions, when the conscientious person can express himself in words.

Words outstrip direct example in the power to influence action. They last longer, and apply to contexts in which one, while living, had no opportunity to provide an example. They can capture the form of an action. They can represent the method of action as a sort of recipe. And, these recipes can be followed long after the original act is forgotten. Moreover, words can represent an end and an ideal. They can express a principle, where a person can only symbolize it. And, from formulas composed of these ingredients, an action can be undertaken by others toward a novel end long after the original agent is dead, the world different, and his direct example no longer effective.¹⁰²

Words are, unlike police batons and prison rapes, essentially nonviolent. But, they are forceful. The great power of words in producing change is that, through them, people can coordinate their actions regardless of time, place, culture or convention. Words can force change through the sheer weight of individuals all acting toward a common goal, in unison, where otherwise there is simply too much resistance. They can do so through the summation of small, nonviolent actions, the coordinated execution of which would be impossible without words. They carry the power to shape the world and change the mind as wind and rain shape the rock, rather than as the bomb, the bayonet, and the bullet destroy the body and break the spirit in an instant.

After, if one's aim is violence, there is no need for words. *And, if one's aim is change, there is no need for violence.*

Picture King, again, the locus of such contrary accusations as "violent" and "peaceful," working to free others from oppression while sitting jailed, indicted by Christian clergy while doing the work of Christ. King had to reconcile these opposites; he had to come to terms with contrary positions, all at once, and all within the space of his own life, so that the lives of others might be better. This is the method of a man with the power to change the world without violence, overcoming through understanding. Thus, we have a portrait of conscience in motion, and a model for moral action.

In the end, King gives us more than a vocabulary suiting a new situation. Our world now is the work of his life, then. He leaves us with more than this simple clearing, this promised land carved from a dream. He leaves us with his example. He exemplifies the method of the conscientious man at work in changing the world through the power of words. He shows us how to live according to the moral law even as we enforce it, through the freedom of speech. And, most of all, King shows us the power of non-violent direct action in the mode of the heroic man of moral law enforcement: *Act according to conscience, not only in refusing to put others in bad situations, but toward improving them.*

This is the guiding principle of the conscientious person, the one that moves a person to change himself and his world. It expresses, for instance, my motivations for having written this book. And, likely enough, for why you are reading it.

Though one may be motivated by conscience to make the world a better place through action, we are still left with a number of questions. How can a person, like King, like one's self, see crisis coming and prepare for it ahead of time? How can one know what will be the best action to take when it arrives? King's example may be the right place to start on the road to conscientiousness, and his words might continue to guide as the road leads beyond the limits of his vision, but one cannot in every case simply mirror his life, doing as he did and as he said. After all, times change, situations change, different situations call for different actions and different words to express them. Though words provide a medium wherein the form of an action can be represented, there is no written recipe for right action at the right time for every action at every time. Even the most prescient prescriptions have limits! However, there is an approach, a way of life, and a resulting virtue, which proves most effective in getting the right things done regardless. It is to this virtue that we now turn.¹⁰³

3 Conscience, and the right time to act.

Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit; so let it be done!

– John Brown¹⁰⁴

Just split my head in half, will you?

– Zeus¹⁰⁵

As awareness dawns, the self is discovered in terms of its unique situation. This sense of location, that one is a uniquely situated self-in-the-world, accompanies every conscious moment as “I.” It is the essence of this “I” to be situated, in a position, and coming to terms with its environment. It may then be said that one's life is essentially positional, all feeling is the feeling of a space, and that the situated self is the first and only thing of which one is ever truly aware.

In engaging with the objects of the world, one is able to discover the limits of his situation in terms of those objects. One discovers where things begin and end, and so literally “de-termines” his situation in the sense of uncovering the terminal aspects, the origins and eventualities, of the objects arrayed on the field over which one is able to act. At the same time, one discovers where his own capacities relative to those objects begin and end. One discovers these objects to be opportunities or obstacles, open windows or closed doors to further exploration. So, in feeling out the space of life, and in coming to terms with one's situation, one also determines his own limitations. One comes to terms with himself, and realizes where he also begins and ends. Discovery of

one's world, thus, is equally self-discovery, all knowledge self-knowledge, and every limit, first and foremost, only a limit in one's self.

Let's look more closely at this process of self-discovery. Think of coming to terms with your situation as this process of determination, again as the literal determination of your space of life. As life begins, of course, you begin. And as you begin, you begin, as it were, "in the dark." Your situation, your self, is, at the beginning, *completely* new to you. So, you begin by feeling around. Touching, tasting, testing, exploring. You begin by feeling out your situation, eventually discovering where aspects of your situation begin and end. You come to terms with the limitations of your situation. You determine the limits of space at the limits of your own sensitivities to them. Where you find no limit, there is an opening, a space that may be further explored, a capacity yet to be fully exercised and developed. An opportunity to grow.

As your world expands, you expand. Discovering openings, you can shrink from them, staying to the tried and true, or you can crawl through them, feel your way past them, and venture out into the world beyond them. Either way, you establish patterns of discovery that continue for the rest of your waking life. What you make of opportunities to grow determines the eventual shape of your life. The same goes for everyone. As one takes advantage of opportunities for exploration, for new experiences of different situations, one first realizes and then overcomes his own limitations, building a great library of experience, and the world, itself, grows with him. Or, resting all the while in the secure terms of the same old place, stuck in the same habits, routinely engaging with the same old objects in the same old ways, remaining the same old person, never

breaking from the past nor changing radically to suit a radically changing world, a person stagnates.

Such regularity can be comforting. It is the consistency with which the terms of one's situation are maintained that points to the apparent continuity of his conscious life. It is the regularity of one's situation that invites habitual modes of engagement with the objects of the world. Habit, the regularity of being in the world, itself depends on a world whose appearances are also regular. It is the smooth play of habit that protects us from terminal distraction, from anxious uncertainty, and from existing as selves not constant enough to constitute that sense of "I" with which we are more or less familiar. So, persons tend to resist change, avoid crisis, and stick to the tried and true. Persons tend to stick to what feels comfortable, else they risk becoming different persons.

As touched on in the first chapter, such radical change is typically not comfortable. However, avoid it all they like, the world does change, often radically, and often forces people to change the ways they live within it. In changing times, habits tend to fail to deliver their regular results, and can even fail catastrophically when the change comes quickly enough. No amount of resistance can stem the tide. A lifetime of regular practice can prove useless in a moment of crisis, a time when things will change, and the only question left is "Are you prepared to change with it?"

Yet, how does one prepare for crisis? Is there some way of life, indeed some *habit*, that suits rapid change? Is it merely a matter of understanding crises, and how they come about? If so, then there is nothing to be feared in a moment of crisis. If so, for the agent who is properly prepared, a crisis is merely a special opportunity for

growth. The only question we are left with is this: *How does one prepare for such opportunities?*

This is a question of self-development. Traditionally, persons have approached the topic of self-development by discussing what are known as “virtues.” Self-development simply entails perfecting these virtues. Courage, temperance, and honesty are such virtues. Different virtues suit different situations. Bravery in battle, temperance in daily affairs, honesty in discourse; this is how we get by. But, when these fields are torn in crisis, things appear differently. Crisis, thus, calls virtue into question. What is brave in a route? What is temperate in a drought? What is honest in uncertainty? Once the order to which a virtue is suited crumbles, it is no longer a virtue. So, what are we to do?

Virtues are the right things, surely, but only in the right contexts. This is one way to understand why most people avoid crisis. Persons tend to stick to those contexts which suit their own virtues. This is a sort of bondage, being habitually stuck in a given sort of situation. Because times change more rapidly than virtues can evolve to suit them, people often try to force situations to meet the terms of habit, rather than the other way around. So, not only do people tend to avoid crisis, when crisis does befall them they tend to act in ignorance of its conditions, and the right things at the most important times simply do not get done.

One habit, however, is productive of a virtue that is up to facing crisis. This virtue suits every situation, even radically changing ones. This virtue is practical wisdom.

According to the ancient Greek tradition, practical wisdom is the “capacity to arrive each time at something new, namely, the correct *logos* for the current situation.”¹⁰⁶ *Logos* is the *form* of the appropriate action. It is not the action, itself. It is only the terms which define the action that fits the moment. It is the shape of action. The formula for action. Being practically wise means being able to determine which action is the right action, why it is the right action, and when is the right time to act. And simply because one has this information does not mean that it is practically wise to actually act.

If there is a house fire, for example, and a kitten needs rescuing, the practically wise person understands that a kitten needs saving, how to save the kitten in the right way at the right time, and why the kitten needs saving in this way as opposed to any other. *The practically wise man does not have to do the kitten saving.* Whether or not he actually acts on this information, himself, is another question, limited as it is by other factors like physical fitness, for example.

The habit which generates practical wisdom is a certain habitual mode of conscience, conscientiousness. The conscientious person is habitually open to the world, to new ways of getting things done, and this is productive of practical wisdom. It builds a wealth of experience, experience that can be drawn on to inform future actions. After, all, one does not become wise by simply doing the same things in the same situations. One becomes wise by doing different things to suit different situations, and by coming to terms with the consequences. One important consequence is that increased wisdom prepares the conscientious person to better meet the terms of upcoming situations. Thus, even as conscientiousness is productive of practical

wisdom, the conscientious person depends on practical wisdom to see his way through to the right thing to do later on. And ideally, this cycle continues, with courage to have a conscience and wisdom all wrapped up in one right way of life, a life worth living.

Our discussion on these virtues, wisdom and courage, meets in the structure universal to every situation. This structure is temporal. Every moment calling for action presents an opportunity for right action at the right time. Too late or too early, and the right thing at the right time is impossible. This structure is common to every moment calling for action. And, it is in this universal structure of opportunity that practical wisdom appears as the mother of all other virtues, rather than as a mere patchwork of context dependent tools. Practical wisdom is a single virtue suiting every situation, a virtue from which all others are derived. This is because it is through wisdom that a person is able to pinpoint when and how to exercise other virtues in the first place.

Note that practical wisdom is a virtue, and not a decision making process or some other time-consuming mode of weighing one's options. These other ways of formulating right action often fail because opportunities to do the right things don't often wait around for a person to make up his or her mind about exactly what to do!

The indispensable role of practical wisdom in seizing one's chances to do the right things at the right times is captured in the ancient Greek notion of *kairos*. The Greeks captured the fleeting essence of opportunity in their mythical characterization of *kairos* as the minor deity of opportunity. *Kairos* was depicted in human form as a slippery, naked, onrushing sprinter. Without clothes, he offered only a single lock of hair hanging forward over his face as a handle by which to grab hold of him before he

disappeared into the past. If a person was prepared, and *Kairos* was seen coming, he could be grabbed by his forward lock, and the opportunity he represented seized. *Kairos* was only there for an instant, however, and then he and the opportunity that represented was gone forever. From behind, there was absolutely nothing to hold onto, nothing to grab, and so fast that there was no way to catch up with him. This signified the fact that, once a chance to do the right thing slips by, the moment is gone, and will not return. The trick, of course, is to be wise enough to see the chance coming. And this requires that one be prepared ahead of time.

For the Greeks, *kairos* signified more than a mythical character. The word "*kairos*" also means "time, place and circumstance,"¹⁰⁷ and can be translated as "opportune moment."¹⁰⁸ *Kairos*, as opportune moment, signifies the structure of opportunity, and as time, place and circumstance represents the form of every situation calling for action. Thus, *kairos* names something universal about right action. It names that toward which every action aims. Each action aims to successfully meet the circumstances calling for it. Circumstances calling for action range from epic to instant, and the actions suiting them range accordingly. It is in terms of these circumstances that any action succeeds or fails, and in light of which it can be evaluated as either good or bad. For example, if it is raining, the right thing to do is to wear a raincoat.¹⁰⁹ Wearing a raincoat in the rain is the right thing to do. If it is not raining, however, a raincoat simply doesn't fit. Every moment, cloudy or clear, exhibits a similar *kairological* constraint. That opportunities are present to do the right thing at any given time is universal.

The capacity to discern the *kairos* of any particular situation is practical wisdom. The advantage of having a large body of experience in diverse contexts when searching for opportunities and in meeting the terms of the passing moment are obvious enough. However, for some persons, religion takes the place of practical wisdom in revealing right action at the right time, especially in times of crisis. The opportunities to meet the terms of any moment requiring action are believed to have been set out in manuals, books that are taken to be instructions, recipes for right action formulated by a higher power. The rituals of prayer and congregation simply prepare the individual to perform religiously prescribed actions when opportunities present themselves. Indoctrinated accordingly, the agent is prepared to seize any opportune moment, impose on that moment the terms of ritual, and through him have his religion's, if not his God's, will be done.

Kairos, on this view, denotes a specious intersection between the instantaneous and the eternal, with opportunities for right action predetermined, set out in indelible ink as if the world will never change. *Kairos*, on this view, is the space of the opportune "Moment" with a capital "M". Capital "M" moments call for acts whose purposes are presumably clear to God, with a capital "G," even if not to the individual agent. Often, in such cases for instance, the prescribed act may not seem to fit the terms of the moment at hand, at all. One need merely reflect on the refusal of members of certain Christian sects to pray rather than seek medical attention when beset with life threatening injuries to call to mind a case in point.

And, what of conscience, that aspect of the human condition otherwise presumed

responsible for advising on right action? On the capital “M” recipe for right action, freedom of conscience merely signifies the potential for subjective deviance from some divine master plan.¹¹⁰ Acting to meet the terms of the moment, rather than those of some religious text, is merely to fall to temptation, the temptation to do the right thing according to conscience, and muck the whole thing up! Needless to say, practical wisdom is of extremely limited utility when there is only divine command to be obeyed. And, when these commands are printed in black and white ink and memorized, often under threat, in every natural language on Earth, displaying conscience can become an act against God and in a State governed by such conviction, a crime.

There is a very basic problem with this religious way of thinking about what constitutes doing the right thing, however. It becomes apparent when one realizes that the *kairological* structure of big “M” moments is universal to little “m” moments, too. The only thing that distinguishes them, in the end, is the presumed role of God in setting out the conditions, and tellingly enough, on what counts as success. In little “m” moments, there is a very clear role for practical wisdom, but apparently not in big “M” moments. What happens to so suddenly change things when “m” becomes “M”? How does inserting God make such a difference?

Let's look for this difference by comparing a basic big “M” case with a basic little “m” case. Let's compare a case of saving a life (capital “M”) to delivering a pizza (little “m”). The pizza delivery driver acts according to his practical wisdom. As the light changes, and the traffic swells and slows, and he moves toward his end, your hungry house. Prayer is not going to speed the congestion. Good or bad is merely late or

early. The very same logic appears to apply in the case of an ambulance driver en route to saving a life, only he has the benefit of bright lights and loud sirens to help clear his way. People pull over, the ambulance passes, all presumably due to a capital "M." However, as in the case of the pizza man, success also seems wholly dependent on the driver's capacity to recognize opportunities to safely get through traffic in time to save the life riding behind him. Again, beyond the presumption that destiny is one and the same with destination, that God sets the terms of one and not the other, there appears between these two cases to be no formal difference at all.

Simply put, some pizzas are delivered by drivers who know a chance to beat a light when they see one. Likewise for life saving. One goes into the moment open, seeking opportunities to do what is necessary, to do the right thing at the right time, or not. There is, in every situation, the right thing to do and the right time to do it according to one's purposes. There is not, however, a body of ritual prescient enough to prefigure these actions. There are no pizzas in the *Bible*. Prayer will not get the drunk man on his cell-phone in the Humvee out of the way any faster. There is no commandment for beating traffic. There is only practical wisdom.

Practical wisdom is where the rubber of action meets the road of life. As we travel, we have to figure it out for ourselves, moment to moment. Religion, as prescription, merely gets in the way. There is no need to recruit a major deity to account for the objective requirements of right action, not when the minor deity of opportunity will do just fine. *Kairos* willing, of course!

The fact is that, religious or not, all people live and die by the opportunities present in every passing moment. To live free, people need to be prepared to seize these opportunities as they arise. To do the right the right thing, for one's self and for others, a person must know an opportunity for right action when it approaches. And, if he is to share this knowledge with others so that they too may benefit, he must be able to relate it in a proper form. He has to be able to talk about it.

Accordingly, *kairos* can be understood in both epistemic – seeing an opportunity for what it is - and rhetorical terms – being able to represent it in words. Epistemically, *kairos* points to the context dependency of what epistemologists call knowledge and moral theorists call the right thing to do. For instance, in a world of honest persons, a person may claim to know that lying is the wrong thing to do. In a different context, say, one more like today's society of profit-at-all-costs latter-day capitalism, lying is (practically) the right thing to do. In today's world, lying is a survival skill. It suits the situation. One is thought to be more knowledgeable if he lies well, and less knowledgeable if he lies poorly. The value that people commonly place on this skill is represented in the fact that an honest man is often much less well paid.¹¹¹

Epistemically speaking, what a person considers to be the right thing to do depends on what that person knows, and this knowledge is, itself, context dependent. What one comes to know depends on one's situation. It is only in terms of one's situation that he comes to know anything, at all. This is true even if God enters his situation and tells him about it. A person becomes more knowledgeable by coming to terms with his situation as it changes. The more changing situations one comes to

terms with, the more he knows. The more practically wise he becomes. And, as it is he who is most practically wise who can best see the right thing to do in any given situation, identifying alternatives and understanding the terms of their respective evaluation, becoming practically wise is, in every situation, the right thing to do. People with more limited experience are more limited in their capacities to discover options, evaluate them, and in the end to tell right action from wrong. As an opportunity arises, thus, what one knows is both the open window and the closed door to the future.

This epistemological understanding of *kairos* underscores the temporal structure of opportunity, once again. Opportunities for right action arise, present themselves, and disappear into the past. In fact, not only does the opportunity for right action have this structure, but actions of all sorts, including speech action, share it. Every action has a beginning, middle and end. And, this fact is represented in the rhetorical structure of *kairos*.

There are three different modes of rhetoric corresponding with the three different aspects of this structure, three ways of talking about things depending on where they are in the process. One addresses the past, one the present, and the third the future. The mode addressing the past delivers a judgment, or a report on consequences of opportunities taken or lost. The future oriented delivery is speculative, and often persuasive, whereby the speaker seeks to convince his audience that some opportunity is approaching, or not, and that some action will meet the terms of approaching opportunity better or less well than others. The third mode addresses the present. This mode of address takes place in “real-time,” “live” so to speak. This is the mode of

demonstration, whereby what is said progresses along with the “now.” It is in this mode that we can see *kairos* completely, anticipating ends and recalling the beginnings, but always stuck in the middle as the process moves along. This is also the structure of time as we experience it, as things change and we change with them.

Consider the following example, a very simple illustration displaying the temporal structure of every moment. It involves a common chemical demonstration from elementary chemistry, the iodine clock. Imagine that the following process is taking place, and that the words you will read in its description are actually the ongoing narration from beginning to end.

With starch and iodine in water, a chemical reaction can be initiated, resulting in a color change at a specifiable point. There is a beginning, middle, and end to the reaction. The beginning state is clear liquid swirling in a flask. The middle is a transition from an ionic to a molecular form of iodine, signaled by a swirling cloud of color, first forming and then filling the flask. The end is a saturated color purple, with the reactive ingredients spent, and the swirling slowing to a stop. As a whole, the demonstration shows one long moment in motion. The trick lies in naming the point at which the change takes place.

Every opportunity for action shares this structure, as does every natural process including the human life. The only real difference is that life’s details are not as tidy as are those of the iodine clock’s. Points of transition, let alone the moment when the whole process will cease, are not so easily specified.

However, we can imagine a person's life story beginning in the beaker of the womb, colorless, but primed for change. In the middle, out of the womb and into the world, the person does change. His life is colored by experience as he reacts with the world, and the world with him. The beaker of the world changes, heating or cooling, expanding or contracting. He changes to suit the beaker, or changes the beaker to suit himself. This reaction takes off, spurting along in the swirling course of everyday life. This is one's self, a living demonstration of enduring change *in situ*, moment-to-moment. As change slows, the reaction comes to a stop, and life ends. There is nothing left to be said, only a lasting example left behind.

4 Conscience, and the right thing to do.

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

– Robert F. Kennedy¹¹²

I am not a speaker but I have spoken. I am not all that tall but I have stood up.

– Leonard Peltier¹¹³

It is only in terms of one's final end that life in the middle has any meaning. In every moment there is a right thing to do, no matter how minimal and no matter how distant. The trick lies in preparing to get it done, and putting one's self in the best position to do it. This takes courage, and practical wisdom. After that, there is only action. In the following short section, we will more closely examine the anatomy of action, thereby better understanding the role of conscience in doing any given thing.

All beginnings and ends of actions are situations. Every end of action is itself a beginning, providing opportunities to move to still further ends.¹¹⁴ Conscience motivates toward situations according to one's capacities to meet the terms of those situations. This is because, if one attains some end in action, he will have to live there, or die. So, persons seek situations in which they can survive. In fact, they look to do more than merely survive. They seek situations in which they can survive easily, in which they have more than they need rather than just enough to scrape by. People seek situations in which they can be comfortable. However, different people have different ideas about what counts as "comfortable." Some people stay safely sun-baked within failing traditions, while others set foundation stones for future philosophies in the rain.

Being motivated to comfort is nothing special to human beings. It is common to every organism with the capacity to compare what it feels like to be in one situation relative to another. Every sufficiently complex organism is essentially evaluative; each has a sense of the good place and the bad and will seek the former and avoid the latter. These might be fairy-tale happy endings, last year's nesting site, or simply that depth of the pond that feels right, but all of these situations have something in common: they are sought after. Some fish keep to warm waters, some to cold; some bacteria seek reductive environments, some oxidative. In the end, the comfortable situation is that in which a thing can remain stable, and this fact is not only common to all living things, it is common to all things, everywhere, of every sort altogether. *Every thing in nature moves to meet the terms of its environment.* Every thing in nature seeks to balance inside with out, to be at equilibrium, to remain stable in the face of change. People are no different. It is their nature to keep to comfortable situations, striving through action, only when they must, to attain their desired ends. They differ from other natural things only in a limited capacity to determine for themselves what these ends might be.

Wherever one goes, whatever one does, he will have to live in terms of the situation at the end of action. When what one needs to live, or to live well, is not where one is, then he must, or might, move on. A situation that does not meet one's needs is intolerable, while a situation that does not meet one's wants may be tolerable, but uncomfortable. The equilibrium between inside and out is overly weighted one way or the other, needs and wants met and unmet, and the result is an imbalance. One feels this imbalance as a tension between where he is and where he would rather be,

between how things are and how he would have them. This tension is the source of motivation to move on, to change self and situation. And it is conscience that contains this tension, even as it holds out the possibility of the comparison from which it arises.

How does conscience do this work? One way to begin to understand the motivational power of conscience is to think of conscience as a sort of (mechanical) spring. Picture a spring, the sort of spring that pulls an open door closed, or hung from which a baby's swing bounces. Picture this spring sprung from one end of action to another, at both end's one's self before and after the action is undertaken. The ends in question might be any at all, but consider the basic form of a simple case. One end is where one is, now, and the other is where he would rather be. Stretched from end to end, A to B, there is tension inside the spring. This tension is the motivation to do the work of moving from A to B. This is the picture of conscience as the motivational spring of action.¹¹⁵

Picture this spring on the move. One begins in his current situation, first at rest at point A. Then, a need arises. One becomes uncomfortable. The spring of conscience reaches out for a satisfactory end, B. It stretches from points A to B, end to end. The tension within the stretched spring is the difference between unrest and rest, discomfort and comfort, A and B. This difference is felt, and is the motivation to move from A to B. Finally, motivated by the spring of conscience, one pulls one's self to B. And, there, one rests, until one feels a need, and reaches out for further ends again.¹¹⁶

This directed motivation to act is known as "intension." When one reaches out for an end, attaches to it, and attempts to move there, one *intends* to reach that end.

And, "intension" is merely "in-" "-tension," the internal motivating force of the spring of conscience. When one is satisfied, he is at rest. Satisfied with where he is, he is without tension. In fact, his only intension may be to stay put, remaining in this condition for as long as possible. Then, when some need arises, a gap appears between this needful situation and where he can get it. To get what he needs, he must release this tension and move in that direction.

This basic picture works in every case. Consider the case of a thirsty man, reclining at home without a care, watching his television. He is at rest. Now, imagine that he begins to feel a need for a drink. A tension develops between his current situation without a drink, and one with a drink in it. He becomes increasingly uncomfortable as he becomes increasingly thirsty, until finally he feels he must do something about it. So, he rises, and walks to his kitchen. He pours a tall, cold drink, and returns to his prior position, reclining and at rest. In this way, the tension that develops between the two situations, before and after, is released as the man moves from thirsty to sated.¹¹⁷ He expends energy to get his drink. He works for it. He has to get up and get it. He must intend it, and exercise this intension.

What if the man is not satisfied with a drink from his nearby refrigerator? He may seek comfort elsewhere, at the necessary additional expense of energy. What if the man travels to the refrigerator only to find it empty of drinks? He is as a consequence even less comfortable than when he set out, but the result is no less a product of his intension than if he had discovered an entire refrigerated room full of drinks.

This illustration suggests that there are two forces at work in the exercise of any given intension. There is the motivational tension, that being the felt difference between comfort at A and B. Then, there is also the physical, metabolic energy necessary to actually move one's physical body from A to B. These two forces, however, can be understood in the same terms, in terms of mechanical springs as described by elementary physics. Every action involves a movement from a point A to a point B. The mass moved across this space and the friction impeding its travel, is – for a simple spring - the measure of the energy required to get from A to B. The more energy required, the more difficult it is to bridge the gap. The more difficult the gap, the more risk there is in attempting to spring across it.

The greatest risks come about when what one wants to do, and what one can actually get done, do not coincide. There are two ways for these to deviate from each other. In the first case, one's metabolic spring may be less powerful than one's motivational spring. One can be motivated to do a great many things that he is also unable to physically do. One may attempt to spring across too large a gap, and fail. This may leave him exhausted, stuck in the middle, unable to find rest and secure what he needs. Such a situation might be the death of him. In the second case, one may tie his motivational spring to an inadequate end. Even though one successfully attains this end, he may find himself in a worse place for it. And, in the same way as the first case, such a mistake might be the death of him. For example, if one expends all his metabolic energy going from A to B thinking that what he needs is at B, and what he

needs isn't actually at B, then he is not in a good situation, at all. Unable to move on, he may simply die there.

Because exceeding one's limits, and mistaking one's ends, can be risky, persons generally exercise low-risk intensions, toward ends that are easily identified and easily attained. Because it takes energy, metabolically measured in calories, to do anything, persons tend to put themselves in situations where their needs can be met with the least expenditure of energy.

Generally speaking, people tend to put themselves in positions from which the least amount of work is required to get things done. People tend to seek situations that are comfortable, and that comfortably allow for the successful execution of their purposes. All of the conveniences that litter the contemporary life provide stellar examples of this fact. Again, imagine our thirsty man reclining at home, watching television, now with a cold drink in his hand. Imagine that he becomes unsatisfied with the current programming. He feels the difference between two situations, entertained and not entertained, and becomes motivated to bridge the gap. He feels he must change the channel. Ideally, this is accomplished with the least amount of effort. There is one very important reason for this: channel-changing is risky business. The next channel may be no more entertaining than the first. He may change situations to only find himself in a worse one, going from bored to disgusted or worse. With this in mind, it is not surprising that he is grateful for his remote control. Since the invention of the remote control, he has been able to change channels without having to get off the couch. This minimizes his risk, his exposure to danger, while maximizing his comfort.

No need to do anything unnecessary, like stand, or walk, or plan which channel to view beforehand. The TV viewer must merely point and click, and all of that hard work is done away with. So, he feels comfortable where he is with his remote in hand. It has made him a god of the televised world, able to go wherever he wants when he wants to go there. Perhaps never has a man felt so free, as if able to do anything while actually doing almost nothing at all, intending anything and everything without the burdensome exercise of tension to get it done!

It is not surprising that so many people spend so much of their lives watching television, enjoying the view from countless situations on a whim, as virtual tourists of life, all while remaining at relative rest. This is life lived with the lowest expenditure of energy. It is also not surprising that so many people who spend so much of their lives this way end up so fat. With calories in far exceeding calories out, this is an easy life, a life with minimal risk of failure (or success, for that matter), but it is not a life without consequences. As a person habitually comes to terms with this situation, his capacity to stretch to ends further than the flick of a fingertip diminishes, until, like an old rusty spring, he risks snapping in two simply trying to leave the sofa.

Getting anything done in life, like getting anywhere in the real world, takes work. Any given person, like any given spring, is more or less able to do this work, and getting work done is a good thing. For this reason, human "progress" is largely a tale of labor saving devices, with TV standing out in that it not only takes the work out of one thing or another, but virtually takes the work out of life, itself!

One very common measure of the value of a person, like that of a spring, is the amount of work he is able to do. The best persons get the most done. For example, in the Tour de France, each rider rides the same distance over the same hills toward the same end. Drawn on from start to finish, each rider intends to close the gap between beginning and end. The rider best able to do this work becomes the winner. The winner pays the energetic cost of closing the gap between beginning and end before any other rider. The work is done. Winning is good.

Some especially consistent cyclists are known as “pedaling machines.” They seem to ride on and on without tiring, as if their pumping legs were mechanical springs. Yet, there is a difference between a human cyclist and a peddling machine, strictly speaking.¹¹⁸ A machine is an “automaton.” That is, it is a thing for which the good, the end toward which it moves, is already given. That given end is where the machine will stop. If it does not stop, it is not a better machine for going the extra mile. It is broken. Persons, on the other hand, have a limited capacity to do differently. A person is free to pedal on well past the finish line. And, if he keeps on going, he may become a better man for it.

A person can attach himself to a goal and work to get there. He can reach out for what he thinks he needs, and go there of his own accord. He can reach well past his limits, become stronger or fail. He can even reach for ends well past the limit of his own lifetime. He can expend his energies dashing down countless short roads, or he can march steadily along one long one. He might reach his end, come up short or go too far. Successful or not, the freedom to attach one’s self to some end or other is universal

to human beings, and not so for machines strictly speaking. Everyone from cyclists to supermodels to sanitation engineers hold open the space between where they are, and where they would rather be. Everyone has a dream, and a more or less limited capacity to realize it. The trick lies in dreaming the right dream, and doing the necessary work so that it might be realized.

People, generally, are endowed with a feeling that things could be otherwise, and with a capacity to picture what 'otherwise' would be like. Most importantly, this process of picturing how things could be otherwise does not cost a lot of calories. It costs far fewer than what actually making things otherwise would cost, especially if the result were not satisfactory, and everything only had to be made otherwise again! This is why some people are "dreamers" rather than "doers." Dreaming is not a very risky business. Dreaming doesn't cost much. In fact, it is almost free.

Some people, however, act on their dreams. They take risks, do otherwise and change things. If one can picture alternatives, then he can strive for them. Sometimes the effort is futile, but sometimes it is not. And, sometimes the end that one achieves is not only different than that from which one begins. Sometimes it is better. Beginning with a dream, with a picture of how things could be, a person can make things better. But, if one fails, or makes a mistake, things can turn out worse. This is where dreaming gets risky, when one works at making real what was once only a dream. This is where what was once free ends up with hidden costs. However, if one succeeds, this is also where what was once fantasy produces real benefits.

This capacity, to see something better ahead and to work to realize it, is human freewill. The “free” in “freewill” comes from the fact that it takes roughly the same amount of energy to picture one end as it does any other. Almost none. Dreaming, thinking, reflecting, these are the the only truly “free” actions in all of the human realm of action. One is free to range over the field of possibilities so far as he can envision them. Nothing can stop him. This freedom ends, however, when he fixes on an end and moves to realize it. This is the “will” in “freewill.” One “wills” an end.

Freewill, the capacity to see and to do otherwise, freely willing some end, is conditional. There are constraints on freewill, matching two general questions, “Can it be seen?” and “Can it be done?”

The first of these stems from the limit that one's practical wisdom places on the field of possibilities that he can envision. Typically, the more one has seen, the more one can see. The more ends that one has seen realized, the more realistic the ends that he envisions. So, the more practically wise, the greater the field and the more possible the possibilities, the less practically wise, the smaller the field and less possible the possibilities. And, in the end, this simply means that the more practically wise one is, the more free one is in practice. We will return to this relationship, specifically with an eye toward maximizing freedom through wisdom, in the 6th chapter.

Freewill also depends on one's next action not being necessary. If ends are fully determined by needs, then there is no freedom, and no way that things can be otherwise, however one feels about the matter. Necessary ends are simply that: necessary. One has no choice but to act toward them. Desperate people, for example,

are not free. They act out of desperation because they feel they *have* to. Dying of thirst, one does what *must* be done to get a drink, not what he *wishes* to do. One acts out of necessity not because one wants to, but because one has to. Nobody *wants* to eat frozen friends to survive an icy plane crash, any more than anybody wants to commit suicide, or have an abortion. People do these things because they feel they *need* to be done. They may be free to envision how things could be otherwise, but they are not free to act toward these ends. Their ends are determined by need, so they are not free. We will look more closely at this relationship, specifically with an eye toward maximizing freedom through necessity, in the 8th chapter.

Without the feeling that one can do otherwise, compelled by need to do what must be done, a person is not free. With needs met, however, comes the opportunity to deliberate over ends that are not strictly necessary. This is “free time,” a moment when a person is free to determine for himself toward what ends he should act. This is a moment of leisure. At a time like this, a person has the special chance to do nothing. We have already seen how this situation arises. Remember our thirsty man, reclining on the sofa. Picture the man after he has had his drink, with empty cup in hand. He now has no pressing need. He is, so to speak, free from need. He is at leisure to make a choice. He can spend his freedom by setting out the terms of the situation he will seek next. He has an opportunity to tie himself to some end, and to will what he wishes rather than what is necessary.

Here, in the space of this moment, he is *liberated* from need, and he has the chance to *de-liberate*. He can de-liberate over what he should do, and on this basis

make a de-liberate action. He can de-liberate in the sense that he can become *not*-liberated from need. He can create a need for himself, and pursue it. He can shed his freedom by attaching himself to a worthwhile goal, reaching out and working to see it realized. Or, he can do nothing, flipping from one channel to the next, attached to nothing worthwhile but the swayed bottom of his sofa.

Freewill, as limited as it is, grounds the most fundamental moral notion next to the first law of morality. This fundamental notion is *culpability*. *Blameworthiness*. The capacity to get things done, to see and to do otherwise, to make things better or worse, makes a person *culpable* for what he does and doesn't do. That one can see an end, and make it a reality, makes him *blameworthy* for the situation that arises from his efforts, or lack thereof. One is not typically blamed for what happens by mistake, or as a matter of perceived chance, or by way of forces beyond one's ability to control, any more than an automaton is to be blamed for its pursuit of predetermined ends, for example. As well, one is not blameworthy for what is done out of necessity. I may be disgusted by the fact that a person has eaten his frozen friends after a plane crash, but it is senseless to blame that person for it. If anything, I should feel sorry for him. But, any discussion of compassion must wait for the next chapter.

Blameworthiness is different from *responsibility*. Blameworthiness has to do with doing a thing, for better or for worse, right or wrong, and responsibility has to do with accounting for what gets done after the fact. "Responsibility" can be deconstructed into "re-" "-spons-" "ibility." "Re-" means "back," or "again," "-spons-" means "speak," or "sound," and "-ibility" comes from ability, meaning "can." Now, to speak back, in the

sense employed here, is to answer. So, “responsibility” literally means “an ability to answer.” One is responsible when he can answer from the place where is is basic questions like “Where are you?” and “Why are you here?”

One can be responsible for a situation and not be to blame for bringing it about. Likewise, one can be blameworthy for a situation without being able to respond from it. For instance, victims of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse are often manipulated by their attackers to blame themselves for their treatment. When asked “Why are you here?” the victim may answer that everything is his or her fault, as if he or she intended to bring the situation about. Able to respond though this person may be, in fact he or she is blameless for their situation. From this position, the victim is merely responsible in the strict sense of the term.

Conversely, others may be blameworthy for a situation, yet unable to respond from it. Even if one cannot answer the question “Why are you here?” he or she may be to blame for bringing the situation about. Dead war criminals come to mind, for instance. Consider what was to have happened in Germany during World War Two. Some persons were to blame for doing some terrible things, so terrible that other persons claim to suffer for these acts to this day. However, as blameworthy as these persons may have been, they are dead, now. As much as one would like to hold these dead war-criminals to account for their actions, this is simply not possible. Furthermore, there is no sense holding currently living Germans to account for the perceived crimes of long-dead ancestors simply because they are able to respond from the long-since transformed situation, now.

Moreover, it is easy to imagine cases in which an agent is neither blameworthy nor responsible for the situation that he is in. Consider German babies in this regard. They are neither to blame nor are they responsible for the crimes of their great-grandfathers. Blaming them for the actions of dead people, and expecting an answer to the charges, makes no more sense than expecting an explanation from a garden-munching rabbit caught red-handed in the vegetable patch. The rabbit is not to blame. He cannot do otherwise, and it makes no sense trying to talk to him about it. A rabbit, in fact, might be best described as a garden-munching machine. His ends are set. That the garden is good is never a question. Holding a rabbit to account for the murder of an innocent carrot is as reasonable as asking a rock why it rolls downhill.

A rabbit, as all other things in nature, seeks comfortable situations. Comfortable situations are good situations. And, it is difficult to picture a better situation for a rabbit than a healthy garden full of delicious carrots ready to munch. He must eat from the garden if the garden is available, because the garden is good and that, for a rabbit, is a given. For human beings, the picture is a bit more complex. Differently than rolling stones and garden-robbing rabbits, humans have a limited capacity to determine for themselves what they take to be good. They can question what is given. And, rather than always going where the going is easiest, downhill, they can work for something more. They can climb. They can build. They can elevate themselves, and take others with them. This is the great promise of the capacity that is called human freewill. Freewill is the capacity to direct one's potential, like the tension in a stretched spring, to some end rather than another, and this tension can carry a person upward as well as

forward. It is the power to do otherwise that starts out free, with the leisure to envision alternatives with minimal energetic expense and even less risk. However, in the ends which one might, through the misapplication of this freedom, bring about, there is hidden a dreadfully steep cost.

People, unlike rabbits, can eat from a garden or a grocery. Rabbits do not enjoy such a luxury. However, rabbits are also free from the burdens associated with such luxury. A rabbit may terrorize a garden at some personal risk, but a rabbit cannot terrorize the globe, litter it with “disposable” plastic grocery bags, to-go coffee cups and microwaveable hamburger wrappers. After lunch, a rabbit also cannot rob a convenience store, or binge drink beer because he is lonely. Rabbits have neither the capacity to act in these ways, nor the capacity to conceive of alternatives. However, persons often do. And, where one is free to do otherwise, he is free to consider otherwise. Looking around, seeing where one is and reflecting on how it all came about, a person comes to terms not only with where he is at, but with where he could have been. The world need not be so polluted. We need not be waging wars without end in foreign countries so that already wealthy persons can control someone else's resources. Looking around, seeing the world situation for what it is, one realizes that he is to blame not only for what he did, but for what he didn't do. Not only could things be otherwise in the future, but they could have been otherwise, now. And, this realization is a heavy burden to bear.

Yet, we are fortunate. We are in a rare position in history. Though we are confronted with crises of magnitudes not witnessed in human history – for the most part

manufactured – we – again for the most part – remain free. We still enjoy some leisure, and can use this free time and free energy to tie ourselves to ends worth seeking rather than those set out for us by bad leadership and big mistakes. Though these crises demand that something must be done, though we act of necessity, we may yet open the opportunity not only to change the world, but to change it for the better. And, we may do so deliberately. Because we want to.

We are fortunate. The opportunity to act deliberately has been, throughout human history, difficult to come by. Deliberation is constrained by leisure, for without leisure there is no freedom to do otherwise in the first place. Deliberation has been difficult to come by because, throughout human history, leisure has been difficult to come by. And, even when people have enjoyed the leisure to tie themselves to ends of their own choosing, this freedom is constrained in another way. The alternatives one can envision are limited by practical wisdom. Practical wisdom reveals what ends are possible. This is why, throughout human history, the greatest leaders have been the wisest people, and why kings have been permitted to live in relative comfort, free from pressing need to survey, to study, to think and, after all, to decide what is best for everyone. And this is why, in the end, the greatest leaders are to blame for the moral codes that shape current conventions and occupy lesser men and philosophers to this day. And this is why, today, we are so fortunate. We know more, now, have experienced more failures, now, have at our fingertips the wisdom of more people, from more times and from more places, now, than any other human being in all of human history. We may face the greatest crises, but we are also, potentially, the greatest

leaders. What we must do, now, is remain free, to do the right thing at the right time when the opportunity presents itself. We must prepare.

Should anyone wish to be free, to make the most of his powers to will what he wishes rather than accept what is given, he must prepare. To change his life, or change the world, for the better and of his own freewill, one must become wise. Only in wisdom do opportunities to do otherwise present themselves. Only with opportunities to do otherwise is a person free. Only a free person can do what is right rather than what is necessary. Only in doing what is right can the world be a better place. Thus, in every case, should one wish for a better world, he ought to become wise. And conscience is the mechanism of it all.

With this, we are finally ready to see this mechanism stripped bare. The next section introduces the ACTWith model of conscience. The ACTWith model is more than a two-legged template, wound up and walking for your viewing pleasure. This is a model for the moral life. Yours. Mine. Real life. It is useful. Its operations can be put into everyday practice. It is a tool for the development of wisdom, the exercise of freedom, and the measure of moral leadership. After all, he who leads best leads least, for no one needs to lead the free, and the best leader is the leader of free people. As a model of freedom for all to follow after, one must only be first in following the true guide of us all, doing the right thing at the right time. Conscience.

5 Conscience, and the limits of experience.

Every faculty in one man is the measure by which he judges of the like faculty in another. I judge of your sight by my sight, of your ear by my ear, of your reason by my reason, of your resentment by my resentment, of your love by my love. I neither have, nor can have, any other way of judging about them.

– Adam Smith¹¹⁹

“Why, haven’t you learned anything in your time with me?”

“No sir. I have learned that a man will do anything for a potato.”

– Jim Graham¹²⁰

The basic idea is a simple one. Persons live in situations. One’s situation is the terms in which he lives and dies, acts or remains ignorant. To be situated is to be in a position. There are good and there are bad positions. Conscience, roughly, compares positions as if one will live or die within them. In this section, I will introduce a simple model of the mechanics behind this operation. The rest of the text will expand on this basic model by pursuing one deceptively simple question, the most difficult question to affect any thinking person since the dawn of time. This is not merely the hypothetical question: “What is the meaning of life?” This is the one we each care about *much* more than that: “What is the meaning of *my* life?”

The model that will help us to answer this question is the ACTWith model of conscience. ACTWith stands for “as-if coming-to-terms-with.” The ACTWith model operates through two essential movements. A-, “As-if,” and -CTWith, “Coming to Terms With” a situation. “As-if” involves taking up of a situation for one’s own. It is an affective operation. It has to do with what it *feels like* to be in a given situation. The “coming to terms with” is the determination of that situation. It is a “rational” operation. It is

understanding what being in that position *means*. The ACTWith model synthesizes the two into a unified account of moral life.

The ACTWith model is grounded equally in psychology as it is in philosophy. In particular, it is inspired by artificial intelligence models of human learning. For the engineer in A.I., the two aspects of the human mind captured in the ACTWith model, the rational and the affective, represent two distinctly different modes of computation. The rational mode is discrete. It involves definite things in definite relations with other definite things. This mode of computation is what people typically imagine when they think of mathematics. 1 apple plus 1 apple equals 2 apples. This is discrete mathematics. This mode of computation also reflects the traditional presumption of what counts as intelligence: discrete computational intelligence. Smart people, on this view, add well. They see the relationships between whole things clearly, and remember them well.

The affective mode, on the other hand, is not discrete. Instead of adding separate, individual objects, non-discrete computation sums fields wherein no one part stands out as a separate thing from the rest. This is what is sometimes called “emotional intelligence,” for example. People who are highly emotionally intelligent are sensitive to change. They tend to see trends, rather than individual objects, and find shifting patterns rather than relationships between fixed objects.¹²¹

For the philosopher, the idea that the human mind consists of two aspects, one affective and one rational, is not new. Philosophers have worked to synthesize the two for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, with today's artificial intelligence merely the

latest incarnation of these efforts. Some have been more successful than others. These theorists have recognized the foundational role of affect, especially in morality, without reducing its role to mere sympathy, pity, or 'melting compassion.' And, at once, they have also recognized the importance of one's situation, or context dependency, in any adequate exposition of morality.

One particularly clear expression of this strain of thought comes from Adam Smith, a philosopher best known for inspiring contemporary capitalists to believe in the power of invisible hands.¹²² Consider the following passage, in which he describes the process at the root of his own moral theory, as presented in his famous text the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* :

By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels.¹²³

In this statement, we see emotion and reason clearly related. Smith's *Theory* is bottom-up. Compassion grounds morality, on Smith's account. Morality begins with feelings, "enduring all the same torments." On the basis of this feeling, one then comes to understand what it is like to be in another's situation. This other situation is then "brought home to us" and "we then tremble and shudder at what he feels." So, moral sentiment is more than a passing feeling. It results in a conscious appreciation of another person's situation. One transcends his own boundaries. He not only feels *for*

another person, he *becomes* that other person, heart and mind, as if he lived in his position. Only from this experience is there any possibility for moral judgment. Without it, one is merely weighing risks and pay-offs. Bean counting. And there is nothing moral about that.

The ACTWith model captures the process expressed in Adam Smith's moral theory in its simple, two-part mechanism. The "as-if" involves affectively putting one's self into another's situation. It involves feeling as if this situation is one's own. It has two basic modes, open or closed. One is either open to feeling as if one is in another situation, or one is closed to it. Openness is "compassion" and closedness is the lack thereof. Figuratively speaking, what is open in compassion is one's heart, and having an open heart is the first step in exercising one's conscience.

The *as-if* operation is the felt starting grounds of the ACTWith model. The "coming to terms with" builds on these grounds. Again, one can be either open or closed to a situation. In coming to terms with a situation, one literally "de-termines" the situation. He plots its terminations. He notes the whys and wherefores of its ends and openings. Coming to terms with a situation follows the open heart with an open mind. It is in coming to terms with a situation that a situation is finally "brought home" to one's self. Closed, however, even with an open heart, one cannot understand what it is to be another's position, and so fails to understand what it is like to be in another's position.

The "as-if" and the "coming to terms with" are essentially related. There is never one without the other, though different persons have different capacities for feelings and for their determinations. One only comes to terms with a situation by affectively opening

to it. One does not come to terms with a situation unless he is able to feel what it is like to live there. Also, to come to terms with any given situation, one must relax his prior understanding in order to take the new situation as it presents itself. This opens the way for an opportunity that is present in every situation. Each new moment presents an opportunity to understand. In affectively opening to a situation and coming to terms with it, one gains understanding. One becomes wise. Conversely, in closing off to a situation one merely remains ignorant. There can be no new understanding if a prior understanding is merely imposed on the moment, however one feels about it.¹²⁴

The terms to which one comes in situations past and present are those which he then brings to future situations. The more terms to which one has come, the more terms are brought to bear in understanding new and different situations. It is through the employment of this understanding that one can identify otherwise hidden opportunities therein. And, it is through discovering these opportunities that one comes to value understanding, and the modes of conscience that make discovering these opportunities possible in the first place, the modes that are productive of wisdom, as it is through wisdom that one recognizes opportunities in the first place.

On the other hand, without the wisdom to recognize opportunities when they present themselves, one is unable to pursue them. Thus, he may remain trapped in the situation into which he had been thrown, without an opportunity to come to terms with different situations, and so he may go on without the experiences necessary to value the modes of conscience that open hidden opportunities to understand. He may, in fact,

come to distrust new terms, distrust different people and avoid the different situations they represent.

In the end, whatever one's experiences, the terms to which one has come in his life effectively limit his conscientious comparison of different situations. If one remains closed to what it is to be in any given situation, he effectively limits the terms to which he comes, the understanding he comes to, and thus the terms which he brings to any given situation the next time around. And this, finally, limits the ends which one may seek in life.

In summary, the ACTWith model captures this process leading to enlightenment, or ignorance, through four fundamental operations:

As-if (closed) = one's feeling of being in a situation is closed to others and centered on his own.

As-if (open) = one is open to feeling what it is to be in another situation: "we enter, as it were, into his body."

Coming to terms with (closed) = the terms of one's own prior understanding are imposed on the situation.

Coming to terms with (open) = one is open for clues to another understanding to be adopted in evaluation of the situation: "and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels."

These four separate operations of the model account for both the rational and the felt aspects of being in the world. But, realistically, they are never experienced alone.

Cognition comes in the form of a bottom-top pairing. Combined, thus, there are the four possible permutations of the ACTWith model of conscience:

As-if (closed) coming to terms with (closed) c/c

As-if (open) coming to terms with (closed) o/c

As-if (closed) coming to terms with (open) c/o

As-if (open) coming to terms with (open) o/o

Altogether, the four modes can be visualized as follows (Figure 1):

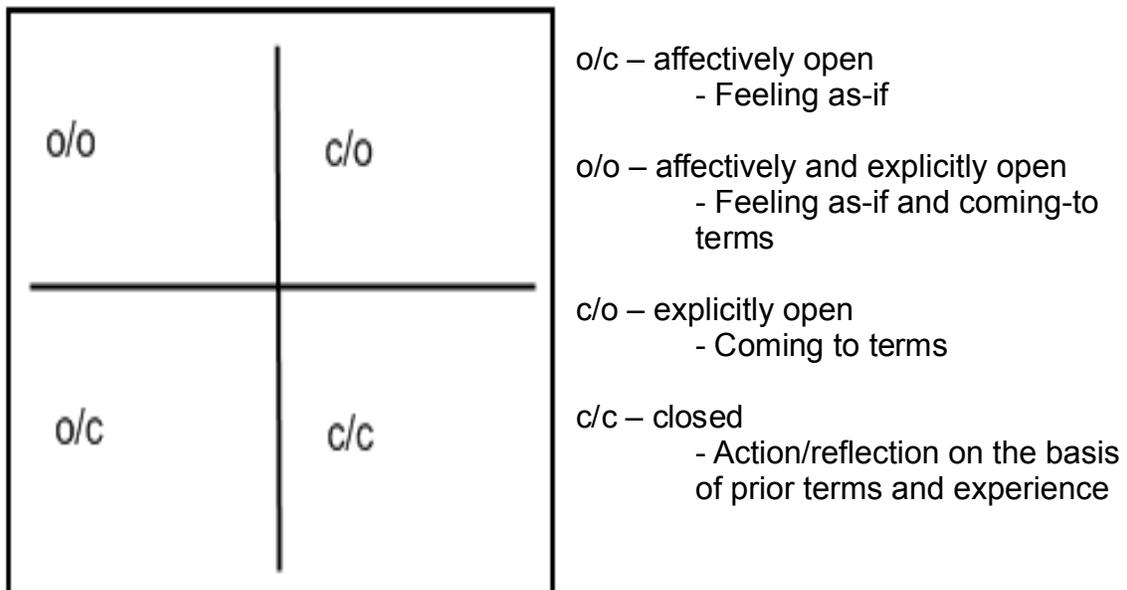


Figure 1: Basic ACTWith model consisting of four static modes.

In the briefest of terms, c/c is feeling as if in one's own situation and understanding that situation only in terms of one's own prior experience. O/c is feeling open to another situation, but understanding that situation only in terms of prior experience. C/o is feeling as if in one's own situation and being open to new determinations of that situation. O/o is feeling open to new situations and being open to

new determinations of these situations. O/o is the mode behind any imputation to love one's neighbor as one's self. O/o is also the mode Socrates demonstrates when he denies knowledge even as he leads others to discover it. O/o is the mode that makes him the wisest man in Athens, a process his example shall demonstrate in detail as this text proceeds.

Right now, it is important to understand how each of these modes operates in everyday situations. The most important everyday situations are those that have to do with the opportunities for people to live well, to remain healthy and to become happy. These are moral issues. And, there is something that all everyday moral issues have in common. This is that they deal with scarce resources. There are a limited number of good places to be, a limited supply of comfortable situations in the world. Famine, poverty, for-profit health-care, for-profit prisons, for-profit police forces, war, education, genocide, abortion, all of these deep moral problems deal with scarce resources, whether these be lack of food, money, medicine, freedom, security, energy, land, or even the basic resources necessary to provide for another life. Capitalizing on this shared aspect of all moral problems, I have invented a simple game involving scarce resources to illustrate the moral implications of the 4 basic modes of the ACTWith model. Granted, the game is overly simple relative to real-world resource problems, but it should help us to recognize the four basic modes of conscience at work in our own everyday moral lives.

Imagine the following scene. Two hungry persons are in a bare room and one of them has a potato. The potato is freshly baked and salted, ready for eating. The potato

will completely satisfy one of them, and in this game can be split. However, only one of these persons, call him 0, has to this point in his life ever missed a meal. He understands what it is like to be empty, and to stay that way, thus the name, 0. The other person, call him 1, has not to this point in his entire life ever missed a meal. He does not know what it is like to go hungry. He has always been filled up. Not only has he never had to come to terms with unsatisfied hunger, on his own, but also he hasn't ever seen anyone else go through it, either. Thus, the name, 1.

Even though the two agents enter the game at the same time in similar conditions – they are both hungry, in the same room, and confronted with a single potato - each agent begins the game with different understandings of that situation. They bring different terms to bear, and so reveal different opportunities for action.

This game is a 'one-off game.' A one-off game involves players who are not interested in learning anything, or in teaching each other any lessons. What happens in a one-off game only happens once. So, the understanding generated in this run of the potato game does not affect what the agents might do with any given potato later on in life. In fact, for one-off game players, there is no 'later on in life' to worry about. The agents have no expectations that the game will continue, or even that they will ever see each other again. It happens only once. This focus on a single transaction is meant to illustrate the difference that prior understanding brings to human interactions through the 4 basic modes of conscience, and nothing more. We will apply the ACTWith model to more realistic problems later on.

Now, consider what happens if 1 begins with the potato. 0 is present, and they are both hungry. According to the ACTWith model, 1 has four basic modes available:

1) c/c. Closed to what it feels like to be in 0's situation, closed to new determinations of the situation. Having never come to terms with hunger, and having no experience what it is like to have hunger unsatisfied, 1 eats the potato blissfully ignorant of what it is like to be affected by the terms which he imposes on the other: unabated hunger. In terms of being compassionate, he is not. In terms of expanding his prior understanding on the basis of a new situation, he does not. He goes with what he knows, and what he knows is to eat the potato.

2) o/c. Open to what it feels like to be in 0's situation, closed to new determinations of the situation. Having never come to terms with hunger, having no prior experience of hunger, 1 eats the potato. He has no terms to begin understanding the other's condition, and is closed to determining what this might be. Affectively open to the other's situation, however, he feels a tension between their respective positions, a feeling which, if the game were not a one-off game, may lead him to do differently next time. But, for the moment, he merely eats his potato, feeling ill at ease, and at a loss for an explanation as to why the other is grimacing so.

3) c/o. Closed to what it feels like to be in 0's situation, open to the new determinations of the situation. Having never come to terms with hunger, he eats the potato while witnessing the other come to terms with his situation, which is unsatisfied hunger. Hunger is still a situation he has not felt, but is something he now understands as a discrete relation between the other, himself, and the potato. This relationship is

that the other person continues to complain about something called “hunger” and doesn’t have a potato, while he himself offers no such complaint, and does. He begins to see that having a potato is more valuable than he had otherwise thought, but he doesn’t feel any need to share it.

4) o/o. Open to what it feels like to be in 0’s situation, open to new determinations of the situation. Open to the other’s situation both affectively and rationally, he takes it for his own, as if he might live or die within it. He feels the tension between his situation and the other’s. And, though having never come to terms with hunger, and with no idea of what it is like to have hunger unsatisfied, he gives the potato to the other. Thereby, through this single instance, he determines the opportunities available to a person who has no potato. Having felt the difference between having a potato and not having a potato, he can work to understand the significance of this difference. Were this game to continue, he would take this new understanding into the next moment. He would become wiser, and probably be a nicer guy for it.

On the basis of his prior experience, 1 has no understanding of the real value of the potato. Going into the game, he had never felt hunger because he had never gone without one. On the basis of the determinations that he has available, he only shares the potato in the open/open mode. This mode is open to enduring different, even unknown situations, regardless of prior experience. This is also the habitual mode of the conscientious person, the person who genuinely brings home to himself the situations of others, who feels that the world is one whole world, shared, rather than

mine or yours to split up, privatize, and profit by at the expense of everyone else. We shall rejoin this theme as the text closes.

Let us consider this same set of options in the same situation – in a room with another hungry person and in possession of the only potato - from the perspective of agent 0. 0 enjoys in the same four basic modes given in the framework, above:

1) c/c. Closed to what it feels like to be in 1's situation, closed to new determinations of the situation. Though having come to terms with hunger, and with a good idea of what it is like to have hunger unsatisfied, he eats the potato closed to the other's suffering, intent only on filling the nagging hole in his own empty belly.

2) o/c. Open to what it feels like to be in 1's situation, closed to new determinations of the situation. Having come to terms with hunger, himself, with the prior understanding of what it is like to have hunger unsatisfied, he shares the potato. 0 acts solely on the basis of his own prior determinations. He already understands what it is like to go hungry. He already understands what it feels like to be in the other's position, without a potato. He does not need to come to terms with the other's situation. He feels for him, as he had already felt that way before. He understands, and shares the potato.

3) c/o. Closed to what it feels like to be in 1's situation, open to new determinations of the situation. 0 is in an unusual position. Closed to feeling as-if in the other's position, and open to new determinations of the situation as it is shared, 0 has a choice. He either eats the potato and discovers what it is like to have a potato and not

share it, or he shares the potato and discovers what it is like to have a potato and share it. He could go one way or the other.

4) o/o. Open to the perspective of the other, and open to the terms of the other's situation, 0 shares the potato if he does not give it away completely.

In some ways, being a simple one-off game makes the analysis of moral problems more difficult rather than easier. The situation as presented in the game is not very complex, while moral problems usually are. This goes for the agents in the game, as well. 1 and 0, the agents in this illustration, are what is called "ideal." That is, they are not very realistic. Realistically, agents learn. They suffer the consequences of their actions. The game of life goes on. The agents in the game as given above do not. What if these were more realistic agents? What if these agents learned from experience, and in fact become products of their actions?¹²⁵

Let's begin to answer this question by enriching our basic understanding of the ACTWith model. Think of the 4 basic modes as if they were types of personalities, with their habitual engagements leading to a certain sort of character, as if these are grounded propensities to act in certain ways day to day, rather than merely in a certain way one action at a time.

These characteristic attitudes show up very differently in everyday life, but the open-minded is more difficult to define. The closed-minded character may seem to have all the answers, imposing prior understanding on any new or different situation. The first two permutations – c/c and c/o - represent modes which are affectively closed to others, and the latter two modes which are affectively open to others.

Characteristically closed persons live as if their own determinations are adequate, (*/*), and as if their subjective conditions are the only feelings to matter (c/*). Closedness (c/c) is the mode whereby one person takes his own experience as a measure of another's (*/*). It is the mode of prejudice, (*/*), and that whereby one person is able to find joy in the suffering of another (c/*). This is the source of the callow comfort of the bigot, this explains the casual cold aloofness of the closed-minded (*/*). This is the space of egoism, and the necessary attitude of anyone who endorses torture (c/*) and the punitive rule of law over the painful needs of another sensitive creature (c/c).

The */o modes represent being open to the objective terms of situations, and the o/* modes represent being open to the subjective conditions within these situations. Characteristically open persons are experimental, caring, flexible, anticipate the needs of their fellows, etcetera. Openness is generative of wisdom. It is through being open to the world that one comes to new determinations of different situations (*/*). This openness leads to increased understanding, and this is brought with that person into his next situation.

Meanwhile, as he enters a new situation, the open minded person may appear to have no understanding at all when, properly speaking, he has merely relaxed the terms of the understanding he does have in order to see what the current situation presents on its own. This is the price of being open: constant attention to changes in the world, and of one's own situation within it. It is also the source of warmth in openness, the sensitive and even suppliant posture of the open-minded (*/*). Open to other situations (o/*) and new determinations (*/*), one is also open to suffering (o/o). This

characteristic mode of meeting the terms of the given situation may show up as an apparent confusion, stress, and anxiety. This comes as a consequence of being open, as one invites revisions to his prior understanding instead of merely imposing the understanding that he might have on whatever situation arises. The payoff for all of this stress and revision is wisdom. So, it is no surprise that the person in search of wisdom is characteristically open to new situations and determinations. This person may even adopt a habitual attitude of not knowing (*/o) as he goes into any given situation with the understanding that he may have something to learn. Famously, this was Socrates' attitude, the wisest man in Athens. And finally, it is the necessary attitude of anyone willing to suffer, himself, in order to save another from suffering instead.¹²⁶

Exposing the relationship between the open modes of conscience and wisdom allows us to expand on the relationship between having an open mind, moment to moment, and the sort of person one becomes in life. Consider the following. Staying open to the world is hard work. The price of being open to the world comes in the form of turbulence, as an open mind requires that one meet the terms of the situation no matter how apparently chaotic. Making sense of chaos is risky business. It doesn't always work out. It takes a long time, and a lot of dedication, to find the patterns in seemingly un-patterned aspects of the world. The price of being open lies in exposing one's self to this chaos, in finding one's self, rather in a stable world filled with the same objects found in the same ways, in a rapidly changing world full of dark and shifting unknowns, in a world of shadows and shades of grey. The price is the anxiety that comes with uncertainty, especially when that uncertainty attaches to where one is and

where he might end up next. Thus, wisdom requires courage, tenacity, and strength of will that far outstrips any dogmatism. And its pursuit is risky. The cost might be one's life, lost or misspent.

For the closed minded and hard-hearted, the pursuit of wisdom appears to be anything but wise, as all it seems to do is make things harder for one's self. There is no apparent value in wringing the order from a chaotic environment, enduring uncertainty, anxiety, and even angst. There is merely what has obvious value and what does not, pleasure and power in the world as it has already been understood. This contempt for openness to change is the sign of a vicious person, selfish, prejudiced, and cold-hearted. Closed to new and different situations, unable or unwilling to find the order in the world over and above that which he imposes on it, this person's view grows increasingly ineffective as the world changes around him. He will fail to find the opportunities emerging from the changing order unless he is either fortunate or powerful enough that the world revert to whatever state suits his habit. Thus, his lack of wisdom is the limit of his opportunities, leaving, in the most egregious cases, only violence as an option.

Wisdom is the window on the world. It is the window into other persons as well. It is often said that "one sees in others what one is in himself." It merely follows that the more one sees in himself, the more he sees in others. Accordingly, the greater one's understanding, the more understanding one is. This is because one initially understands one's self, and others, only in those terms to which he has already come. This relationship is captured by the o/c mode of the ACTWith model. In this mode,

though one is open to another's situation, he understands it only insofar as his prior understanding allows. Persons who routinely engage with others in this mode can be characterized in a certain way. They can be characterized as “caring *about* another” without actually “caring *for* another.” Of course, everyone must begin a relationship with a stranger in this mode. One begins affectively open to their situation, and with only their prior experience to guide them is assessing the relative value of that situation. But here, there are other modes of conscience in which to engage in order to fill the gaps. For example, in the o/o mode, one can learn something new, adjusting old information in light of new.

However, we all have known people who live habitually in this first ACTWith mode, o/c.¹²⁷ Consider the following illustration taken from my own years in graduate school.

I once had a “friend” offer that I paint her house. At that time, I was a student, struggling with limited opportunities for income in a small college town, and with the further pressure to produce written research under strict time constraints.¹²⁸ As work opportunities were few, and competition high, wages were low, further aggravating my situation. My “friend” offered that my financial tensions be partly alleviated by working for her. Her terms, however, ignored aspects of my own situation to which she was not sensitive.

She was open to my situation insofar as her terms allowed it. She loved money and hoarded material things. She was not quick to part with any of it, and when she did, it was with an unduly weighted significance. So, in so far as her understanding limited

her capacities to do so, she offered to help me by imposing a low wage and an arduous schedule. In terms of her own situation, her impositions likely seemed appropriate – wages at local market rates paid at her own convenience - and she represented her offer as one of genuine concern. The terms of her offer, however, presented a problem for me.

When I appealed to her to take into consideration the terms of my situation (that is, to enjoin in the o/o mode with me), and understand my own situation as her own – the pressures to continue in an uninterrupted research regimen - she refused. Though I was sensitive to her anxiety over a cheap and easy completion to her project, I was inflexible in at least one determination of my own. I demanded that I have shorter hours over a longer period of time, so that I might not lose touch with my own growing project, steady progress in which the terms of her schedule made impossible. On this point, we were mutually (o/c), neither would engage (o/o), and the work fell through. Now and since, we have been mutually closed (c/c).

In the o/o mode, we may have come to some agreement. But, this mode is easier spoken of than brought to bear. For one thing, it is easier to relax one's prior determinations when he or she is able to relax, in general. In other words, the o/o mode should first be expected from those at relative leisure before those under greater pressures to the contrary. In terms of the preceding example, I expected the relatively wealthy and established "friend" to enjoin in the o/o mode, to be flexible, before expecting the cash-strapped and over-worked graduate student to do so. After all, she was free to consider options, where I was not. However, this did not happen. It is of

this would-be employer's character to expect that her terms must be met (*c), even when any objective evaluation of her situation would reveal this need not be the case. And, her characteristic mode has worked well for her. She became a professor at a university by forcing her own terms on an otherwise unwilling administration, and has since attained a position of relative ease and high status, whereby others typically rush to meet her on her own terms. She quickly found someone else to paint her house, for instance. So, from her point of view, her characteristic o/c mode must seem effective. In the classroom, it passes for an airy superiority. Outside the classroom, it is more often taken to be condescension and elitist disingenuousness.

Of the four characteristic modes of conscience, it is not the habitual o/c mode that stands out. It is the character marked by the first and fourth, c/c or o/o, which stands out in experience. Consider the person habitually in the c/c mode. This person is tuned to his own needs, and cares to understand nothing past his own situation. It is a mode evidenced by an obvious sense of entitlement. This person is not happy unless he has it all because, after all, he already knows everything he needs to know to rationalize its appropriation: it is already his. Dealing with this mode of conscience is like looking for a soft spot in the proverbial brick wall. This mode of conscience is dogmatic, selfish, and takes the world on his own terms. He is closed to the world and to the persons in it. He imposes the terms of his own understanding on others as standards, and he represents these very subjective terms as-if they were objective, as if his own selfish interests were endorsed by the world at large, or worse, by the God in heaven, above.

This is the conscience of a sociopath, a sadist, a tyrant and a bigot. This person “without a conscience,” so to speak, bases evaluations of other situations on his own terms (o/c), forces his own interests on the moment (c/c), claiming dominion through broad, self-serving platitudes (* /c). His determinations of the objective world are static, forced, and selfish (c/c). These rigid generalizations are likely constructed in order to overcome an essentially selfish sense of locality in the face of diversity (c/*). He is inflexible (* /c), and taking himself as measure of all things (c/*). Thus, he is interested in universals and in rigid absolutes, as for him these constitute a contract to which he holds the rest of the world to account. After all, if it were to change, he would be ill-prepared to change with it.

Consider the following illustration of the (c/c) character, also taken from my days in graduate school. A man was newly hired to run the academic department of which I was already a member. Let’s call him Professor ManPig, fondly recalling J.S. Mill’s famous injunction that it is better to be Socrates dead than a pig, living. As chair, ManPig enjoyed a great deal of control over everyday issues, including whether the department helped or hindered any student’s or professor’s career. One of his duties was to manage all the departmental meetings. In these meetings, he forced his determinations of academic value on department guidelines (o/c). He pushed for an environment that suited the success of his own characteristic modes of conscience (closed). He determined that the successful faculty member and graduate student should employ “shameless self-aggrandizement” (c/*) to receive raises in pay and preferred scheduling. He stressed strict adherence to rules and regulations (* /c) – privy

to his own selective enforcement, of course - and argued against flexibility for others because, for him, other situations and their determinations did not matter (c/c).¹²⁹ Needless to say, with those who did not share his inflexible ascriptions of value, he was not popular, and to them not kind.¹³⁰

The fourth character, habitually in the (o/o) mode, is opposite. This mode of conscience is open to the world and to the others in it (o/*).¹³¹ This person is tuned to the needs of others (o/*), and is sensitive to the terms of their evaluation (*/o). He bases evaluations of goodness in terms of how things turn out for others (*/o) as much or more than how they turn out for himself (c/o). This person is happy with less if things are fair for others (c/o). Flexible, at the right place at the right time, he is ready to meet the terms of the moment (o/o). This is the conscience of a saint or an angel, of mercy and grace. This is the positive mode of morality, when one is willing to come to new determinations (*/o) of a shared situation in order to affect another's health and happiness.

Dealing with this mode of conscience is like finding a soft spot in the proverbial brick wall. This habitual mode of conscience is tolerant, selfless, and takes the changing world on its own terms rather than impose his own. He is interested in universals and absolutes as well as the tyrant, but for other reasons. For this character, these values constitute a contract to which the rest of the world holds him to account. These are terms which *he* must meet, not the other way around.

Compare the academic tyrant illustrated above with the following example of the (o/o) style of leadership. Let's call this person Professor GoodMan. In matters of policy,

Goodman worked at finding consensus (* / o) whereby the best efforts of each diverse member (o / *) of the department could be encouraged (o / o). He took the department to be a shared situation (o / *), equally determined by the needs of all (* / o). In fact, his own professional work during his tenure as chair focused on this topic: the coordination of group members around the solution to problems the outcomes of which were to varying degrees important to each member according to their interests. In other words, he took everyone's interests as his own, came to terms with them, learned from his experience, and became wiser. He then wrote about it, helping others to share in his wisdom. In terms of his own work, he was their "trustee." This process, as we have seen, is actually only possible through the (o / o) mode of conscience.

The other two modes of conscience are hybrid modes. The first we have already seen. It is as-if another, in terms of one's own prior understanding (o / c). As before, this mode is captured in the phrase "caring *about* another without really caring *for* him." We also see this mode captured in the phrase "If you were like me..." (o / c). In this mode, one person may not understand why the another spends so much time outside in the summer, because he cannot understand life without air conditioning (o / c). He may be heard saying "If you were like me, you wouldn't sit outside so much in the summer" or "I don't know why you sit outside so much in the summer because air conditioning is so much more comfortable!" (o / c).

The other hybrid mode of conscience is as-if in one's own situation, coming to new terms with this situation (c / o). This sense is captured in the phrase "If I were like you..." (c / o) In this mode, a person may be able to understand why the another spends

so much time outside in the summer, but he may have a hard time adjusting to the temperature (c/o). He may be heard to say “If I were like you, I could sit outside without air conditioning, too.” or “Does it feel hot to you? It feels hot to me, but it sure is cheaper and better for the environment!” (c/o)

In the end, it is not the mode, but the efficiency of the mode in performing the task at hand that is important. Different modes are more or less effective in different situations. Tyrants are most effective in enforcing a tyranny, just as charitable persons are most effective in establishing a charity. Now, recall what was established in the preceding chapters. *All things in nature seek equilibrium in terms of their environments.* Most importantly, recall that human beings differ from other living things in a limited capacity to affect the terms of this arrangement. Through that discussion, we came to understand that another way to talk about 'equilibrium in terms of environment' is 'comfort in terms of a situation,' and that all actions are undertaken towards a comfortable situation. So, this leaves us with the following formula: *All organisms seek comfortable situations, and human beings differ from other organisms in a limited capacity to determine for themselves what sort of situation this will be.*¹³²

Coupled with our current results, we can see that persons exhibiting different characteristic modes of conscience work at creating situations in terms of which their own characteristic modes are most effective at becoming comfortable. People like to be in situations in which they can get things done. This bears out in terms of my own graduate school experience. GoodMan worked to create an environment supportive of all equally invested in the discovery of truth through free inquiry, a direct reflection of the

open minded way in which he dealt with others generally, and a peaceful environment free of drama and departmental politics. In such terms, he thrived. ManPig, on the other hand, worked to create the opposite, seeking instead administrative power over others and the elimination of contrary voices through manipulation, especially of funding and scheduling, thereby hamstringing free inquiry in any vein beyond his capacity to value.

In any case, we can remain charitable and assume that everyone, these men included, always and only act toward the ends that he or she feels is right. Echoing Socrates on a point to be attended in greater detail in the next part of this text, no one tries to do the wrong thing, *per se*. Everyone acts toward the realization of the good, toward a comfortable situation. However, many persons simply take very different things to be good and comfortable.

The point to be taken from all of this is that habitual modes of conscience lead to differences in character, and these differences in character lead to differences in characteristic ends. There should be nothing controversial in this result, or in the following related observation. We tend to find similar characters working for similar ends, often together, and often with a similar explicit understanding of the situation that they are working to create.

In fact, this tendency is so regular that there is a special vocabulary that classifies these groups of inclination and end. Persons who hold to certain modes in certain situations toward certain ends are called "x-ists" and are said to practice "x-ism" in seeking "x-ist" situations. For instance, racists practice racism in pursuit of racist

ends, sexists sexism in search of sexist ends, imperialists imperialism, despots despotism, and fascists fascism. At root, these positions have one thing in common. They are all forms of fundamentalism, seeking fundamentally different ends, often enough through fundamentally different means.

And it is here, at the root of these classifications, that we can find the four characteristic modes of conscience at work. The closed modes constitute egoism, fascism, imperialism, despotism, and others. The open modes constitute Buddhism, pacifism, communitarianism, egalitarianism, and others. They do so as persons are led to classify one another in terms of their characteristic actions and attitudes. Pacifists practice pacifism by valuing peace over violence and acting in the name of the former against the latter, communitarians by community against selfishness, egalitarians equality over inequity, and so on.

With this, simple differences in characteristic modes of conscience become political problems. Pacifists resist despots, communitarians resist egoists, and egalitarians anyone who would divide the human race against itself along lines of sex, race, class, or otherwise. So, we see war protests, tax revolts, and struggles for rights in the face of prejudice from the one side, and police brutality, economic repression, and piecemeal concessions from the other. The implications of these conflicts along the lines of conscience are explored in detail as the text continues, especially in the third part.

What confronts us now is the fact that, if we have some power over what modes of conscience we adopt and when, who we become and the sort of world we create by

way of our routine employment of these modes, then we have some power over how these political struggles bear out. Should I become a tyrant or a martyr? Should I weigh in on one side against the other, as one person against others bind together in arms toward a common vision of a possible future preferably sans detractors, or should I seek another way, a third way, a way that makes room for all? As the way to realize the first option is clear enough from the preceding discussion and productive merely of more of the same, what form would this third way take?

Recall the discussion from the second chapter. There, we examined persons at work in reconciling conflict through finding common grounds for contradictory determinations. There, we focused on the power of language on bridging the gaps between conflicted parties. Here, recall the methods of perhaps the most famous martyr of the 20th century, Martin Luther King, Jr. Where two sets of determinations seem to contradict each other, yet apply to the same shared situation, his method involved reinvesting old words with new meanings, meanings crafted in order to represent the shared situation toward which he worked. Recall his analysis of the word “tension.” Rather than emphasize the notion that tension indicates division, King emphasizes that tension indicates a common ground simply polarized by misunderstanding. He worked to reinterpret the language that described the situation in a way that permitted its reunification. In so doing, he was able to illustrate that even as the barriers of language were overcome, so could the physical barriers.

In King's example, we saw that this work of reconciliation takes place in the space of the open conscience. A person has to make space for the future in the space

of his own life if his vision is to become a reality. Thus, every revolution begins inside one's self.

For example, King opens common grounds for his own and conflicting positions first by assuming that the situation, however it is defined, is a shared own (o/*). He then recasts this situation in terms of a revised vocabulary (*/o) that emphasizes this fact. In this way, conscience does what otherwise may have seemed impossible, affectively bridging the poles of conflict under a single umbrella of understanding (o/o). This umbrella, or at least some parts of it, shields us today. And King the martyr, through his understanding, has won some form of immortality in carrying us all toward the paradise that was his vision. This is a fact of history.

There is a further fact of history with which King's example confronts us now, however. This is that King's methods, his mode of conscience and pursuit of characteristic ends, was met with resistance. For those who take their own determinations as exhaustive (*/c), and who will not affectively open to contrary positions (c/*), any reconciliation of poles of conflict is impossible. There is only one or the other, us or them. There is no space in this closed heart for a third way. There is only life and death, no compromise. And, in order to survive under such a limited scheme, King was murdered.

Ignorance is as ignorance does, no more tellingly than through its favorite tool, violence. So, as much as we can learn from the history of King's life, we can also learn from his assassination. We can learn about the obstacle that stand in the way of conscience, today. King's assassination demonstrates just how far divisive interests will

go to keep the divisions between persons from being bridged. Who are these divisive interests? People who profit on contradiction. People who profit on conflict. People who live in an habitual mode of closure, tyrants, warmongers and weapons-dealers. People who continue to lead many governments today.

In King's case, for instance he was not assassinated until he became a strong force in the movement to stop the American war in Vietnam. Meanwhile, many people were getting very rich on that war. And, knowing what we know now, his assassination is not a surprising result. When one opens to the suffering of the murdered (o/o), one stands up to murderers. In so doing, one exposes them for what they are (c/c), and runs the risk of being murdered. Ignorance does as ignorance is. People seek situations in terms of which their characteristic modes are effective, and seek the company of others who pursue similar ends through similar means. Confronted with another from the opposite pole, however moral and right, these modes and men must have seen only one resort to effect their desired result. King's heart was finally closed with a bullet, as closed as were those of his murderers, but his example remains a spark to keep our own hearts beating on in his same open mode.

Finally, with King's example, we can articulate the full form the ACTWith model. We can now put it in motion. We can wind it up, and get it walking in the world. Fully developed, the model represents a process of cognition, a cycle of conscientiousness that results in wisdom or ignorance, in virtue or vice. The cycle is a model of learning, and a model for living a moral life. This cycle is the "beating heart of conscience," and it is the framework around which the rest of this text revolves.

*The four chambers of the beating heart of conscience open and close in the following pattern: opening to being in a new situation understood on the basis of prior determinations (o/c), then opening to the new situation and new determinations of that situation (o/o), then taking these new terms as determinative of the situation one is in (c/o), then closing to new situations and new determinations (c/c) in a moment of reflection.*¹³³

The ACTWith model is, fully developed, a cycle of information processing. It can be represented thusly (Figure 2):

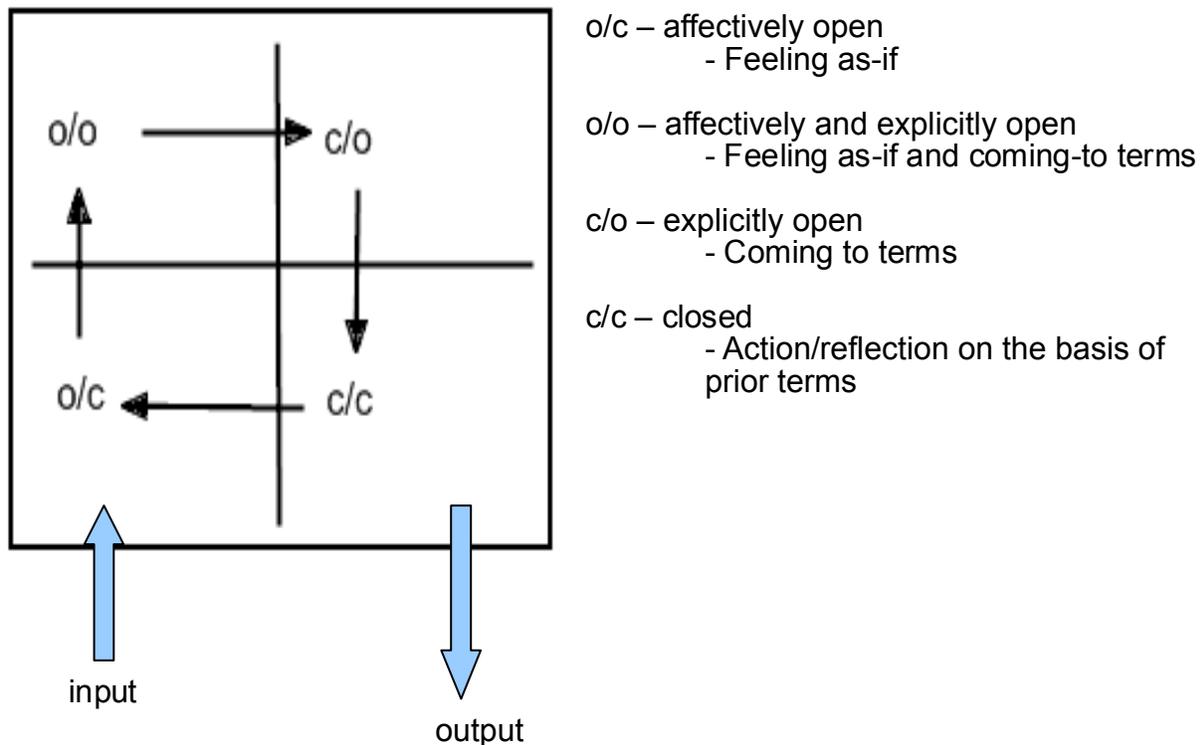


Figure 2: The Beating Heart of Conscience.

Actually, this process is not new to moral philosophy. The ACTWith model differs only in its explicit integration of these insights. Recall the passage from Adam Smith

given earlier in this section, appended below with the ACTWith modes representing its movements:

By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation [O/C], we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments [O/O], we enter as it were into his body[C/O], and become in some measure the same person with him [C/C], and thence form some idea of his sensations [O/C], and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them[O/O]. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves [C/O], when we have thus adopted and made them our own [C/C], begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels [O/C].¹³⁴

This cycle is a normal process. Normal, at least for the conscientious person, the person not completely “hidebound by habit.” Uninterrupted, it is a process of experimentation, of inquiry, and of compassion. It is productive of a huge library of experience, both one’s own in different situations, and of others’ vicariously through empathetic experience thereof. It is through this cycle that one comes to terms with the objective conditions of the world as a changing and shared situation, rather than limit himself only to his own rigid determinations therein. It is through this cycle that one becomes wise, and through the repression of this cycle that one remains ignorant.

It is also this process that is most effective in helping others to become wise. In fact, the ACTWith model is inspired by my own experience teaching. It was as a graduate student, teaching philosophy at the University of Missouri, that I came up with this model. As a graduate student, I wanted to become a good, or even great, teacher. So, I began to study the effects of my approaches on students as I tried to teach them, and as they tried to learn. I found that, first, one must feel for his students. One must first open to their situations, put one's self in their shoes, understand their lives as if

one's own, in order to begin to understand what sort of information is important to them (o/o). Only with this can teaching actually begin. Otherwise, one is merely a lecturer, and I was aiming to become more than just a paid public speaker. I was aiming to become an educator in the Socratic sense, a sense and an example which will become our explicit focus in the next chapter.

In teaching, the (c/o) mode is the crucial starting point. One must meet the student on his own terms (c/o), and test these determinations as if one's own (c/c). Moreover, one must engage in this task openly, publicly, with the student a full partner in the enterprise in order to bring the student to a similar stance in a shared situation (o/c). The point is to bring the student into the cycle so that he might open to other positions, take them up in full consideration (o/o), and from this position begin to integrate this new information into the often unchallenged understanding with which he began (c/o). At this point, it is important to send the student off with homework, with a task at hand which demands that he reflect on the significance of this new-found understanding in light of his own prior experience, so making this new experience equally his own (c/c).

It was in reflecting on the Socratic method of education through the window of my own experience that the ACTWith model was conceived. And, even as this process serves as a method to bridge the gap between teacher and the student, it also helps the student to bridge the gap between who he is, now, and who he seeks to become through the education that he or she is pursuing. After all, in pursuing an education, one pursues not only information for the mere sake of information, or even for employment, but one pursues one's own future self. One seeks to transcend one's own

limitations, and this entails reconciling a very special sort of contradiction within one's self. That contradiction exists between being the person who one is, who does not know something, with the person one seeks to become, one's self in the future who does. As conscience reconciles other contradictions, bridging the gap between disparate ends by opening the common grounds beneath them, the beating heart of conscience opens this space of reconciliation within one's self, as well. One must first only open to the potential, feel as if he is that future self, and remain open to the determinations of this situation as they present themselves, ready to seize the opportunity as it approaches. In the end, this is the same person, awaiting and approaching, before and after, bridging the gap between one's potential and one's actuality. Learning, thus, is an exercise of conscience.

Learning is an exercise in reconciliation within one's self. It involves overcoming one's prior limitations, and becoming something more through experience. There is another word for this movement, however. Typically, this sort of transformation is called "transcendence."

Consider transcendence in terms of the ACTWith model. The transcendence of prior limitations through learning sets up a relationship between a person and himself. This relationship holds between who one's self is (c/c) and who one's self will become (c/c) through the transformative experience (...o/c, o/o, c/o...) of education.¹³⁵ This transformation proceeds as a movement within one's self, by opening to a new situation (to something one does not know now, o/c), coming to terms with that situation (opening to the understanding that this new situation offers, o/o), making these terms one's own

(allowing this new understanding to shape one's life, c/o), and then living accordingly as a new person, wholly transformed by his experience (c/c and onward through the cycle again).

Moreover, this movement of transcendence does not simply describe a lateral exchange of places. In learning, one does not simply become a different person. The situation that one takes up after learning is always an advance over that before learning. In learning, *one becomes a better* person. In education, one does not merely move along, one *moves up*. One does not merely complete schooling and move to another equal position, one *graduates*. One does not merely become wise. One *ascends* to wisdom. It is not easy to become wise, after all. It is hard work. It is like climbing a ladder of enlightenment, and this is why images like “ivory tower” and “shining city on the hill” seem so appropriate to describe bastions of wisdom and the free inquiry that produces it. From such heights, more is seen, coming and going, and from farther away.

In coming to terms with the world through education, one is able to move from an understanding limited to one's subjective perspective to an objective understanding of the world and of one's self within it. This process has deep implications for our distinctly human freedom to determine for ourselves the situation in terms of which we live, and to change ourselves to meet the terms of our changing situation. It will become central to discussions in later chapters, beginning in the second part of the text and culminating in the third. With this in mind, allow me to introduce some of the important points, now.

As we have seen, the subject habituated to the terms of regularly repeated situations is what is known as the “self.” The self is constituted through coming to terms with situations. It binds these situations together, being at the center of each of them it is the thread that ties their relative determination. It is this locus of determination, this self, that moves ahead and enters any new situation. It is in the terms to which one has *already* come that one’s self is one’s self. The terms to which one has come *are* one’s self. This is why dramatic change in one’s situation means more than merely a change in the world. If one is to come to terms with that change, it means a dramatic change in one’s self.¹³⁶

And this is why dramatic change in the world is so scary. This is why people tend to work at keeping things the same, stable, steady, the way that things have always been, and resist change. They tend to avoid it. They tend to stick with comfortable situations, and with the comfortable sense of one’s self within them. Confronted with the loss of this comfortable sense of self in the face of the changing world, one is confronted with anxiety, even angst. These are not good feelings. Not comfortable. It is for this reason that the Greek poet Aeschylus famously remarked that, should one learn, one must suffer. One must let go of his comfortable sense of self, transcend his limitations, and become something more.

As we have seen, the self is constituted through the beating heart of conscience, from the feeling of being in a situation to coming to terms with that situation, into another situation and around again. This is conscience in action. Unfettered, at work and open over a conscientious lifetime, it produces what Nietzsche called a “beautiful soul,” what

Heidegger called “genuine authenticity,” and what Kant called a life worthy of “reverence.” We will attend directly to Heidegger and Kant on these points in Book Two. First, let’s look more closely at the conscientious movement from subjectivity to objectivity, from self-centeredness to the understanding of one’s place in history, that becomes a central focus in Book Three.

“As-if” has to do with subjectivity (o/c, o/o). It is the feeling of being a self in a situation. The situations one enters, subjectively, are objectively those in terms of which one lives and dies, and so must come to terms, one way or another. “Coming to terms with” has to do with objectivity (c/o, c/c). Meeting the objective terms of one’s situation generates new determinations, increases understanding, and exposes more of the objective world. This understanding is what one takes with him as he enters future situations. This is one’s understanding both of himself, and of the world in which he is situated, which he then brings into every new moment (moving from o/c to c/c and around the cycle again). Throughout one’s life, thusly, one’s understanding grows as this cycle repeats itself, and one moves past prior subjective limitations (what it feels like to be “me” in a place at a time) to a more objective understanding of himself so bound, and so limited.

Just as this conscientious transcendence takes one from ignorance to enlightenment through its repetition, it takes one from birth to death, open to closed, over the course of one’s conscientious life. The infant is purely subject to the world (o/c, o/o). As he comes to terms with it he comes to understand the world, and himself within it (c/o, c/c). One begins life in the womb, feeling out one’s situation as if self and world

were the same (o/c). Then, one is ejected. No longer embedded, as if one with the warm walls of the world, the seeds of individuation sprout. As an infant subject, one is fully open to the world, to others, their situations both as felt and from this basis, increasingly, as determined (o/o). These determinations are taken up, tested from one's own position against one's own feelings, and either adopted or refused. Through this process, one's situation is increasingly determined (c/o). One becomes what he understands, does accordingly, individuated amongst others by what he does not do. Thusly, one proceeds through adulthood, demonstrating the capacities through which one is (more or less comfortably) integrated with the objects that litter the shared situation. And, through this demonstration, one teaches the new generations, sometimes actively, and sometimes passively as they openly mirror one's actions and adopt or deny the determinations that ground them. Finally, one ends life as a corpse object, fully closed to the world, and fully determined (c/c).

Though one has no control over where this process begins, one gains increasing control as understanding grows. Though one's self emerges as his situation is revealed, one's personhood emerges as his control over his situation is revealed. Personhood marks the beginning of the moral self. Though one is always responsible for his situation in the world in that he has no option otherwise than to respond from within it, it is with one's control over that situation that one becomes blameworthy for it. The period when this control emerges, and so when the moral person emerges, is commonly known as "adulthood."

Throughout one's life, one comes to terms with his situation as it changes, and experiences himself in terms of the objects of his world (c/o). It is this self, enriched by ongoing experience, which enters into every next situation (o/c), seeking situations according to their objects as one seeks engagements with the objects therein. One comes to terms with this situation through these engagements, then moves on to the next, and so on (first (o/c), then (o/o), then (c/o), then (c/c), and so on into the next situation). Through this process, one actually *becomes* his experience. And, through this process, one can gain some control over what the next experience will be, some control over who one self becomes by way of these experiences, and some control over the shape of the world that one is experiencing.

As one lives and grows, one's self and the world into which he is born are increasingly tied together in understanding. From early development to the end of life as one moves from pure subject, to subjective determinate of the objective world, to pure object, from birth to death, one's self and world are co-determined by the diaphanous interface between them. It is at this interface that life is lived. It is in opening to the world that one becomes one's self, and in the selective opening and closing to the world that one exercises one's limited power to determine for himself who he shall become, and in what situation he will become that self. Open and close as one will, self and situation are inseparable.

This process of co-determination of self and world is captured in the following illustration, "stitching one's self into the world." The lesson that this illustration represents is that persons (and agents of every stripe) shape their environments

through their actions. And, shaping one's environment through action, one thereby sets out the terms to which he or she must come in future iterations, and so on. Self and world, what one knows and does, are not only inseparable, but are increasingly related on this picture. As the person opens to the world, he or she takes up the understanding of this situation, and carries it into the next situation, and so on. Thus, in opening and in closing to the world, one becomes the product of the terms generated prior [Figure 3]:

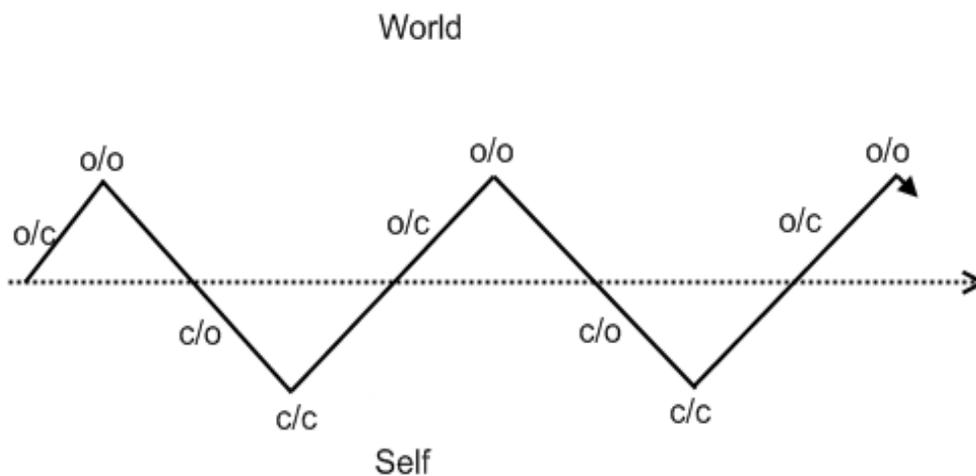


Figure 3: "Stitching one's self into the world."

Think of the common zigzag stitch used in everyday sewing. This stitch joins two parallel surfaces across a gap, for instance when mending a sock. This stitch is used in fastening two materials. For the everyday seamstress, these materials are sheets of cloth. In this case, "stitching one's self into the world," it is the subject and the objective world that are joined. One stitches one's self into the world as he moves out

from himself in action, transcending the limitations of his prior situation, only to draw himself up in meeting the terms of this new situation.

In the process of stitching one's self into the world, the modes (o/c) and (c/o) are the reaching out and the drawing in modes, respectively. These are where the gap between the self and the world are bridged. The (o/o) and (c/c) modes are where the materials on either side of the gap are grasped and held fast. The (o/c) mode bridges the gap between one's prior fixed situation within the objective world (c/c) and new determinations (c/o) of the objective world. The (c/o) mode bridges the gap between this new situation (o/o) and one's newly determined self (c/c) by holding its determinations against one's prior understanding of his situation. Realizing one's self in light of this result (c/c), one has an opportunity to open again to the world (o/c), and to new determinations of his situation within it (c/o) by opening to the objective world, allowing himself to be transformed – literally 'in-formed' – in light thereof (o/o). Thus, what we have is a picture of a basic zigzag pattern of stitch, whereby one comes to an ever better understand himself, his world, and his place within it, even as he becomes self and world through the beating heat of conscience.

This cycle, stitching one's self into the world through the beating heart of conscience, illustrates how it is that certain characteristic modes of conscience make morality possible. When one is characteristically open, he is ready to do the work of joining across divisions. He is ready to reach out, to integrate, to synthesize, and to reconcile. He is ready to bridge gaps, to tie together disparate determinations, and to come to mutual understandings. The open person, in folk terms, "has a heart" or "is

warm hearted.” This person “has a conscience,” and in extreme cases is often said to be “in love with the world,” “in love with life,” and even to be everyone’s friend, enemy or lover, alike.

In the diagram below, there is illustrated the potential for personal growth that is the promise of the habitually open mode, which leads to what existentialist have called the “beautiful soul” and that phenomenologists have called “genuine authenticity” [Figure 4]:

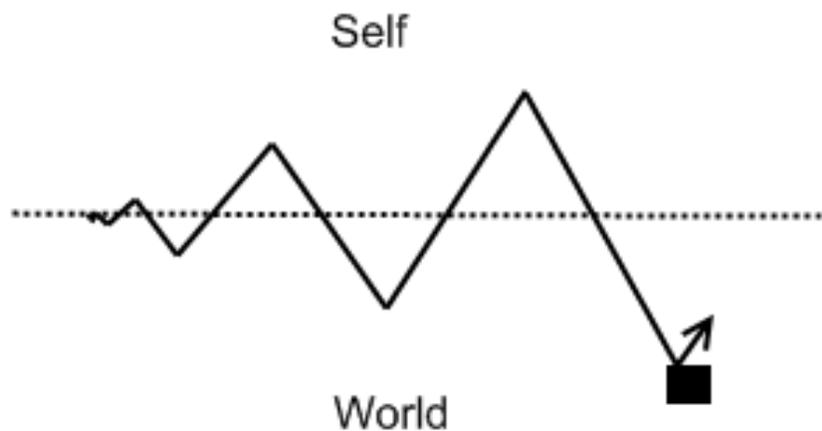


Figure 4: Evolution of the "beautiful soul" through the habitually open mode.

As is shown in the preceding figure, and as asserted in the preceding chapters, the role of conscience in freedom is that it serves as the mechanism which makes the freedom of self-determination a real possibility. Through the cycle of conscience, one can become a great person, a savior and saint.

However, this cycle also allows for a less auspicious end. When one is characteristically closed, he is fastened tightly to a certain determination of the world

and to his place within it, refusing to open to new situations and even to new determinations of his own. It is as if the beating heart of conscience has stopped. The characteristically closed person, in this way, “has no heart” or “is cold hearted.” He is “into himself,” is “selfish” and “self-centered,” as if the world should meet him on his terms rather than the other way around.

We will have a lot more to say about both of these possibilities as the text continues, with special emphasis on how to make one's highest (rather than lowest) potential a reality.

Finally, the process of stitching one's self into the world through the beating heart of conscience helps us to understand something about the structure of the world and of one's self within it. Far from being simple sheets of material, either surface joined through the zig-zag stitch of the ACTWith model is extremely complex. These two surfaces are one's self, and the world whose terms one must meet. In terms of complexity, as prefigured in the prior discussion on transcendence, the world-surface into which one stitches one's self – the surface on which this integration takes place -is above him. The world is the surface *into* which he can fully stitch himself, but not a surface which he can ever fully stitch *into* himself. The same cannot be said of any other surface, nothing created by man, no narrative, no religion, no myth. In terms of complexity, again, as one learns about the world, he moves *upward*. If he restricts his experience to something less than this, to something less than the objective world in all of its complexity, his transgression is otherwise. Thus, in stitching one's self into the

world, and only in stitching one's self into the world, one reaches above himself, and ties himself to something higher. The name for this "higher" is "truth."

The discussion on the process leading to truth, to objective understanding, will come to a head at the end of Book Two, but it is summarized in ACTWith terms below.

Learning is rising up to meet the world on the world's terms. Coming to terms with one's situation (c/o) in the world essentially fixes one's understanding in terms of that space (as the beating heart of conscience cycles from o/c to c/c). The cycle begins by opening to a new situation, (o/c) and proceeds by opening to new determinations thereof (o/o). These determinations are then "backfed" to the self as one comes to feel that situation as his own (c/o). Then, the subject encapsulates this experience in the privacy of his own mind (c/c). As one learns more about the world, one continues in this enterprise, reaching out, and drawing in, and shapes his self against the surface of the changing world from passing fancy to increasingly universal terms. In wisdom, thus, one not only learns what is true. One *becomes* the truth.

This capacity to become the truth is a human being's highest potential. One climbs from subjective darkness to the light. Where this is the object of one's life, "stitching one's self into the world" is enlightenment. Coming to terms with the objective word transcendence from low to high, and life, itself, is "ascension." What is the meaning of this life of ascension, moving from subject to object, from embodied potential to objective realization? It means constantly coming to terms through inquiry and experience, constantly allowing one's self to be transformed through this

experience. It means constantly being open to the world and to the others with whom one shares it, in love with the world and the other people within it.

This life is not easy, this life of ascension. It is a difficult climb. Those who have done the work, bridged the gap from bottom to top through the blood sweat and tears of their own lives, we call "wise." And, according to the common expressions, we "look up" to them. This is simply because they have risen above us, and have by their lights revealed the truth of the world to which we are mere subjects. They oversee us, care for us, and call us forward to do the same. Thus, as one stitches one's self into the world, he may answer this call, rise to the heights of wisdom, recognize the laws of the land as if inscribed in the rocks at his feet, and watch over his fellows as a shepherd over his flock. As one exercises one's beating heart of conscience, comes to terms with truth, one may find one's self, whether he likes it or not, more than just another man. One may discover that one's self is a leader.

Whether in the mold of the loving martyr, or the base ignorance of the self-serving tyrant, in stitching one's self into the world, in becoming one with the world, one creates himself. This is a synthetic process. The self becomes the terms in which one lives. And, as one becomes one's self, he shapes the world around him.

Each person has a limited capacity to affect the shape of the world into which one is sewn. Each carves out the space of life as a sculptor chipping away from the inside out. Each determines the world, setting out its ends and openings. Each determines its value, lives according to this evaluation, and demonstrates the virtues that suit it as well as vices which do not. Each shows others not only how to live, but

why to live, one way or another. Thus, each person adds to the meaning of life even as he discovers the meaning of his own.

This raises the focal question of the next chapters: “What is the meaning of life?” Through the ACTWith model, we have seen how it is that one shapes his life, but how this life becomes meaningful, and what it means for the world one leaves behind, are far more complex questions. It is to this first question, how it is that there is any lasting significance to these living shapes, these shifting forms, *us*, that we now turn.

BOOK TWO

The human individual lives usually far within his limits; he possesses powers of various sorts which he habitually fails to use. He energizes below his maximum, and he behaves below his optimum. In elementary faculty, in coordination, in power of inhibition and control, in every conceivable way, his life is contracted like the field of vision of an hysteric subject—but with less excuse, for the poor hysteric is diseased, while in the rest of us it is only an inveterate habit—the habit of inferiority to our full self—that is bad.

– William James¹³⁷

6 Conscience, and the way of the world.

I think Western culture has things backwards. We equate comfort with happiness, and now we're so comfortable we're miserable. There's no struggle in our life, no sense of adventure. I've found that I'm never more alive than when I'm pushing and I'm in pain and I'm struggling for high achievement. In that struggle, I think there's magic.

– Dean Karnases¹³⁸

In the study of living things, biology, one common procedure runs contrary to common sense. This procedure is to take a specimen for analysis, and dissect it, “carve it at the joints.” This is how anatomy is done, for instance, with the once living, or at least with living things killed in the process of their investigation. So, biology, the “study of life,” is actually the study of the dead. And that doesn't seem to be what one sets out to study when taking up biology, at all!

Of course, there is an obvious limit to the fruits of such inquiry. The student of biology learns nothing about how living things live. Unlike living things, dead things do not thirst, hunger, wish, want or act. They do not respond when questioned or called. Biology, thus, would be without significance altogether if it did not proceed with the comparison, the question held against the dead flesh that is its direct object, “What would this do if it were alive?”

There is an analogous mistake operative in another presumed study of living things, moral philosophy. The procedure in question involves the dissection of living actions into rules and codes with the sterile instruments of logic. And, as with anatomy, there is always the silent comparison that acknowledges the very fact that the inquiry itself ignores: none of this matters if not for the moral life, itself, because the moral life, oddly enough, is hardly the object of study.

Although we are not here to do anatomy, per se, we are here to discover the mechanisms that motivate the moral specimen, the human being. We have already determined that this mechanism is conscience. So, now, we must study one in action. And, this means that the tools of modern moral philosophy are largely useless. After all, principle, rule, right or privilege may be applied post hoc, funeral clothes for the right thing done, but they are not forgiving enough to fit the active moral life.

Moreover, if we to train our own moral hearts for the hard exercise that is doing the right things, day in and day out, then we need more than a model for study, we need a trainer. A moral trainer. And, though we have already studied many conscientious persons in the second chapter, that review was limited in one critical way. Mostly, it was undertaken in the third person, and revealed conscientious exercises mostly confined to isolated episodes. What we require now is a specimen for whom conscientiousness is a way of life, for whom justice is his life's goal. And, if we can't get him to coach us directly, then we need for that critter to reveal, first hand, what that life, with that purpose, is like, so that we can set out on a similar course, ourselves, and recognize that we are on the right path by his description of it.

Luckily, Socrates - renowned after death to be the most just man in Athens - had something to say about what he was up to while earning that reputation during his own moral life. What he was up to was philosophy. And, even more fortunate for us, he tells us why philosophy was the thing that kept his moral heart beating. In Plato's dialogue, *Philebus*, Socrates tells us that philosophy is important because truth is important, and truth is important because taking the wrong thing for the right often leads to bad ends.

This is important most of all for political leadership, because if these people take the wrong thing for the right, they might lead lots of other people to bad ends, too, and this invites the worst end of all, injustice. Contrary to its contemporary face, philosophy – done right - is not some ivory tower mental manipulation. It is not all thinking and no doing. Philosophy matters in a practical sense, even as thought matters in a practical sense, justice and truth, right, wrong and the good matter in a practical sense. What people think matters because life matters, people matter. Truth is what people think when they do what is right, justice what comes about when they do it together, and that is all that is good so far as a philosopher is concerned. The life of the philosopher is the life that brings people to the truth in doing the right things. It is the life lived for justice. It is the good life. And, by the Socratic measure, it is the life worth living.

And, as he sets out and succeeds in living the life worth living, Socrates does more than talk about it. He shows us what this life is like. He lives it while he talks about it, practicing what he preaches. In the *Philebus*, for example, Socrates illustrates, through the practice of philosophy, what it is to do philosophy, even while he talks about what it is that philosophy is supposed to do. Through this demonstration, thusly, he shows us how to become a philosopher by showing us what a philosopher does even as he tells us what should be done at the same time. All that is left is for us to do it, an art we shall work at perfecting through the rest of this text.

In the *Philebus*, Socrates eases into his demonstration of the life worth living by taking up a deceptively simple question: Is that a man standing ahead of us - say, is that Socrates, up ahead? - or is it a scarecrow – say, an illusion? - put up by farmers to keep

the blackbirds from stealing the crops? In other words, is that someone I should seek to become, as an end of my own actions, or is it something, someone, that I should avoid?

Well, the answer to that is easy, right? That can't be you, Socrates; you are here with me! We are talking... And, of course you could *never* become a scarecrow. That is just silly! Right?¹³⁹

Nope. Not so easy. Socrates' question is, itself, only a facade. It is a way to get us thinking about things in a certain way, a philosophical way. Underneath these particular facts, all this talk about scarecrows and Socrateses, there is a certain *form* of question. It is this form, regardless of the content which fits it, that concerns the philosopher. In fact, it is the form, alluded to in preceding sections, that also concerns the conscientious person. Socrates' concern is that:

An object may be often seen at a distance not very clearly, and the seer may want to determine what it is which he sees.¹⁴⁰

The form of question that concerns the philosopher, and the conscientious person alike, involves what is ahead. What is that coming up? What does one do when he does not see clearly his own self, his "fate," ahead? Which end shall one seek, his own best, or some other? Who shall one become through his own actions? These are all difficult ways of asking: *What is the meaning of life?* And this, in fact, is only another way of asking: *Why?*

Aristotle once said that philosophy, itself, begins with "Why?" What we are after is an example, even a tutorial, on how to do philosophy. Below is such a tutorial. Let's follow in Socrates' footsteps as he shows us what it is to do philosophy:

Socrates: Who is that ahead? Is that my true self, or is it a false-self, a stand-in, set up as a guide to some false and unhappy end?

Friend: I don't know. I cannot see it clearly. How are we to resolve this question, Socrates?

Soc: Through discourse, both together and within ourselves, as a sort of interrogation, comparing what we see from one moment to the next, one perspective with another, until we are confident in our vision.¹⁴¹

Fr: How does this work? I can understand discourse between friends, but how can one interrogate one's self in order to see something more clearly?

Well, in short, one part of us has the sensitivities of a writer of a book, setting out plots and intensions, and doing so determinately, pointing out this and that thing and its relations. The other has the sensitivities of a painter, open to the movements and colors of the world, and instead of working to contain this dynamic field in straight lines on flat pages pressed into the binding of a book, the painter works to capture the world in all its dynamic and fluid totality.¹⁴² This one, the painter, feels out the situation and is sensitive to its curves and colors; the other, the scribe, determines them and sets them in figure and symbol. Then, having seen the object, these two interrogate each other, until either account coheres. And this is the inner discourse whereby a philosopher interrogates himself about his situation, so that he might see more clearly those most important things up ahead.

So, he interrogates himself. And, how does this proceed if he is with friends?

He reveals his discoveries to others through the medium of his voice. His voice expresses what is disclosed by his inner discourse, articulating the situation from his position in terms that carry both affect and conviction, painter and writer, and we call this expression a "proposition." "Proposition" means to put some position forward. When someone holds the position that he puts forward to be the right one, we say that his proposition is taken to be "true." This is how his vision is checked. His propositions are measured against the terms to which others have come from their perspectives. If these others share his determinations, seem to see the same things that he sees, then these others say that the position that he puts forward is "true." In determining alike, it is as-if they share situations, as all men should see the same way from the different positions, but within the same world. The trick is getting there, to this one world shared.

So, what is proposed is truest if it remains the same for now, for one's self, and for everyone else at every other place?

Yes, but even this doesn't guarantee that we will not, even together in consensus nominate "real" what is only illusion, thereby giving voice to untruth. After all, we all agree that the voice is infinite in that its tones take forms to fit any situation, even as the mind is infinite in its capacities to picture any fantasy and pen any myth. Meanwhile, we all agree that it is also finite, in that it expresses only one's own limited determinations, from one's own limited experience. So, to find truth in words, we must seek to express the sense in which these aspects meet, and that means taking up as one's own the ends in which they are together realized. One must seek out and test these spaces in life, for thereby the truth is disclosed.

But, what ends, what spaces in life, are those?

Not necessarily pleasant ones, surely, for objects often taken to be objects of pleasure are often seen at a distance from unpleasant situations, without which they would not appear to be objects of pleasure at all.

Yes, the thirsty man is in an unpleasant situation. He seeks water as the most important good, until his thirst is quenched. Then, he would not take water to truly be the most important good at all!

Exactly.

To what should he turn his attention, then, so that the true and the good do not change at his whim?

To the good as determined through an understanding of the shared nature of all things in general, and of one's self most of all.

But, again, in every situation, for every person, there appears to be different goods that fit?

Yes; and in discourse with others, terms will be met and then discarded until all find truth expressed in terms of the common good. This is the nature of discourse, and its end is consensus. The trick lies in understanding the nature of things, as this understanding will shape the discourse, the eventual consensus, and thus the good and the true that all take together in common.

Couldn't this go on forever?

It does. That is our condition. As the world changes, so should our understanding of it, and of course, so should the truth.

Socrates, you speak as if we had all the time in the universe to find the truth!

No, we do not have all the time in the universe. But, we do know some things that are universally true. In all places and at all times, what is true is that which fits the situation. This is universally true. Some things are true for every person in his or her respective situation. This is also universally true. These things will never change. Also, in our own cases, are there not some aspects of every situation which stand out in our minds, some ends to which we always move?

Yes, Socrates. I for one am most concerned for my own future, and for my friends, and family, and for my City. I wish to move to the ends in which all of these are taken care of, and their terms met.

What about them concerns you most?

In fact, I am most concerned about the signs of pleasure on the persons' faces, for I feel pleasure when they show pleasure, health when they show health, and wealthy when they need for nothing. I am also concerned that they should hold me in high esteem as if I had been some great benefit to them, as if I had been to blame for their health, wealth, and happiness.

Of course, you agree that these signs can be deceptive. Just as the figure in the distance, can it not appear that a man feels pleasure even when what he enjoys is killing him? A man sick on wine may often be grinning, but end up dead the next day. Is it not also the case that a thirsty man can die from too much water?

Yes.

You don't want to be to blame for the deaths of your friends because you have mistaken some sign of happiness for what was not actually good. Do you?

No.

Then, what you must mean is that you are concerned that your self, and others, will be able to discern what is truly pleasant and good, and what is not, whenever necessary? Otherwise, we may move to tragic, and not to happy, ends, either alone, with close friends, or all together - City, world, everyone.

Why, yes.

And what is this condition called, this capacity for discernment?

Well, that is what we call practical wisdom...

And how would you suppose we are able to come to such a situation?

Well, by interrogation of self and others with discourse toward the truth!

Exactly, through philosophy...

Let's review. According to my remodeling of an actual Socratic discourse, one aspect of mind feels out the world, the other determines it, and these two aspects carry on in an inner discourse toward truth.¹⁴³ This picture should look very familiar! As the one reflects on the other, the writer's determinations come to capture the details of the space insofar as the painter reveals it, just as the painter takes inspiration from the poets he has read. If one has friends, he expresses the content of this inner discourse in language, and all see if their own view checks out with the others. In this way, one comes closer to seeing the figure in the distance for what it is, philosopher or stand-in, all without moving a step, but only through the expression of this essential character of thought, inner discourse. And, the art of this discourse towards discerning the true nature of things, however distant, so that we might come to the good, is philosophy.

The picture of Socrates philosophizing in order to discern the truth of an object in the distance presents us immediately with the form basic to philosophic questions. There is a gap between what one understands, and what one wishes to understand, a distance between where one is and where one wishes to go. What we find Socrates trying to do, above, is to traverse this space through philosophic thought. In every case, as one always has some notion of what it is he is looking for, or looking at, whether or not he is sure of his vision, this space between the here and there is the space between how a thing appears, and its reality. *Appearance and reality are separated by wisdom.* This is the space that defines the field of philosophy, that the philosopher explores, and the travel from ignorance to wisdom is what the philosophic life is all about.

In general terms, this space is felt in two familiar ways: spatially and temporally. An object can appear spatially distant, and temporally distant. Of course, in physical terms, to be one is to be the other, but things do not always appear that way! Distant in either dimension, however, things appear small, even unimportant, as if they do not demand immediate attention. Those which appear spatially near and temporally pressing, on the other hand, demand attention before those apparently more distant.

Recall the earlier discussion about *kairos*. This fact about appearances can be traced to the structure of every opportunity, and of every moment calling for action. Opportunities approach, they meet us, and if not seized, depart forever. If they are still a long way off, then others closer by can be pursued in the meantime. And, as for any other opportunity, the space between question and answer has this structure. Asking a question is merely inviting an opportunity to understand. This is the nature of every situation. And, it is the nature of every situation because of the nature of ourselves within them. Thus, as the philosopher asks any question, he is actually only examining himself. And, this is why Socrates can so adamantly exhort that "The unexamined life is not worth living."¹⁴⁴ It is, in the end, a life of ignorance, a life without conscience, and non-philosophical. Allow me to explain.

The basic form of a gap that compels every philosophical question is constituted by the conscience. It is the space that conscience opens within one's self, between one's present situation and another. This is the space between what could be and what is, whatever may be the object under consideration. This fact highlights the role of philosophy in the life worth living. Coming to terms with situations, however distant, is

what a philosopher does. And, it is in pursuing the opportunities in the present moment to pursue sometimes seemingly far-off ends that makes life most meaningful, now. Meaning, after all, is to be discovered in reality, regardless of appearances.

However, it is also the attention to all-too-distant ends that often makes philosophers appear small, even petty, and unworthy of attention. Especially in the recent era, with so much weight placed on immediate returns and instantaneous gratification, forgoing immediate opportunities for something farther off appears, to most everyone, especially meaningless. Philosophy and all its introspection, seeking out and coming to terms with the most remote possibilities in the space of life, can seem to go on and on and on, as if without purpose. Meanwhile, a life lived in terms of appearances, keeping up appearances, even surgically altering one's own appearance, can be especially profitable, comfortable, and by all appearances truly a life worth living! This poses a real problem for anyone attempting to present philosophy as the good life. He may appear, as so many had thought Socrates to have appeared, foolish.

Oftentimes, for example, one finds one's self in a situation demanding action without time to consider the far-reaching implications one way or another. One has to act on how things seem at the moment. The situation calls for action without time to reflect on the question: "Who shall I become by way of my action?" Here, there is no freedom for speculation about appearance and reality. One simply has to go with what he knows! How is philosophy supposed to help in such an instant? Where is all this self-examination getting us, after all, if it can't get us out of a tough situation? Flat-footed, the philosopher certainly does appear foolish.

But, perhaps the philosopher is not so foolish, after all. No question is more important than that regarding what one does in life. The situation one arrives at through action, no matter how desperate or poorly informed, is always one's own, and only one's own, to live through or to die from. Every action, every thing one does, is nothing less than a matter of life and death. It simply doesn't, in most cases, seem so dramatic when one is doing it. Each new situation, however, is more than simply some place at some time. It is one's own place in the world, the wrapping paper of one's ever-present self. It is this gift that is handed to one's self again and again through action. And, moment to moment, this hand-off only happens once. Each person has only one life, and that life is a daisy-chain of such instances. Each of us only has one opportunity, thus, to determine through action who he shall become. It simply happens little by little, one step at a time. There is, regardless of appearances, no going back. Once the moment is unwrapped, the self revealed, there is no turning around. Nothing can put one's past self back together again, and every road leads to death. The only thing to do is to keep walking, going forward, attempting to get where one wants to go along the way. In the end, this is the value of Socratic philosophy, and the fundamental industry of philosophy generally. And, regardless of appearances, nothing could be less foolish.

Still, the question remains, what is one to do? Here, we find the real treasure in the examples of others who have lived before us. When action is uncertain, one need only begin in the mode of a chosen example. If Socrates went that way, did the right thing, and that way can still be gone, then he provides an opportunity to follow in his footsteps, at least until the results of these actions can be reflected upon. In answer to

the question "What am I to do?" one may thus answer "As he did." Or, in taking one's self as an example of right actions past, "As I have done, before."¹⁴⁵

Still, examples come with a lot of baggage. Even with the Socratic example ready at hand, his wasn't a way of life that many of his fellow Athenians followed after. It is no more popular today. After all, living a life of self-examination is hard work! Pretending to be wise, keeping up appearance, is much easier than actually becoming so. However, the folly inherent in such a life, especially amongst leadership, has never been more obvious than it is, today. Consider the contemporary world: golden parachutes from the highest levels of failing industry and trillion-dollar bailouts for the politically connected wealthy reward appearances and flout the reality, that these are not wise people. But, they are rich, comfortable, and by all appearances living the good life. If philosophers were so wise, why isn't it they who are so rewarded? How can a strategy of ignorance leading to such monumental injustice as witnessed in the contemporary world pay so well, while conscientious persons, thoughtful persons who value wisdom over wealth, simply lose their homes?

The strategy of manipulating appearances pays because, in fact, most people are not willing to do the hard work necessary to be able to tell the difference between a truly wise person and a man out to make lots of money. As the gap between appearance and reality is bridged with wisdom, in every case, to be able to tell the difference between a wise man and a stand-in requires nothing less than becoming wise, one's self. This is hard work, and doesn't usually come with a high salary. After all, as our contemporary world exemplifies, the road to riches is paved with

appearances, not wisdom, so the value of wisdom is difficult to discern. Few persons, for this reason, seek it. Even fewer have the stomach for the responsibility that wisdom entails, that being to do the right thing even if it means living in the poor house. And, persons extolling the apparent virtues of wealth over wisdom take advantage of this fact.

This was as true in Socrates' Athens as it is, today. For the Athenian elite who sought power without all the hard work, philosophy was not an option. In fact, philosophers were trouble. And, this is where *sophistry* came in. Successful sophists worked by selling their services to wealthy families who wanted their children taught to be compelling political agents, to become persons who could appear to win an argument, to appear wise, even when confronted by one who actually was so. The wealthy and powerful were interested in knowing how to be persuasive enough to become even wealthier and more powerful. They were not interested in doing the right thing, and even less interested in justice. They were interested in an art of deception. If they could convince other people that they deserved what they wanted, and didn't deserve what they didn't want, then they could get these other people to give it to them. They weren't interested in a life of self-examination. They wanted to be as happy as possible with the minimal cost. To this end, sophists promised to show their students how.

All too often, however, this didn't happen. Sophistry didn't make anyone happy, at least not for long. Without the wisdom to pursue the right ends through right action, without a clear view of themselves in the distance, many of the students of sophists

became tyrants, or squandered their wealth on fleeting stand-ins for happiness, prostitutes, wine and whatnot, but that is beside the point. Our question, as philosophers, is *why?* *Why* did sophistry fail, in the end, to deliver on its promises?

Sophistry failed because Sophists were not interested in the same form of question as was the philosopher. They were interested in making others see what they wanted them to see, rather than to see clearly for themselves. It was this capacity that was valued by the Athenian elite, even as increased powers of persuasion most valuable for sophists. After all, they could use these powers to persuade selfish students to pay them merely for the opportunity to model their examples. Thus, the sophists failed to deliver their students to happy ends because they simply never had an end in sight in the first place. Their powers of persuasion were not valuable for what they might produce for someone else later, but for what they could get for their practitioner, now. Finally, for all appearances, this was not such a successful strategy after all.

Here is what happened. When what had appeared so distant finally approached, and the results of their sophistical leadership's manipulations came home to roost, the people of Athens were confronted with the fact that they had been swindled. Their opportunities, their freedom, had disappeared. It was too late to look to philosophy. They had been lied to, led to a tragic end, by persons who had merely pretended to know what they were doing so that they might get rich along the way. They had suffered a terrible injustice, even as the people of the world suffer under similar

leadership, today. But before we say much more on this matter, we must attend to the story leading up to it. And, to do that, we should go back to the beginning...

Sophists always knew the way of life they wanted, and it had nothing to do with discovering anything good or anything true. It had to do with power over others. These men wanted to be powerful, a motivation student and master shared. And, as the old saying goes, knowledge is power. So, part of the sophistical strategy was for the sophist to manipulate others into thinking that he knew what he was talking about even when he didn't.

Part of this strategy had to do with appearing to his audience in a certain way. A sophist tended to act and dress as if he was an important person. Another part had to do with making his audience members appear to themselves in a certain way. A sophist tried to make his audience appear wise, even as he made himself appear wise. He managed this by appealing to the terms with which the audience was most comfortable, as if these terms were necessarily correct, and as if they had been led to these terms together in the genuine pursuit of what was good and right. So far as it went, sophistical discourse was not directed at coming to terms with the universally good situation and laying out the long road to realizing it. Sophists said what others wanted to hear for the moment. This helped the sophist appear wise, and helped his audience to feel wise too, because, according to the sophistical manipulation, whatever the audience already took for true was, in fact, apparently true. Of course, this was what the audience wanted to hear first of all. So, the sophist simply made a show of it, and proceeded from there to get what he wanted in return: money and power for himself.

The Sophist understood that the more one appears to know, the more convincing he can be. The more convincing he can be, the more easily he can distract others from pursuing the truth, and the more readily they will accept what he offers as true, instead. This task is made especially easy if he offers the audience account of truth as the true one. In this way, whatever the case, he could align the “truth” with his own self-interest, in effect manipulating other people to helping him become wealthier and more powerful. The idea, again, is to get what one wants, now, regardless of more distant concerns, such as the expense to others. And, for a lot of people, this appears like something worth learning how to do! So, they may not have been wise, but some sophists were very good at demonstrating for others how to appear so, saying whatever was necessary for personal gain personal gain.¹⁴⁶

Socrates was the opposite of the sophists, both in method and, often enough, in effect. Consider the following scene. In the dialogue named after the famous pretender to philosophy, *Gorgias*, Socrates meets an impasse with a young man named Callicles. The discourse circles around the following question. It is given in two forms. First, “What ought the character of a man to be, and what are his pursuits, and how far is he to go, both in maturer years and in youth?”¹⁴⁷ And second, “How a man may become best himself, and best govern his family and state...?”¹⁴⁸ These are merely two difficult ways of asking a simple question: “What is the meaning of my life, and who shall I become?”

Callicles is a product of entitlement and sophistical education, and is certain that he will get what he wants by doing what is popular and convenient. What he wants is

power and influence. This is most telling in that he holds up a certain sort of man as the exemplar of the good man, as the example to follow after. He praises “the men who feasted the citizens and satisfied their desires...” Popular, wealthy men.¹⁴⁹

Against this opinion, Socrates warns that:

...people say that they have made the City great, not seeing that the swollen and ulcerated condition of the State is to be attributed to these elder statesmen; for they have filled the city full of harbors and docks and walls and revenues and all that, and have left no room for justice and temperance.¹⁵⁰

Socrates challenges Callicles to account for the fact that the man he takes as an example of the good man in fact brings others to bad ends. Callicles cannot, yet still wishes to be this man because he is powerful, influential, and gets what he wants. He isn't interested in bringing anyone else to good ends unless this means he himself becomes more influential by way of it. This is no problem for Callicles, however, as his only concern is himself.

Socrates argues that this is not the man one should become. He argues that the good man helps others to become just, not himself become rich. And, for all the industry that Callicles' heroes may have encouraged, they were unable to do this. He then tells Callicles that there is a single industry which which can do this work. This industry is a combination of medicine and gymnastics, representing the discovery into and the attainment of the good, respectively. Philosophy.

Socrates argues further that a healthy society is measured by the goodness and justice of its members. When a state's health is measured by its wealth, and not its justice, then it is not a healthy society, at all. Therefore, all of the City's industries which

focus on creating wealth, however they do so besides by making good men better, are at best unnecessary and at worst wasteful luxury from the standpoint of the healthy society. Moreover, a good leader is part of this essential industry. He helps others do the right thing, not become fat and rich. He does so not for his own good, but for the common good. The men whom Callicles had held up as great men and leaders did not do this. They had in fact *misled* Athens to bad ends for their own influence and enrichment. They sought their own good at the City's expense. They made their City unhealthy. This is clearly injustice. Finally, Socrates has a better man in view. A better leader. A real hero and someone worthy of emulation. A philosopher.

Callicles is unimpressed. He just wants to take it easy. The quickest way to that end is to gain favor with others through politics, and the quickest way to fail is to offend the politicians. To do so is to risk the wrath of these powerful men. Callicles warns Socrates that he, too, could be punished if he continues to speak the way that he does about the men in Athenian leadership. Finally, Socrates admonishes the boy: "no man who is not an utter fool and coward is afraid of death itself, but he is afraid of doing wrong."¹⁵¹

Let the painter in your mind loose to picture this. Head down, exhausted, demoralized, distraught for the future of Athens, Socrates, aging, throws down his gloves, sits heavily, sighs, and simply tells Callicles why he lives the way he does.¹⁵²

Socrates holds that, at the end of his life, he will be brought before three judges, Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus. These were three great leaders three known for ruling justly and for having laid the legal grounds which became the model for Athens'

own laws, laws since corrupted by lesser men.¹⁵³ He holds that he is to be judged naked, free from the vestiges of social life. He shall not be judged by fame and wealth. He will be judged for having been just or unjust throughout his life. Socrates confesses:

Now I, Callicles, am persuaded of the truth of these things, and I consider how I shall present my soul whole and undefiled before the judges on that day. Renouncing the honors at which the world aims, I desire only to know the truth, and to live as well as I can, and, when I die, to die as well as I can. And, to the utmost of my power, I exhort all other men to do the same.¹⁵⁴

In order to understand Socrates' story, we must also take a perspective from the end of life. This is a perspective the capacity for which all persons share. Every person can look back on himself, from someplace up ahead, even imagining a view from beyond his own Earthly existence.¹⁵⁵ Where the Earthly existence is punctuated by need for food and clothing and desire for fame and fortune, the point of view from beyond that is punctuated by the lack of these needs and desires. Need and desire are characterized by a sense of urgency. Without these, there is no such dimension driving action to some passing satisfaction. Thus, living in terms of Socrates' myth means holding each moment and its opportunities to a timeless standard.¹⁵⁶

"Renouncing the honors at which the world aims," Socrates takes the timeless terms of the story as definitive of his own situation. He takes the terms of this myth for true, and this means that he takes them for reality. He exhorts others to take these terms as definitive of their own situations, as well, so that all may live and die as best as they are able. This is Socrates the leader, calling his compatriots forward to a promised land, a better world. This is his world, filled with others like him, by great leaders long

past. In so doing, he at once also holds himself beyond the threats and promises of the contemporary leadership, cowardly men close enough to persecute him for what he says.

He speaks of justice, and does not simply mouth what the audience wishes to hear. He seeks to satisfy a universal audience, not the momentary whims of some power-mad crowd. And, he acts as if he weren't in a corrupt City, led by corrupt men, under threat of prosecution. Earlier in the dialogue, in fact, Callicles says to Socrates "you seem to think that you are living in another country, and can never be brought into a court of justice."¹⁵⁷ About Socrates' mode of life, Callicles is right. However, what he takes for the source of justice is mistaken.

The real world, for Socrates, is the just world. And, for this reason, he knows that he will be better judged on the plane of the dead than in Athens' corrupted halls and porticoes. In taking his mythically determined final field of justice to be his ultimate aim, Socrates merely commits himself to doing the right thing, the just thing, at every opportunity along the way to that end. He acts along the way to this final place as if he were already there. Actions which do not meet the terms of this situation are to be avoided. They do not fit in a just world, so he does not do them. Socrates, living this way, provides all persons alike with a striking example of the power of philosophical self-determination. And this, not some external force, not some divine power, and certainly not some conventional court of law, is the true source of justice.

One may object that it is impossible to live this way, as it is impossible to consider what long dead heroes would do when confronted with a thoroughly modern, and perhaps urgent, situation demanding action. It may be fine in theory, but impractical.

Yes, it would be practically impossible for anyone to consciously determine at every moment what the right thing to do may be. A moment's opportunity does not wait around, permitting the luxury of time-consuming deliberation over options. This is a difficulty we had met with before. But, it is one that Socrates had overcome.¹⁵⁸ Socrates does determine to do the right thing at every opportunity, and he isn't simply bound to some pre-determined path of action or habit. He is free to meet every passing moment on its own terms. The terms that he meets, however, are simply those universal to every moment, for every person, at every time and place. Such is the mythical end he has taken for his own, and the consequence of his taking this end for the ultimate reality. The corrupted world of selfish politicians is merely a world of appearances. Whatever action does not suit the real world, contrary to all appearances, is simply not an option. There are always many options for action, but few of these are the right thing to do at the right time. His approach simply cuts away the room for error, leaving little deliberation to get in the way of pursuing any passing opportunity to do the right thing.¹⁵⁹

As ingenious as this solution seems, Socrates is not the first to live this way. He confesses that the story that guides his life is not original to himself. Someone else came up with it. He has not chosen the terms and set them out in myth. He has merely chosen to live by them. He has taken this story to be true, and acts accordingly. In so

doing, he takes his freedom with him, moment to moment, deliberately. His is a self-determined freedom to do the right thing even before the opportunity to do so presents itself. He could give up on this story, and live otherwise. He is free to unbind himself from its terms, to become a different man, but he does not. Finally, even when he is presented with that opportunity in order to avoid his (unjust) execution, he refuses. We must wait to review this final episode, however, until we have a better understanding of the situation that brings it about.

Those others, whom Calicles named as good leaders, by this analysis were not. They were, on the contrary, self-proclaimed benefactors of Athens under whose influence works were undertaken which only reinforced their own power and influence.¹⁶⁰ The two men in particular offered by Calicles as examples of good leaders, Pericles and Cimon, were actually good examples of *bad* leaders *disguised* as good ones. They were rivals whose contests for power caused the people of Athens continuing problems. They each sought power and influence, and so formed policies and enacted public projects to promote their own reputations and to cement their influence. Yet, what was good for their own power – to fatten the public for the moment so that they could get what they wanted – was not good for the people of Athens in the long run. They became influential at everyone else's eventual expense, distracting the public with grand gestures. They manufactured the appearance of health, while the reality was opposite.

Socrates saw through the charade. He contested the value of Pericles' and Cimon's examples. He argued that, having led the City to bad ends implies that these

men should not be taken as examples of good leaders, after all. For one thing, they took what was good for themselves to be what was good for the City, and used their influence to direct others to ends that served only themselves. For another thing, they provided examples that others took up as models to live similarly: for one's own power and influence at everyone else's expense. In emulating these men, others did not become just and good, and the City did not become healthy. They did not become the best they could be, they became worse, and the City continued to pay with its future as its situation degraded along with them:

Callicles: Well, but how does that prove Pericles' badness?

Socrates: Why, surely you would say that he was a bad manager of asses or horses or oxen, who had received them originally neither kicking nor butting nor biting him, and implanted in them all these savage tricks? Would he not be a bad manager of any animals who received them gentle, and made them fiercer than they were when he received them? What do you say?

Callicles: I will do you the favor of saying "yes."

Socrates: And will you also do me the favor of saying whether man is an animal?

Callicles: Certainly he is.

Socrates: And was not Pericles a shepherd of men?

Callicles: Yes.

Socrates: And if he was a good political shepherd, ought not the animals who were his subjects, as we were just now acknowledging, to have become more just, and not more unjust?

Callicles: Quite true.

Socrates: And are not just men gentle, as Homer says? -- or are you of another mind?

Callicles: I agree.

Socrates: And yet he really did make them more savage than he received them, and their savageness was shown towards himself; which he must have been very far from desiring.

Callicles: Do you want me to agree with you?

Socrates: Yes, if I seem to you to speak the truth.

Callicles: Granted then.

Socrates: And if they were more savage, must they not have been more unjust and inferior?

Callicles: Granted again.

Socrates: Then upon this view, Pericles was not a good statesman?

Callicles: That is, upon your view.

Socrates: Nay, the view is yours, after what you have admitted.¹⁶¹

How is Socratic philosophy the genuine political art, succeeding where these other men fail? In the same ways that they fail, he succeeds. He holds all men's ends equally on a single plane for universal evaluation, including his own. They hold themselves above this plane, with destinies separate from the ends to which the City is led beneath them. For them, the end in sight is their own well-being, and the good is what secures it, all else be damned. For Socrates, the end in sight is justice for all, in whose terms all men are equally invested. He remains oriented to this end, and not to his own fame and reputation, everyday along the way of his life. By this mechanism, he succeeds as a leader where these others fail. He leads to the common good, where they lead only to their own.

In Socrates' example, we see the ACTWith model in action. It is operative in inner discourse, discourse with others, and the discourse which leads one on to his

objectively realized self. In inner discourse, the feeling of being as-if is that function of the painter. The coming to terms with is the function of the writer. Together, they are productive of understanding. Others proceed by the same process. In discourse with others, one interprets the expressed determinations of the other by taking up his position as-if [o/c -> o/o], and checking to see if these determinations hold in his own position [o/o -> c/o]. In coming to an understanding through an exercise of conscience, thus, two hearts beat as one.

Socrates demonstrates the beating heart of conscience. He begins discourse from the other's situation, as-if the other (o/c). He walks with the other, engaging in a shared situation (o/o). He comes to terms with this situation as if it were his own (c/o). Then, he retreats, to the bathhouse, to sleep, to reflect over the course of events on his own (c/c)

This is why Socrates claims to be a "mid-wife" of sorts, helping others to birth understanding. He is open to others, and seeks their own ends as-if these were his own. He loves his fellows as if himself. He puts himself in, and so comes to terms with, no situation which is not determined by this equality. Thereby, he does nothing unjust. He acts as-if all others were himself, philosophizing toward the common realization of the good life even more so than he does his own.

In reaching for an ideal situation, Socrates' object, conscience opens a perspective as-if from that ultimate end. All action along the way can be held to the determinations of that situation. Holding one's self on a common field with all others means that he holds them in equal esteem with himself, and that as he comes to terms

with his own situation, he comes to terms with theirs. The space of this life is shared with others universally. This is a just man. Now, you do it.

Let's quickly contrast this situation with that of Socrates' old foil, the musician.¹⁶² The musician does not begin with the situation of the other, but with his own (c/o). He is able to express what appear to be the terms of the other, but he does so merely by confessing his own (o/c). His expression is of his own subjective experience. He may appeal to the universal human condition – i.e. broken hearts hurt, being on the road is lonely, that sort of thing – but almost by accident. He intends only at having subjective determinations reinforced through the applause of the persons present and hearing his plea.

The musician does not strive for an understanding of the universal, per se. He seeks inter-subjective recognition of a subjective expression and takes this, instead, to be an objective determination of his own value. This has nothing to do with objectivity; it has to do with ego. He places himself above others, on a stage. He drowns the voices of the others, forcing them to meet his terms. The musician does not seek to meet the objective terms of his situation, but seeks to have his own terms met instead.¹⁶³ The musician, as a political way of life, is a fraud. Insofar as he has political influence, the health of the City is threatened. The musician's fame does not a better world make, lest the world stops at the edge of his stage, and end with his show.

This is the real issue. The musician does not provide an example of a life lived in terms of just ends shared by all. He does, however, provide a powerful example. This goes with the territory. To be a good performer is to appeal to others. He must be

sensitive enough to influence the other. But if the other cannot come to his terms, he is free to see another show. If the musician is politically empowered, then the City is in real trouble. There may be lots of loud parties, but the musician is not going to stick around to help clean things up. The City still needs the philosopher to see where the whole thing's headed, especially after the dust settles and the wine has gone stale. The philosopher leads a city to virtue. The musician, to a city of vice.

To be clear, though the musician is the object of this criticism, other apparently good ways of life are equally insufficient to ensure that the right thing is done at the right time in the interest of all persons universally. It should be apparent that the musician has a great deal in common with sophistry, for instance. Both are motivated by the subjective reinforcement of others and mistake this for an objective realization of their own situation and self-worth. The situation, the terms of which both must meet is determined by the subjectivity of the audience members.¹⁶⁴ In this mode of life, there is no significance attached to the objective point of view. There is no view from the "outside in." There is only the view from the inside upon others also on the inside. There is only the view of others nearby, and the weight and influence of their happy or unhappy faces.

The sophisticatedly trained leader is equally guilty of doing things in order to please the populace, and to maintain power and influence, and these things have little to do with what is good for the society as a whole. Leaders in this mode judge their leadership by the fat and happy faces of those nearby. This is the mode of the stand-in "philosopher," the pretender to wisdom, and the politician, the leader who pretends to

practice the true art of politics while seeking his own enrichment. These persons are not concerned with citizens to come, and even less with citizens past. They are concerned with what gets the present audience to applaud their efforts and with what gets the present jury to endorse their contentions. This is what separates the politician from Socrates' political art, and "philosopher" from philosophy. This is what removes self-aggrandizement from being great.

What goes for bad leaders does not necessarily apply to musicians, however. Musicians are not necessarily bad. They make for a good party. It is simply that they tend to do no good in healing the sick society. This is not their object. This tendency they share with politicians. The difference between them is merely that politicians will ruin a good party.

In fact, either example, when popularly emulated, makes things worse. The real trouble comes when persons aspire to be leaders and do so in the mode of the politician, or the musician, and not of philosopher. This is a crucial issue in Socratic philosophy. Musicians do not train good leaders anymore than do sophists. I will have more to say on this particular point later.

We will stick with the theme that is Socrates' most important question throughout the rest of this text: *What is the meaning of life and who will I become?* Until, finally, we will see this question for what it really is, the ultimate question: *Why?* This question can be directed at anything, and everything, even as it always begins and ends with one's own self. So, it will pay to look more closely at the whole of the moral universe, and

especially at one's place within it. We will do so with the help of the most famous moral philosopher in the western world since Socrates, Immanuel Kant.

7 Conscience, and the good life.¹⁶⁵

Why don't you understand what I've said? It's because you can't listen to my words.

– Jesus of Nazareth¹⁶⁶

Only he who understands is able to listen.

– Martin Heidegger.¹⁶⁷

The voice of conscience is, in all cases, as the voice of God to every man.

– Joseph Priestley¹⁶⁸

Nothing fills me with greater awe than the natural order, and nothing troubles me more than man's practical abstinence from it. The great thinker Immanuel Kant was similarly moved. Yet, even as he looked to the newly relativized heavens for a guiding moral principle, his time was not ready to receive a truly relativized ethic. Because of this, much of what he intended has been misunderstood every since.

Kant famously claimed his moral theory to be a Copernican revolution of sorts. Copernicus, rejecting the ancient model wherein our imperfect planet is circled by increasingly perfect things, maintained that Earth is not the center of the astronomical order. The Sun is. Kant adopted this Copernican perspective in his moral theory. Copernicus' view of the cosmos cast doubt on that ancient governing principle of the moral order, that "man is the measure of all things." Kant responded to these doubts by creating a moral theory which makes, not man, but rationality the measure of all things. Man, the Earthbound "rational animal," is not the center of Kant's moral universe. Pure reason is.

Kant's moral psychology is a mirror on the struggles of his times, those of reasoned inquiry against entrenched interests. The weight of astronomical science struggled against the dogma of ancient mantra to deliver its picture of the natural order. As the preponderance of evidence overcame the horrific executions of countless martyrs for the cause of truth against the inquisition that is religious authority, the science of reason *finally* bore out over the religion of the dark ages. At last, the guiding principle of science, that reason is right, was proven. Reason freed men from religious bondage, and brought them into the light. Kant's moral theory, on this model, rests in the power of man's rationality to break the chains of habit and dogma, and only thereby to do the right thing.

Consider the Kantian moral animal, man. A human being has a moral "rational" will. The rational will is bound by the laws of thought, logic, and rules the body. The role of this rational will is to administer the moral law over the "empirical" will. The empirical will is the hunger of the body, desire. The rule of the rational over the empirical is not an easy one. But, because of the possibility of this rule, a human being is more than merely rational and empirical, *he is moral*. He is moral because he is "autonomous." He is autonomous because he can make his own rules (from *auto-* and *-nomos*, self-giver of laws) and act accordingly.

Because of this capacity, to make his own rules, a human being is also responsible for his actions. When asked "why did you do that?" a man can respond in terms of these self-given rules. Kant sees that if the action is bad, then the rule which governed it must also have been bad. Vice versa, if a rule is bad, then the action

prescribed by the rule is bad. Because man is free to make his own rules, he must, then, be free to determine his own actions. And, this is the crux of morality. In order to be moral, that is capable of some action besides that compelled by bodily hunger or mental habit, and so capable of being held responsible, a being must be able to do otherwise.

On Kant's picture, human beings are special amongst other beings of the Earth in this regard. All animals have an empirical will. They are driven by their senses and desires to do certain things, but there is no sense in blaming them for it. Lions kill Christians, snakes kill rats, and squid kill krill. We do not call this "murder." There is no moral weight attached to these actions. These are simply animals following the laws of their empirical, embodied natures. They are mere creatures of habit. People are different, however. A human being also has a rational will which may rule over his sensual drives. Where the rational contradicts the habitual, one can do otherwise. Where one does not, he is immoral.

This is how Kant accounts for human autonomy, or free-will. It is also, in a nutshell, how he accounts for human morality. Because one can reason to do otherwise than according to habit, a human being not only follows universal laws, just like rocks and squirrels do, but he also makes them. By this principle, human beings are more than merely rational animals; they are moral. When a person makes rules for himself, he governs himself. Thus, he is morally responsible for his actions, and the moral and the cosmic orders once again align. Reason is like the Sun.

The trouble is that, if this is all there is to Kantian ethics, then man is still the measure of all things. It is still man's reason which is the light of the empty moral darkness. This is still an Aristotelian universe, with perfect beings increasingly distant from the imperfection that is everyday human life on Earth. Man is still the rational animal, on this picture. And, because of this, the moral order begins to look a lot more human, and a lot less cosmic, with man at the middle again. After all, reason makes rules. All men have reason. All men make rules. All rules have contradictions. This much *is* universal, but the rules themselves are not. This is a problem for Kant's moral theory in at least two ways.

For example, consider the rule "do not kill." This is a universal law which appears obvious to a rational man. Its application is evidenced while restraining one's impulse to kill another. This involves a rational will overcoming a bodily desire to end someone's life. Thus, being moral requires an exercise of autonomy. So far, Kant's system seems to work.

But, what if this other is himself a murderer, certain to kill again? What if this other is a brilliant but clumsy scientist certain to end the world with a killer virus? What if it is Hitler, while he is only a painter in jail? What if it is some other bad leader, himself bent on the destruction of truth and the enslavement of millions, George W. Bush, for instance? How does the rational will rule, now? Not so easy, is it?

The other problem is that the rules given by some rational men conflict with those of other rules given by other rational men. For example, there is nothing necessarily irrational about eating the dead. Though most have a rule against it, healthy, un-

diseased meats are perfectly nutritious. Likewise, there is nothing necessarily irrational about a convention which requires that some segments of a population dress a certain way. In the west, women must wear shirts. If a woman were to walk the streets topless, in most of the United States, she would be arrested and jailed, if not simply raped and ridiculed for it. If a woman were to walk the streets of some Muslim nations without their traditional garb, they too are subject to sanction. Rationality alone cannot dictate which rule should hold. Who, after all, is to judge? Hitler?

As proven in the case of Copernicus, and in countless cases before and since, the natural order stands as the ultimate testing grounds for all merely human rational constructs. There are natural limits to rules: too broad, and they fall to the weight of burgeoning exceptions, too narrow, and they fail to be rules altogether. It is by this principle that the Copernican view on the cosmos has since been improved. We live now in an Einsteinian universe, wherein our Sun is only one center amongst countless other solar systems more or less alike. The Einsteinian universe is, truly, relativized. Time and space slow and shrink according to frames of inertia, with each accelerating away from one another as if sinking into the governing principles of their own massive hearts. Thus, importing this picture roughshod into a moral theory, it would appear that, on the view from Relativity, we live now in an increasingly lonely moral universe.

But the Einsteinian picture does not imply that we are merely alone, without common rules, free to go our own way and to do what we want. Though the relative movements of the cosmic frames of inertia appear governed by a principle of automaticity, each system accelerating into individuation, appearances can be

deceiving. Objects within these frames still share a common space. We still share a common space with each other, for instance. Though each person moves through this space according to his own moment of inertia, such moments can be guided. So, with inertia in the picture, morality may take more work than merely making a rule. However, its governing principle remains the same. Morality still rests in autonomy. It is just that the moral order is material, and not purely rational.

Einstein's relativity, after all, does not imply the sort of radical relativity of the oft caricatured cultural relativist. Planets and stars do not careen willy-nilly on the relativized Einsteinian vision of the dynamic universe, each following their own thoughts, and neither should persons in an Einsteinian moral universe. There is no contradiction in the movements of the stars, just as there is nothing essentially contradictory in the actions of persons. But stars have been known to collide; and, while standing on one, it is sometimes difficult telling up from down. This is the situation we find ourselves in, today.

Consider this practical example. For many years, the Boy Scouts have taught their students that a compass can be constructed in an emergency with a dry leaf, and a light, thin piece of metal like a fine needle or the minute-hand of a watch. The leaf is placed in a very still pool of water. The metal sliver is rubbed against clothing, and the static charge taken up by the metal causes the crystalline matrix of the substance to orient in a polar alignment, thereby creating a (rather weak) magnet. This sliver is then placed on the leaf floating in the still water, and the result is supposed to be a working compass.

That this is in fact possible, and within the reach of any literate person exposed to this account, is fascinating. But, what is more fascinating is that we are coming to a point where this mechanism will no longer work. The polarity of the Earth, itself, is changing, and thus so is the attraction between the sliver of metal and north. Where, at one moment in history any literate man with a watch could find his way, this era is quickly fading. In fact, there may be a time when no compass, no matter how strong the magnet, will work. Increasingly, the capacity of traditional methods to direct us through the so-called objective world is in doubt.

Even more primitive than the magnetic compass in finding one's way, however, is the conscience. And, much as the poles of the material globe are diffusing, so are the poles of the ethical globe. Neither are fields the judgments of which most men had ever figured to have to make twice. Right is right; north is north. Right? Once such rules were established, they have been merely taken for granted. There is no systematic provision for their revision. Few anticipated a day when a compass does not work, and when what is right is not what it seems. In fact, however, the reasoning behind the Boy Scouts' compass will simply stop working altogether, and many reasonable men with a bad recipe for direction will increasingly pursue very bad ends.

Reasoning is important but it fails. Rules are important, but they fail. Their original purpose is to express ways of life which lead reliably to certain ends. When situations change, however, when the natural order changes, so will the rules need to change. It is the conscience which directs such change, as it is the conscientious man who recasts rules once their molds are broken.

Let's look at this result through the Kantian lens. The compass point of Kantian ethics is Kant's categorical imperative. The categorical imperative directs persons to ends of actions. It directs to ends the attainment of which can be universally prescribed. It directs away from those which cannot. The categorical imperative is also the form of the voice of conscience for Kant. In the end, thus, it is conscience which does the work of forbidding those actions which lead to a contradiction according to the categorical imperative.

The most commonly discussed form of the categorical imperative is: "Act according to that maxim which thou couldst at the same time will a universal law."¹⁶⁹ The maxim of any action is an imperative, that is a guiding principle or rule of reason. Maxims are, in the Copernican spirit, Kant's replacement for rules of religious morality issued in the form of divine commands. Kant's commands are formulated by rational human agents, rather than by God. To act morally, one must act according to that rule which is at once applicable over the category of all rational beings. Thus the name: "categorical imperative." Maxims, thus, are rules for action which should, as rational, similarly govern all rational beings, *universally*. They are not *context* specific; they are *categorically* specific.

The moral agent must be rational for two reasons. One, in order to guarantee that the maxim is rational; and two, in order to guarantee that the maxim includes the originating agent in its scope. It is the rationality of the maxim which makes the maxim universally binding on every member of the category of rational agents, and it would be senseless if this failed to apply to the agent acting on the imperative in the first place.

Certainly, irrational agents can create rational maxims, and even act accordingly, but they are not necessarily *governed* by them. They are, thus, not truly rational, not truly autonomous, and therefore not truly moral.

It is important to emphasize that Kant places the locus of the moral act not in the action, but in the agent. It is the agent who considers the action, and the agent who then must consider the morality of the action. Without this aspect of agency, there is no moral action. The morality of the action consists in its universal applicability, but it begins from the standpoint of the subject. Kant's categorical imperative is "framed in the first person, and so it - the maxim itself - can 'hold' as a universal law only if first-personal thoughts can somehow be universal."¹⁷⁰

The categorical imperative is commonly represented as a rational test for logical contradiction. When one's subjective wish, when made universal, contradicts the objective results of the realization of this wish, then action toward this end is denied by the imperative. The action fails the test, and is not morally permissible by the standards of the categorical imperative. This is because any contradiction is essentially irrational. Thus, the categorical imperative is a method for coming to terms with the objective implications of one's actions.

There are subjective and objective constraints on right action, and both must be met in order for the action to be a moral one. This is because all agents, rational or not, are bound by the terms of the same objective world, and no maxim cannot be universalized if it ignores this fact.

For example, my subjective wish is to be seen in a grand chariot, so I buy a HUMMER. Thinking in terms of the categorical imperative, however, means that this opportunity must extend to every rational being. This means envisioning a world in which buying a HUMMER is the right thing to do and everyone who is doing the right thing is also buying a HUMMER. But, this objective result contradicts my original subjective wish to be seen in a grand chariot. Universalized, everyone has a HUMMER. All of a sudden, my grand chariot is not so grand! My wish has contradicted itself. By the categorical imperative, buying a HUMMER in order to be seen in a grand chariot is not rational, and thus immoral.¹⁷¹

Most reviews of the demands of the categorical imperative tend to stop here, if they get this far at all. These interpretations rest in an assay of rationality and its demands, as ours has to this point. I think that stopping here is a mistake. Let's see where they go wrong.

Again, a moral agent for Kant is a rational agent. Rationality is the source of freedom, for Kant. A moral agent must have a capacity to realize the immorality of an action to be free to do otherwise. Rationality gives him that power. Without a capacity to reason, to do otherwise, there is nothing right or wrong about any given action undertaken. It is just the way it is done.

The categorical imperative directs this moral freedom. As the compass point of Kantian ethics, the categorical imperative directs rational agents to ends of actions which are moral, and away from those which are not. It directs to ends the attainment of which can be universally prescribed. It directs away from those which can not. This

is where any adequate analysis of the categorical imperative must become an analysis of conscience, as well. In denying actions because of their ends, the categorical imperative is the voice of conscience in Kantian ethics.

Consider David Velleman's interpretation of Kantian ethics on this point. Velleman reads Kant as asserting that conscience does the work of forbidding actions which arise to consciousness insofar as they lead to a contradiction according to the categorical imperative: "conscience tells us that the reasons we thought we had for doing something couldn't be reasons for doing it..."¹⁷² Thereby, on his account, conscience doesn't provide reasons to act, but reasons not to, and it does so as an aspect of consciousness. It tells you so.

But, this cannot be right. Consider the following example. At position A, a person looks at end B and conscientiously determines that B is moral. According to the categorical imperative, there is no contradiction in sight. Now, on the basis of the preceding view, the only terms which can be brought to bear in the evaluation of B are those present to the consciousness of the person still situated at A. So, the person moves to B.

Let's say that upon arriving at B, something strange happens. Our person learns something. Some aspect of B was not determined prior to his situation at B, and this aspect would have forbidden B as a moral end. He simply missed it.

Now, in such a case, ubiquitous as it is, Velleman's formula no longer makes sense. It cannot be that "conscience tells us that the reasons we thought we had for doing something couldn't be reasons for doing it..." unless conscience only does so

after the fact! If this is all that conscience does, then it no longer resembles the common sense picture with which we, and presumably Velleman, have all begun. Conscience must work from the perspective of situation A. Otherwise, what use is it? How are we to solve this problem?

Kant's own illustrations do place emphasis on the role of reason on the formation of maxims which represent the motivation for action. It is these maxims which are then fodder for the categorical imperative. For instance, in analyzing the institution of promise keeping, Kant points out that breaking a promise works against the institution of promise keeping on which the persuasive weight of the promise depends. To break a promise is to act on the maxim that it is good to break a promise. If everyone acted on this maxim by this reasoning, there would no longer be an institution of promise keeping. This leads to a contradiction. How can you make a promise if you can't make a promise?

In this case, one presumes he is free to keep his promise, or not. Thus, it appears to be the contradiction between the maxims "promises must be honored" and "promises need not be honored" which makes breaking a promise the wrong thing to do. In discussions on Kantian ethics, generally, it is this rationalization which judges the immorality of the action. I think that this is wrong.

For this view to work, it must assume a perfectly rational, unrealistically informed, rule-bound "moral" agent. It must assume an agent with perfect information about any desired end before any action toward that end is undertaken. It demands that, however

that end is to be evaluated, the terms of its evaluation must be present to the agent *before* he undertakes the action to achieve it. This is a very conservative demand.

On this view, it appears that any action whose end is not exhaustively pre-determined is to be denied by the categorical imperative.¹⁷³ As one acts morally when one acts rationally, and one cannot act rationally towards ends he cannot adequately test by the categorical imperative, then any moral action appears to be a matter of seeking *only* fully determined ends. When reasons fail to fully determine those ends, conscience speaks up against these ends, or one acts anyways, albeit irrationally and immorally. On the one hand, this formula seems to classify a great many more actions as immoral than is commonly conceived. This, on its own is not really a problem. The real problem is that persons often do not act rationally, yet still do what appears to be the right thing without protest from the voice of conscience. Something isn't adding up, here.

In fact, what we appear to have is a moral principle fit not for a man, but for a god(s). Thus, for clarity, I would amend Velleman's formula: conscience tells us that the reasons we thought we had for doing something couldn't be reasons for doing it... from the position of the perfectly rational agent who has already come to terms with every possible end! What are we to make of this result?

Well, if the present analysis is correct, we should see this result as a very good thing! Otherwise, no human being would do anything new, or novel, or creative, or for that matter would ever learn anything, ever, without doing the wrong thing. And, this simply cannot be right.

Typically, whenever one is deliberating over the right thing to do, how it will turn out is still in question. Yet, the categorical imperative on Velleman's view appears to paint this picture otherwise. It is as if the end of that stillborn action was already exhaustively determined from the point of view of the agent before the action, as if he had already been there. This is unrealistic.¹⁷⁴

Realistic moral agents are not simply rational agents; they are learning, feeling, striving, hopeful agents, as well. There is no correction without error, and the question of the right thing to do never arises to a being with perfect information who has no stake in how things end up. The categorical imperative, as commonly understood, does not capture this fact of the matter.

I think that Kant was smarter than that. He should have seen this problem. Recalling that Kant places the locus of for the evaluation of action in the agent, I think that the focus of any proper analysis of Kantian ethics must be the universal terms of the maxim-maker, and not merely how well the agent fulfills the logic of the categorical imperative, itself. If an end is evaluated in terms universal to any given maxim maker, then the maxim which results will also hold universally. This means more than pure reason; it means everything universal to any potentially moral agent.

What terms are these which should enter into the moral evaluation of actions before they are undertaken? Recall the old Stoic mantra: the natural is the rational. In this spirit, the terms by which the categorical imperative should evaluate actions are natural terms. On this view, the rational agent is a natural agent, acting in terms of natural necessity. These are terms universal to all human beings at every place and

time. Every moral agent will always be constrained by these terms. Every moral agent will always aspire to meet these terms. Every moral agent will always need these terms to be met in order to live and to secure the leisure for genuine deliberative autonomy. These are universal terms, and those *essential* to the balance that is Kant's conscience, even if it is understood to rest on a rational fulcrum. If these are taken as the terms of moral sensibility, then there is a role for conscience both before and after action. Is this what Kant could have had in mind, after all?

To address this question we must, conveniently, get clear on Kant's mature view of the conscience. For the Kant of his later years, conscience has to do with doing, with acting, and clearly less with logical analysis. By his account, conscience is the "spring of practical reason." A spring is a source of tension, of motivation. Practical reason is the capacity to figure one's way from one end to another. It is a capacity to overcome obstacles, solve problems, and otherwise perform the logistical gymnastics needed to get from point A to point B. We have not discussed practical reason very much in this text, but we have seen, in passing, that it is in fact subsistent on practical wisdom for the raw materials of its application. Conscience, in any event, motivates a moral agent to try to get from A to B.

Conscience is a motivational spring in at least two senses. Conscience is a spring tying one's self here to one's self up ahead ($A \Rightarrow B$). Conscience is a positive force in this way. It directs towards ends, towards someone up ahead one wishes to become, and motivates him to get there.

Conscience, however, also prohibits some ends from being sought. Conscience is also felt as a negative force. Conscience restrains persons from acting toward ends the realization of which would result in a loss of “worth as a person.”¹⁷⁵ Tied to one’s self at one end (A), it forbids attachment to one’s self at others (B).

Kant’s fully developed moral theory is sensitive to this fact. For the categorical imperative to be realistic, it must test more than reasons. In fact, on Kant’s mature view, the imperative evaluates at a fundamentally affective level.

This makes sense. Doing the right thing doesn’t feel like a rule, though it is nice to remember how to do it again in case the opportunity arises. Likewise, doing the wrong thing doesn’t feel like a contradiction, though upon this determination it makes sense to figure where one went bad. Thus, the reason for doing or not doing any given thing has little to do with reasons, at all.

It is in feelings that Kant’s moral law is ultimately grounded. It is also from felt grounds that an agent commits himself to act morally, in the first place, before undertaking any given action. The willingness to act morally, and thus to submit to the constraints of the categorical imperative, Kant calls “good will.”

THAT, we now know, IS A GOOD WILL WHOSE MAXIM, IF MADE LAW UNIVERSAL, WOULD NOT BE REPUGNANT TO ITSELF.¹⁷⁶

Now, good will, in our everyday contemporary talk, equates to something like being nice. Good will, for Kant however, goes much deeper than that. Good will is wishing for universally good ends. Good will is wanting everything to work out for everyone, everywhere, always. It is wanting to only endorse the terms of those ends

which, when realized in action, are good for all others alike, that one shows what Kant considers good will. Thus, the sentiment underwriting “I wish you well” is, in terms of Kant’s good will, “I actively seek only universally good ends, yours included.” This is more than being nice. This is a way of life.

This way of life – only wishing for moral ends - holds up to affective scrutiny. A good will is to be revered; selfishness, falsity, dishonor, these are sources of disgust. To act accordingly is repulsive. Thus, the motivation for or against any action depends on feelings about the way of life which would result upon the realization of the end of that action. The feelings which motivate for or against these ends are *reverence* or *disgust*. For these, there is no necessary rationale. It is perfectly rational to seek to be an object of reverence, and perfectly irrational to seek to be an object of disgust.

Though the test of the categorical imperative is commonly represented merely as a test for logical contradiction, this is not the flavor of the formula richly understood. The contradiction to be avoided is not to be encountered in the vacuity of a purely logical space. It is to be encountered in the space of one’s own heart. The test is not merely a rational one. It has to do with feelings of self-worth. Perfect rationality alone is not worthy of reverence, any more than reason alone can predict which ends are moral and which ends are not. It is because disgust doesn’t feel good that a rational agent doesn’t seek disgusting ends, and not the other way around. No rational agent aims to be an object of disgust, even as he avoids disgusting objects! Similarly, every rational agent aims to become an object of reverence. And this is perfect information available to an agent before he ever undertakes an action.

Recall that, for Kant, conscience is the spring of practical reason. It directs positively toward a morally ideal situation, one to be revered, and prohibits those to be disgusted: selfishness and solipsism,¹⁷⁷ self-conceit and self-love.¹⁷⁸ Conscience pulls one's self to the peaceful reward of a worthy life which comes with feeling at one with one's self. In deliberating on this end, one must discount immediate sufferings, attractions and distractions.

This is where the categorical imperative comes in. It helps to clear away all this clutter between one's self and doing the right thing. Moral action is impossible if one has to reason over every considerable detail of every possible implication of his action, and then test these for contradictions. Conscientious exercise of the categorical imperative, on the other hand, allows the free person to act – instead of according to “the solicitations of the sensory”¹⁷⁹ – out of reverence for what Kant calls the “moral law,” good will.

Let me restate Kant's imperative in more direct terms: Do not become, through action, a person in whom you are disgusted. To which I will add: by leading your self or others to bad ends.¹⁸⁰

The basis for this universal moral evaluation is the shared constitution of individual persons, human nature. This is not limited to rationality, but rests in a desire to be loved:

The constitution of my nature forces me to desire and will every other person's benevolence; wherefore, conversely, I am beholden to entertain goodwill towards others...¹⁸¹

Good will has the deepest significance in Kant's ethics. It is good will which grounds moral obligations to one's self and others. Most importantly, it is this affect which he then gives as the *sole arbiter* of the right thing to do, only endorsed by reason after the fact:

Benevolence or goodwill is the pleasure we take in the prosperity and happiness of our neighbour: beneficence, again, would be the maxim to make that happiness our end; and the duty to do so is necessitation by the subject's own reason, to adopt this maxim as his universal law.¹⁸²

This is, in my opinion, the most complete exposition of Kant's moral philosophy distilled into one florid passage. The universal moral law is good will. Good will is like a mirror; one looks in it, and sees everyone else, everywhere else, as if he were they.¹⁸³ I mean here phenomenally - what it is like to be as if another. His pain is my pain. His pleasure is my pleasure. These shared phenomena are themselves dependent on a shared constitution. The terms of this shared nature are those universal terms which are the focus of the categorical imperative, properly understood.

And the universal executor of the moral law is the conscience. Conscience is that aspect of human nature which motivates persons to do the right things, while motivating them against doing wrong. Moreover, it does so as an aspect of feeling, for one's self and for his fellows:

The compunction a man feels from the stings of conscience is, although of ethical origin, yet physical in its results, just like grief, fear, and every other sickly habitude of mind. To take heed, that no one fall under his own contempt, cannot indeed be my duty, for that exclusively is his concern. However, I ought to do nothing which I know may, from the constitution of our nature, become a temptation, seducing others to deeds which conscience may afterwards condemn them for.¹⁸⁴

Conscience affects a person's body, not merely his mind. It makes a person feel bodily sick at the thought of an immoral action; it does not merely confront a person with an irreconcilable logical contradiction. Following one's conscience is not something one merely thinks he should do; it is something he needs to do.

Moreover, as all persons share an embodied nature, and are led to the satisfaction of similar needs, one must do nothing to satisfy his own needs when that embodiment cannot be conscientiously endorsed for all others alike. Good will, thus, is like a mirror. My own willful actions signify to others "this way to the good." If I turn only towards what benefits me, as if endorsed by conscience, then I provide an example for others to do the same. This is against Kant's moral law, which presumes that others will follow suit in pursuit of selfish, solipsistic ends.

In reverence for the moral law, on the other hand, only ends which are universally good for all persons in common are sought for one's own. These are the only ends to which the moral agent will tie himself if he, indeed, is to be moral. To tie one's self to universally good ends is to be motivated by goodwill. This is according to Kant's moral law.

To be motivated by goodwill feels like a tension between what is subjectively and objectively good. This is morality conceived as a spring. Springs seek rest as thirsty persons seek wells. With this in mind, I will again restate the categorical imperative, this time with even greater clarity: do what you must to be at rest, but do so as if one's self were all others, alike. Do, subjectively, only what will result in objectively good ends. Act in good will. To do so is to become an object of reverence.

With this view on one's self from these ends, alone, one's esteem, no matter his success or failure in action, is guaranteed:

Reverence, even when felt for a person, results from the law whereof that person gives us the example (Cato, of integrity). If to cultivate talents be a duty, then we figure to ourselves a learned man, as if he presented to our view the image of law, enjoining us to be conformed to his example; and thus our reverence for him arises. What is called a moral interest, is based solely on this emotion.¹⁸⁵

It is an embodied moral exemplar which is the object of reverence. The form of his life, itself, inspires any further interest in what is moral, in doing what is right. This person exemplifies the terms to which one holds one's self in comparison. His example becomes the law. He shows the way. To be alike with this person, situated similarly, is an end to be sought, and likewise embodied. Further, this person is as much one's self up ahead, after action, as he is any one else. The logic is the same. Thus, the moral law is universal. Everyone always wants to be an object of reverence, else he is irrational. Finally, we see that figure up ahead, that man in the distance to which Socrates pointed in the last chapter, with the greatest clarity.

Taken altogether, these passages and our previous discussion lead to the following conclusion: reverence or disgust for self and others, and the power to be an example for self and others, is all there is to morality, at all. Once we set out rules, beyond doing what is right, becoming a just person, we have missed the point of morality, entirely.¹⁸⁶

To act out of reverence is to become someone we'd like to see when we look in the mirror. This is perfectly rational. Reverence is a special sense, more than

admiration, more than mere recognition. It is the love for one's self, and for others, which pulls one along the difficult road that marks the right thing to do, to become the man ahead he knows to be the best man he can be:

A man may be an object of my love, my fear, or my admiration, up to the highest grade of wonder, and still he may be no object of reverence. His jocose humor, his strength and courage, his power and authority, from the rank he has, may give me such emotions, but they all fall short of reverence.¹⁸⁷

Reverence is to want to take ends as one's own and to embody that way of life which gets one there. Reverence is no ordinary attitude. It attaches only to a way of life, to a way of being in the world, to which one is compelled by affect to open, to mirror. "REVERENCE is bestowed on Persons only, never on Things."¹⁸⁸

In the end, Kant gives us more than moral theory. He shows us how to live. No amount of rational reflection alone can uncover the sanctity of the conscience, or reveal the weight of the moral life as universal exemplar. These must be felt, and are the burden of the moral man. It is his cross to bear, as much as it is in our natures to revere him for it, so that we may, someday, become so good:

I may add, that to any plain man in whom I may discover probity of manners in a grade superior to my own, my mind must bow whether I will or not. To what is this owing? His example presents to me a law which casts down my self-conceit when it is compared with my own deportment; the execution of which law—that is, its practicability—I see proved to me by real fact and event. Nay, even if I were conscious of like honesty to his, my reverence for him would continue; the reason whereof is, that all good in man being defective, the law, made exhibitively by an example, prostrates my conceit, which exemplar is furnished by a person whose imperfections—which must still attach to him—I do not know as I do my own, and who therefore appears to me in a better light. REVERENCE is a tribute which cannot be refused to merit, whether we choose or not. We may decline outwardly to express it, but we cannot avoid inwardly to feel it.¹⁸⁹

We mirror others in reverence. We close to them in disgust. We all want to become worthy of reverence, and avoid the other end. Conscience, the spring of practical reason, may take others for models, but is at both ends bound to one's self. That end in the distance, that is not just some end, that is not just some man, that is *my* end, *my* self, *me*. This aspect of the moral mechanism is clear on Kant's mature view, and lost in its common interpretations.

Conscience is the universal mechanism determining what is moral and immoral and motivating one way or the other. Practical reason may make the travel to an end easier, "But so long as man lives, he cannot endure to be in his own eyes unworthy of life."¹⁹⁰ Thus, the category over which the categorical imperative governs is less the rational than it is the conscientious. To follow conscience, this is the moral law, its utterances the substance of moral command. To deny this fact is, simply put, irrational. This fact of human nature is universal. It is the only contradiction of any moral weight. And it is where our analysis of Kant's ethics will stop.

8 Conscience, and the good.

It would seem to be a sort of accident, if it turned out that a situation would fit a thing that could already exist entirely on its own.

-- Ludwig Wittgenstein¹⁹¹

But look ye, the only real owner of anything is its commander; and hark ye, my conscience is in this ship's keel. - On deck!

-- Captain Ahab¹⁹²

In the everyday way, conscience brings one from the space of need to a space of rest by first presenting the perspective of that space ahead with needs met. It is this view from the place ahead which provides the conscience its motivational infallibility. One never fails to find some end for which to reach, one only fails to reach it.¹⁹³

Remember, the spring of conscience both ties one's self to ends and motivates to their realization. A spring has what scientists call a "work function." A spring contains power, and can do work. With this in mind, we can picture the conscientious agent sort of like an inchworm. Persons stretch out and pull up to ends, coming to terms with those ends and deliberating over new ones, inching along in life, situation to situation. At both ends of the spring is always and already one's own self. One end of the self is there before the rest arrives, but the whole of the worm is committed to the end of his action. He is simply ahead of most of himself most of the time he is on his way. From rest, he reaches out for whatever it is he needs, imagined or as a matter of fact.

Earlier, we saw that conscience opens the space between a thirsty man and a needed drink. Some men have taken this to mean that the good life is lived with drink in hand. I tend to agree. It pays to have what one needs, to have more is to have too much, to have less too little. This is true in every moment, at all times, and is a situation

to which all must confess being bound. The good life is everywhere adequate to the situation.

There is nothing new about this realization. Consider this report on the ancient philosophers called the Cynics:

Their fundamental Maxim was to live in conformity to virtue, which they said was sufficient to make men happy. They sought Liberty and Independency as the greatest Good. The Gods, said they, stand in need of nothing and those that stand in need of few things do most resemble them. To procure this happy independency they pretended to look upon honor and Riches with perfect indifferency, and to renounce all the inconveniences of Life. Diogenes would have no other habitation than a Tub, and when he found that he could drink out of the hollow of his hand, he threw away his wooden cup as a superfluity. Alexander the Great, coming to visit Diogenes in his Tub, asked him what he desired of him. "Nothing," said the philosopher, "but that you would not stand between me and the Sun."¹⁹⁴

Diogenes' example makes explicit a universal condition. Everyone will thirst, and not simply for fluids. Limiting that for which one thirsts is to limit those ends to which one is compelled to move. The workload on the spring of practical reason is thus reduced, and opens the opportunity for a life of leisure even for the man who has nothing.

Life is better when it is not permeated by unmet needs. Diogenes exemplified this condition by living in his tub. In renouncing worldly attachments, Diogenes had few unmet needs. He could live happily in his tub with no need to go anywhere else. Needing nothing, he could refuse Alexander's offer of help. What could Alexander do for him, anyways, besides get out of his light? Diogenes would not live in Alexander's shadow and, lucky for us, this gives us the best view on Diogenes' situation.

Imagine that Diogenes' tub is filled with water. He is lying in the Sun, bathing.¹⁹⁵ His situation is a good one. Though he will still thirst, his thirst shall be reliably satisfied with the least effort. When he does get thirsty, again, all that Diogenes must do is to dip his hand in his bathwater, and drink. He has even thrown away his cup, because keeping track of an unnecessary cup is merely unnecessary trouble. Diogenes refuses any offer from Alexander because the space in which his needs arise is that very same space from which his needs are filled.

This is an ideally comfortable situation. Diogenes feels no anxiety about how and where his needs might or might not be met. He has no uncertainty about his capacities to satisfy his thirst. He has come to terms with his situation. He doesn't even have to lift a cup to his mouth, and every little thirst is quenched one handful at a time. Just what he needs, in the light of the Sun.

Looking back, it makes sense that Diogenes put himself in this situation deliberately. It is an optimal solution, minimizing the strain on the work function that is the spring of practical reason. It is a situation with very little tension. Diogenes minimized the tension between where he is and where he needs to be to have his needs met. He is already there, in the space of his own needs, with nowhere to go.

This was something Diogenes deliberately did, but it is much more than that. A similar dynamic is at work in the space of every situation. All persons feel good when their needs are met. They also feel good when their present situation is such that any upcoming needs will be met. What Diogenes does is provide an emphatic example of something that all people already do.¹⁹⁶ For example, when I know that I will need lots

of printer ink, I try to have an extra ink cartridge on hand. Why? Because then I do not have to get up from my chair, bike to the shop, and return. I feel good reflecting on the fact that there is an extra printer cartridge here, right next to me. I can relax in the space of my work knowing my coming needs are met.

It feels good to have one's needs met. It also feels good when a present situation is such that any upcoming needs will be met. That's why I have an extra cartridge of printer ink. It is as-if I was bathing in it! Such is the power of Diogenes' example, the timeless power of a philosophic life. The image of this man in his tub, at rest in his space of need, will never fail to express The Truth of every situation.

It is in this spirit that the Cynics understood morality to be the highest science, and it is in this spirit that Diogenes refused any other need. He had come to terms with his own situation well enough to be able to demonstrate our own universal condition, all at once, and without lifting a finger.

Most of us are unwilling to follow Diogenes' example. We cannot spend our days in a tub. Other people rely on us not to forsake our every unmet need. Diogenes lived in his tub alone, but this does not mean that to follow Diogenes' example, we too have to live alone. We will bring other people into the tub with us in the next section, and make even more of Diogenes' example in the final section. For now, however, imagine what it is like to rest in such a space, alone, in order to better understand what Diogenes may have been up to. In this light, I offer the following illustration.

Imagine that you are, like Diogenes, reflecting in the space of your own needs. Imagine that you are in Diogenes' bathtub, but with *everything* you need in it, not just

water from the cup of your hand. Imagine that all of your daily needs are met. The kids are cared for, the clothes are clean, and the work is done. In this case, anything that may have been a motivation to seek a different situation is gone, taken care of.¹⁹⁷

This is where the thought experiment begins. You are in the perfect bathtub, the space of the perfect situation.¹⁹⁸ There is no tension, no felt weight of need compelling distraction in the space of the perfect bath. Your deepest inward wishes and grandest life's dreams are all met right down to the fabric and the color. This represents the space of ideal determination, where everything significant in your life is exactly how it is supposed to be. This is the space of the world as one would have it, the space where one feels his own highest potentials realized. This is the space of reflection which answers to "life would be perfect if..." This is the perfect bath.¹⁹⁹ What is conscience doing here? Recall how conscience was characterized as con-science in the first chapter. Con-science holds two sciences in comparison. -Sciences were characterized as ordered arrays of objects which are significant in terms of one's engagements with them. This order is one's situation, robustly understood.²⁰⁰ Conscience holds another situation out as-if one was so situated, opening the space of this difference as the feeling of what it is to be so situated. This is the work of conscience.

Feel the difference between the following two scenes. The first scene to be compared is the world before the perfect bath. All of the determinations of the situation are loaded with everyday tensions. One has to come to terms with having kids, or with living alone, or with finding a drink on a moment-to-moment basis. This first scene is the space of need: things need done, terms need met, ends need pursued. In the

second scene, all of these same everyday tensions are met. This is the space of rest. The kids are cared for, a pretty girl moves in next door, the bartender buys the next round. In this second situation, all the strained terms of one's everyday situation are relaxed.

The difference between these two scenes is the tension between being in need and being at rest. This tension between the situation one is in, and the situation held out before one's self, is motivational. Conscience motivates one to reach that second situation, that situation "where everything external and every restriction has disappeared." This is a space of rest, a space in which one's needs are met. This is good. Conscience motivates us to seek the good.

The best situation of all is the "perfect bath." In the perfect bath, there is no tension. In the perfect bath, there is no space between need and satisfaction, no distance to travel to get there.²⁰¹ There is no second situation toward which to move because any necessary terms are already met in this one. This is the space of perfect and complete rest. This is a low energy state, one of utter relaxation. Life in such a situation, when all that one wishes for is realized, is good.

Let's return here, to our starting place. We will introduce a basic tension. Imagine now that you are in the perfect bath with all needs met. Let the tensions slip away. Now, imagine that you begin getting thirsty. You need a drink. Unlike Diogenes' situation, imagine that you are not resting in the space whereby this new need can be filled. Drinking the bathwater is not an option, because bathwater is not that for which you thirst.

Recollect the discussion on thirst and the orientation to the good. Recall what thirst requires. To be thirsty is to have an end in need of being reached. Perhaps this is a well. Perhaps it is a pub. In either case, these places of rest are not where you are presently situated. Hereby, a difference opens up between where you are, and where you need to be. You feel this difference as a tension. You are thirsty, motivated to get a drink. Now, imagine a space ahead with a drink in it. It is a well, fed by a cool mountain spring, right next to a nice warm pub. Perfect.

To be thirsty is to need a drink. To get a drink, in this case, requires walking to the well. Imagine walking to the well. Pull up the water, and lift the cup to your mouth for satisfaction. The energy necessary to complete this operation is the minimum expenditure of energy necessary for you to get that drink of water. This is the energetic barrier between the situation in which you thirst, and the space of your satisfaction. You have to overcome this barrier in order to satisfy your need. This is where the conscience is motivational, like a (metal coil) spring: it does work. In this case, you have to get out of the tub and walk to the well and pull up the water. The spring of conscience motivates you to get over this hump.²⁰²

Things could have been worse. If there were other obstacles besides the rim of the bathtub, things would have been more difficult. If you had to cross a minefield, you would have felt more tension, for example. If you had to clear the way through the jungle and dig the well from scratch, things could have been more difficult still. This would have presented quite an energetic barrier to overcome. Lots of work for a drink of water!

Luckily, in most cases, the walk to the well has been cleared by prior generations, and the wells have been dug. Others have gotten thirsty, needed a drink, and had opened the restful spaces of satisfaction before us. Prior generations, in fact, have done better than merely show the way to the well. Now, we have sinks, and pipes, and sewer lines. Walking to the well had required a lot more energy compared to what most people must do now! Getting a drink used to be a source of great tension. Now, we simply walk to the tap. It is the energy expended by others in digging wells and laying pipes which saves us so much work, today. Their efforts have put us in a better situation. How good of them!

Even our situation is more energetically expensive than was Diogenes' when it comes to getting a drink, however. The present process - getting up, walking to the sink, pulling a clean glass of water - still requires a great deal of energy, comparatively. For Diogenes, the energy necessary to satiate his thirst was a bare minimum. It is difficult to imagine an easier situation for the thirsty bather than comfortably drinking his own bath water from the cupped palm of his own hand. This is an ideal space of rest. There is simply no place to go because one is already there. Now, that is taking it easy!

Let's return to a more common scenario. Imagine standing over the well after having taken a drink, satisfied, as-if without a need. In this second situation, the first situation, punctuated with thirst, is safely behind. That feeling of need now past, standing over the well is no longer necessarily the right place to be. A drink is no longer necessary. Drinking is no longer the right thing at the right time. The future is open; no need ties you to any end not of your own determination. This is an opportunity for de-

liberation, for tying one's self to some end of one's choosing, even some end which answers to no need, at all. It is a moment of leisure. It is at a moment like this that a man is free.²⁰³

At this point, there is an option. For one thing, one may continue on in one's old practices, slaking thirst at the same old watering holes to live out a life of utter routine. One may merely look around the well for distractions, and busy himself with trivial aspects of the world, until he grows thirsty again, keeping the same old wells nearby to satiate the same old thirsts day in and day out. Conscience is at work here in these mundane instances, keeping track of changing situations and opening to some things, but closing to most. In this routine life, however, there is a great capacity untapped. With needs met, one has an opportunity to deliberate, and to do otherwise.

Recall the theme of the last few sections: what is the meaning of life, and who shall I become? Am I to be a man who hovers around the old watering hole, or am I to be a man who does new and different, or even great, things? In order to demonstrate what I am getting to, let's recall Socrates' question: is that Socrates ahead or some scarecrow?

Now, we are prepared to imagine what the freedom to do otherwise than live a meaningless life of mere repetition and routine really adds up to.

Recall Kant's stipulation that "what is called a moral interest, is based solely on this emotion," reverence. Let's see what happens when what one needs is not just a sip at the old watering hole. Let's see what happens when what is missing from the space of one's life is self-respect, self-esteem, self-worth, reverence.

Return to the perfect bath for a moment. The perfect bath certainly involves being revered. After all, there is nothing perfect about being an object of self-disgust! What I want you to do is to imagine that your perfect bathing situation is being an object of reverence. Now, imagine that all tensions are released. Pay particular attention that this tension, being revered, is released. Begin by imagining how you regard those whom you revere, because in this case *you* are the object of reverence. Allow yourself to become this object. Reflect on the space of reverence, and let the tensions slip away.

Imagine that to be revered is to be in a situation exactly like your own with others seeking to be exactly like you. This is the significance of reverence. It is more than admiration, or simple respect. Others wish they were you, and actively seek to become just like you. They adopt your practices, they mirror your actions, and seek your ends. This is more than fame or passing fancy. You are setting the standard for excellence. You ARE the good.

In prior discussions, we had focused on particular aspects of given situations. Where is the furniture? Where is the one I love? Where can I get a drink? Here, we are focusing on one's entire situation. Reverence is about one's entire way of life, beginning, middle, and end. It is not some mere aspect of one's self which is the object of reverence, it is *the entire self*. Reverence does not mean "admiration for some trait or quality." Reverence is for persons only, *whole persons*.

Reverence is for life, a life, in this case *your life*. But, it does not come easily. To my mind, for example, that Diogenes could capture what is universal to everything in

nature simply by living in a tub is to be revered. Everyone wishes to be in a situation with needs met and turned toward the Sun. Everyone.²⁰⁴

Of course, every tub is different in detail. Each person has unique needs. Selves essentially differ from one another. And this points to the actual object of reverence. One is revered for his difference, his embodied difference, which is the right difference at the right time. It is this difference which displays that situation to which others are drawn in reverence. Others are motivated to seek the revered situation because they differ from it. In being different from the object of reverence, one is conscientiously motivated to become otherwise than he is. He, too, wants to be revered.

I have often said that conscience is about doing the right thing at the right time. I have stressed the value of examples. Here, these two aspects come together. Conscience is about doing the right thing at the right time and serving as a model for others to do the same. Conscience works at providing one's own situation as the ruler – as in *measure – for others*'. Wanting to be revered is wanting to have a conscience, is wanting to be responsible for doing the right thing at the right time in one's own eyes and in the eyes of others. Imagine that you have done the same.

Reverence is different from mere popularity. People don't revere you because they want to, or because it feels good. If one is revered, unlike the men named by Callicles in the earlier section, this sentiment continues long after the party is over. Reverence is more than a fat belly and a happy face for the moment. Like Diogenes, to be revered is to be situated with no place to go because one is already there. In fact, to

be revered is to be the “there” to which others are conscientiously drawn in the first place.

Imagine that you are revered. That man, up ahead, is already you. In this perfect bath, it is as if one has come to terms with the world as shared and everyone’s needs are met. This includes coming needs. You already are that man ahead, the good leader, the just ruler, the model for others to live the just life. Imagine, for instance, that you have provided for the security for your City through hard work and dedication. You are in the situation of having this work behind you. They are safe and happy, free to set out the good for themselves. You are successful. That feels good. No tension. You are in the perfect bath, revered, without the tensions of meeting the obligations of reverence. Remember the sweet feeling of this felt space.

Real life is seldom this way, however. How far are you from this ideal situation? Is who you are, now, the person you wish to be?

Now, let’s take the perfect bath and invert it. Let’s turn your tub upside down. You are cast out on the muddy floor covered in filth and soot. Imagine that you are the object of disgust, rather than reverence. Imagine that everything has gone horribly wrong. In life, for your self, and for everyone everywhere else, you have failed. You have misled them, and all suffer for it.

This is a terrifying difference. First, in the space of the perfect bath, all felt needs were met. These include fame, fortune, and other worldly things, health, hope, and happiness. You were revered! Now, none of these needs are met. In fact, these are lacking. You are heartsick, infamous, miserable, despised, avoided, alone. This

situation is not a place to which anyone is motivated. You are the NOT good. It is the opposite of being revered. Others no longer seek you out; they fear you. You are disgusting. No one wants to be you. Especially, *you* don't want to be you. You are bound by the greatest of tensions. Strain tears you apart. This is Hell.

Hard to imagine? Begin by imagining particular things. In the perfect bath, you are clean and healthy. In this inversion, you are slimy, sick, even contagious. In the perfect bath, you are respected by others. In this inversion, you are despised. It is in the mirroring eyes of those whom you love that your despised situation is most clearly revealed. After all, the love expressed by those others to whom you are most open is, most of all, what makes the bath perfect. In this case, there is none of that. In the perfect bath, the one you love comes to you in your time of need. She brings you a drink when you are thirsty. In the inverted bath, she goes off, instead, to drink beer and to live in a van with a hippy. Not a comfortable situation.

To open to another in love, only to have her lie, and reject you in disgust, is the opposite of a perfect situation. Imagine that this happens to you. In the inverted bath, the one you love abandons you in your time of need. In the mirror of her eyes, you see the disgust behind the rejection. "Yours is not a place I wish to be. I wish instead to be away from you."

You mirror the rejection, and it is complete. In self-disgust, this evaluation is internalized. You reject the whole of your self. It is not merely that some aspect of the situation went wrong. It is that everything went wrong. What is wrong is your entire

self. In the inversion, one's self is the very situation one cannot be in.²⁰⁵ Imagine the tension! Life feels like a complete and utter loss.

This is not an end one seeks. It is one to be avoided. However, becoming an object of self-disgust is a very real possibility. Without good examples to follow, and the good-will of others, and without an opportunity to do otherwise here and there, it is even likely.

The option to do what is right instead of what is necessary, to put one's self and others in the best possible situation, to bathe in the best possible light, is life's most valuable opportunity. Opportunities to do what is right rather than follow the routine may not arise very often. So, it is best to prepare for them when and if they do.

This is why leisure so important to Socrates. He understood that it is when action is not required that one has the chance to consider what one might do when action is again required. So, he advocated a life of constant inquiry and reflection, an examined life toward self-knowledge, asserting in the same breath that all knowledge is self-knowledge. And, it is during moments of leisure, when one has the chance to examine himself, that one may come to know what must be done as opposed to what merely has been done. These are the moments when one is free. After all, when one must act, there is no freedom, only the necessity for action. And, this is why being taken by surprise, betrayed, caught flat-footed, is such a terrible place to be. There is nothing to be done about it. That is, unless one is prepared, and if one is already prepared, then he is hardly surprised...

Maximizing the rare opportunities one has to be free is what the bathtub experiment is for. Reflecting in one's private pool, oscillating from reverence to disgust as we just have, one can catch a glimpse of the two poles which frame life's possibilities like bookends. When one wonders which ends are worthy, and which are not, one wonders about what it is that makes the right thing to do the right thing to do, about what is the life worth living, and how to live it. This is a universal truth. Everyone wants to live a life worth living. And, everyone wants more than anything to avoid the opposite. Everyone wants his or her dreams to come true. No one wants to live a nightmare. Conscience, as we have seen, sets out these ends, and pulls us to or away from them. And the bathtub experiment serves as a sort of training grounds for conscience. A moral gymnasium. The "Socratorium." Know thyself. You will do the right thing because of it.

9 Conscience, and the appearance of the good.²⁰⁶

That an artist has beheld the truth follows from the fact that we too are seized with the conviction of truth when he leads us away from currents of accidentally related qualities. An artist is superior to us in that he knows how to find the truth amid all the confusion and chance events of daily experience.

– H. Helmholtz²⁰⁷

All our regrets are just lessons we haven't learned yet.

– Beth Orton²⁰⁸

We took a bath with Diogenes last section. The lesson that we derived from his example involves the universality of the human condition as situated in a world of need. In the end, we discovered something about the conscience. It is what motivates us to realize our highest dreams and aspirations. It also reveals our frailty, and the horror of being cast out.

In this section, we will approach the theme of alienation in general. We will find in Martin Heidegger's thought a basis for the things revealed in prior sections. One of these is the significance of others in how we come to see ourselves. Another is the role of conscience in motivating us to realize our highest potentials. Together, we shall come to know just what these highest potentials really are.

There is a danger in working with Heidegger's philosophy directly. Everything is connected with everything else. To begin talking on one point inevitably leads to a web of critical associations. This is why I have saved a review of his work until this point in the text. Thus far, we have caught a glimpse of where many of these associations would lead us. In this way, we can be sure not to get too lost, should our discussion take a subtle turn.

So, let's tread lightly and begin on familiar ground. For Heidegger, conscience is universal among human beings. Conscience is a "universally established and ascertainable fact."²⁰⁹ Conscience shows up as a call. It "summons" one's self away from everyday entanglements and forward to one's highest potentials.²¹⁰ Consistent with its characterization as a call, conscience "gives us something to understand, it *discloses*."²¹¹ What it discloses, and what it calls one toward, is one's self.

In some traditional terms, the movement of disclosure is one of "exstasis." "Exstasis" comes from root words: *-sta*, meaning "staying in place," and *ex-*, "out of," implying moving from, standing out, *no longer staying in place*.²¹² Only living things are ex-static. As their situations in the world change, living things experience new things, or old things in different ways. They "disclose" the world in their ex-static movement from a resting place. They discover a way, clear the way for themselves, reach out to the end in sight, and climb their way toward it. This understanding has been the phenomenological tradition since the Greeks.²¹³

Accordingly, Heidegger's focus in *Being and Time* is not "living with clocks," as the title in English suggests, although he has something to say about that too. Heidegger's focus in *Being and Time* is "*die Lichtung*," or "the clearing" of being. By clearing of being, Heidegger means disclosure, discovery, discourse. By the clearing of being, we *really are* talking about the meaning of life: "...the essence of a human being is to be "already" ... that place where things show up as what, that, and how they are."²¹⁴ The meaning of life, in other words, is to understand one's self, and the things of the world, so that one can see them for what they truly are.

Let me clarify. "Clearing" is both a noun, as in "already that place where things show up" and as in "the cleared space of a dark forest wherein one dwells." It is also a verb, as in "clearing out the undergrowth" and "clearing the way for the path ahead." By "the essence of a human being is to be ... that place" Heidegger means that the essence of a human being is to be both, clearing as noun AND verb, at the same instance. A human being is a sort of place where things show up, and a human being acts so that things can show up in the first place. That is simply being human, on Heidegger's account.

These two, noun and verb together, lead to a third sense of clearing. Yes, a clearing is a space in which things arise. Yes, a clearing is the ordering of a space so that things can arise there. In a third sense, a clearing is a work in progress, both thing and action all at once. A clearing is a space of inquiry, both known and unknown all at once. A clearing, thus, is an ongoing synthesis, a site of continual integration with the things of the world. More than discovery, thus, one's essence is to create.

This brings us to one of the great difficulties in coming to terms with Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger has created words to capture aspects of the human condition that are, by their natures, difficult to capture in words. It is difficult to talk about the "essence of being human," so it should not be surprising that the words we use are difficult, too. By "essence," we are not merely talking about resting parts of us, like arms and legs on a dissection table. We are talking about the moving whole of us. And, as we are each a moving whole, it is difficult to get a clear look at what we essentially are; and, besides that, as we all are essentially the same, we tend to take our common

essence for granted. We simply don't find ourselves often talking about the stuff that Heidegger is trying to describe. Consequently, we have no words for this stuff, and Heidegger is placed in the position of having to either make words up, or bend old words to capture what it is he is trying to capture. "Clearing" is one such example of Heidegger's creative use of words.

Another such example is the word that Heidegger uses to refer to human beings. The word that Heidegger uses to indicate (entire) beings like human beings is "Dasein." Dasein is a German word, and literally signifies "being there."²¹⁵ "Being there" is not quite what Heidegger means when he calls human beings Dasein, though. What Heidegger has in mind is "the being of the there" more than simply "being at a place at a time." Other things, like rocks and sticks, are merely at a place at a time. Dasein, on the other hand, is where any *there* happens. Dasein is where things come to matter. Dasein is the clearing of being.

Why not simply call human beings "human beings?" Because "human being" is a term that comes with a lot of baggage. Heidegger was concerned that people would focus on all the other stuff that goes along with "human being," and miss the point of what he was trying to capture in his philosophy. So, he took a German word and bent it up a bit until he could make it mean what he needed it to mean. He did this in order to avoid confusion. Whether or not he was successful is another question.

On the other hand, Heidegger was something of a poet. He was a real artist with words, as he was with the ideas behind them. Not to begrudge the artist, here, but that doesn't make his philosophy any easier for the everyday reader to understand. So, the

trick to understanding Heidegger's philosophy will be not to forget what has been uncovered in this text, already. For instance, throughout this text, we have been referring to this spatial sense of being in the world, the clearing of being, as one's "situation." We have seen that one's situation includes all the things of the world that one cares about, and that the aspect of one's situation which one cares about most is one's self. This will all be represented in Heidegger's philosophy in this chapter. In fact, Heidegger's thought is the inspiration for much of what has come in prior chapters, so far. So, don't let Heidegger's strange vocabulary throw you. You *already know* most of what you are *about to learn*.

For instance, one's situation is determined by his position relative certain things in the world, and especially relative to those things that occupy his attention. This aspect of one's self, that one always understands himself to be situated in terms of objects, Heidegger calls "existential spatiality." This aspect of one's human condition shows up in very everyday ways. Whenever one says that "I am here," or "the pub is over there," one is remarking on the "existential spatiality" of one's self.

At the center of this existential space of one's self, is one's self. One's self is always the "here." Other things are often "over there." Heidegger tells us that "here" is always understood in terms of "the things at hand which [one] initially takes care of in the surrounding world."²¹⁶ "Here" is understood in terms of the things one cares most about. If the things one cares about are not "here," this is a source of anxiety, tension. This is why it feels best to have the things one cares most about close by, "here."

Why should a human being care if some thing is close by, or not, in the first place? Because, more than caring about some *thing* here or there, human beings care about themselves. A person keeps the things nearby that he keeps nearby because these are the most useful things when it comes to taking care of himself. Most of all, a person cares about who he will become, how his friends and family will fare, and about the health of his society and of his world at large. Heidegger expresses this fact like this: “Da-sein is a being which is concerned in its being about that being.”²¹⁷ In other words, Dasein can’t help caring about himself, because that is simply the sort of critter that Dasein is.

All of this, taken together, explains why we surround ourselves with the things we do. It also explains why we understand those objects in terms of their significance to our lives. We care about things because of what we do with them, and because of what they do for us. We care about these things because we care about ourselves. “Clearing,” thus, mirrors “caring.” It is only in terms of this clearing of being that things come matter at all. Likewise, it is in terms of the things that matter that one is the clearing that he is. “One *is*, after all, *what* one takes care of.”²¹⁸ Thus, one is “spread thin” when the objects which demand his attention are far removed, when they are not “here.” He is “together,” on the other hand, when all the things he cares for are close by, and doing well.

In a later essay, separate from *Being and Time*, Heidegger explains that: “Being there names that which should first of all be experienced, and subsequently thought of, as a place – namely, the location of the truth of Being.”²¹⁹ Being there is being the place

where things are found to matter, to still matter, to matter no longer, or not at all. Being there is being the place where things are found to matter in this way, or that. It is on this basis, then, that things come to be “true” or “false.”

For Heidegger, as for the Greeks, “the essence of truth” is a privative expression, *a-letheia*. *Aletheia* signifies a “robbery,” or a taking for one’s own. This is not some passive waiting for the world to present itself. This is pushing back the darkness to see for one’s self. This is, in other words, clearing, making room for things to show up as they are. This is what Heidegger calls “making space for things.”

So, by truth, Heidegger means disclosure, discovery. Truth is real, on this view, not something to be sought after, yet never wholly achieved. Its actuality lies in the experience of the being whose function is disclosure, whose highest function is truth as such, *Dasein*. In disclosing the world, in making room for truth, one’s self is opened up. This is how one comes to the truth. He makes space for it, becomes it, comes to *be* the truth even as he comes to live in it.

Consider the following example. Imagine clearing a field for farming. In this mode, rich clean soil is good, and rocks are revealed as obstacles. Now, imagine clearing a field for geology, in order to study the rocks. With this purpose in mind, it is the soil that is the obstacle. In either case, it is the purposeful making space for one’s self which evaluates rocks as either good or bad. The rock itself suffers either determination without complaint. It will find rest where it lays, obstacle or object.

The mode of discovery determines what *Dasein* takes to be true. If farmer *Dasein* says to Geologist *Dasein* “There are a bunch of obstacles in that field. Get rid of

them, I am going to lunch.” He may return to a field with all of the dirt taken out of it. This was not his object!

After all, the work in clearing [verb] is for the sake of a clearing [noun] for the purposes which opened the space, in the first place [Dasein]. So, again, clearing farmland means taking out the rocks, which, in the end, means clearing a space suitable for farming. Geology means taking out the dirt and studying the rocks. If the farmer points to a rock and says “obstacle,” the geologist will say “false.” And, the fact is, they are both right.²²⁰

This brings us to the expansive sense of clearing. A clearing can be pushed outward. The clearing,²²¹ can be made bigger. In discovering the objects of the world, Dasein clears the way for himself. Disorder is pushed back, and Dasein makes the unknown known. One way in which the clearing of being is always expanding is in time. Dasein is temporal. He doesn’t clear the way in just any direction, however; he clears the way ahead.²²²

Here, we see the primary significance of clearing in the sense of both noun and verb taken all at once. One’s self is always expanding, moving from the borderline of his own present into his own future. Thus, he *is* the site of their synthesis. Always moving away from rest, and into the future, the space of one’s own being is where the integration of presence and future takes place.²²³ It is of this integration with the future that Dasein is primarily composed. It is also about this integration with the future that Dasein is primarily concerned. “Its primary meaning is the future.”²²⁴

If Dasein's primary meaning is the future, then the future's primary meaning is Dasein. That is, one sees up ahead what he understands here and now. We have seen this process play out in previous chapters. In one's ecstatic discovery of the world, one comes to understand it. This understanding is then brought to bear on every next present moment. It is, thus, from the basis of one's prior understanding that he looks ahead for possibilities. What one sees ahead is dependent on one's present understanding, just as one's present understanding depends on what one came to see, before. Heidegger explains things this way:

Understanding constitutes the being of the there in such a way that, on the basis of such understanding, a Da-sein in existing can develop the various possibilities of sight, of looking around, and of just looking.²²⁵

After all, the farmer does not clear rocks in order to have a good last season, but in order to have a good next season. The farmer works so that, whatever came of this year's harvest, he can at least realize the possibilities for the next year with fewer obstacles in his way. He is looking ahead, doing what he does best, according to his understanding. "Dasein comes toward itself in terms of what is taken care of."²²⁶

The farmer is concerned about the next season every year. This is not something he only does once. He worries about things like getting rid of rocks so that, next year, he can be an even more successful farmer than he was this year. He wants to succeed because he cares about himself, and this is why he keeps pushing ahead, perhaps expanding the farm and clearing more ground for farming. "Dasein has always already compared itself, in its being, with a possibility of itself."²²⁷

One looks ahead in terms of what he understands, and cares for the same. Heidegger calls this sense of one's self, that what is important always and already lies ahead, a "project."²²⁸ Each project is unique. Each self answers differently to "I see..." "I want..." "I will become...." This is the fundamental fact of being an individual:

Utterance is not necessary. With the "I" this being means itself. The content of this expression is taken to be absolutely simple. It always means only me, and nothing further."²²⁹

Everyone has their own "projection." Each unique projection is based in the understanding one has of his own situation, through his experience, and on this basis he is oriented to the future in anticipation of what will come next. Ongoing discovery simply is the disclosure of more of this situation. Thus, wherever one goes next, he takes his situation with him. And it is this situation which is then held against the next. This ongoing process of projection is what it is like to be this unique, individual self, this "I." "Saying I means the being that I always am as "I-am-in-a-world."²³⁰

Moreover, one is never the only one to say "I." If it were, then there would be no need to say "I" in the first place! We are each born into a world already filled with others who make the same claim. Plus, these other "I's" have been busy doing the same things that we end up doing, clearing the way for a good life. Each other "I" has his or her own project and projection, as had each other "I" who came before us, and just as will have every other "I" who will come after us. In fact, for the most part, we each live in a world already cleared by the work of these past projecting "I's" for the sole purpose of all the "I's" to come after, ourselves included. We live in a world ready-made for us by others like us who came before us.

Let's face it; one has already, and continues to find one's self in a situation the terms of which one is not the sole author. One's own clearing of being, thus, is essentially a shared one. It is shared with people past, people present and people future.

We are not simply lucky to find ourselves with others, day to day. Being with others is an essential aspect of our constitutions. As much as the future, *being with other persons is what we are made of*. Heidegger finds proof for this in that persons get lonely. "The other can be lacking only in and for a *being-with*. Being-alone is a deficient mode of being-with, and its possibility is a proof of the fundamentality of the latter."²³¹ Heidegger calls this essential aspect of Dasein, being with others, "*Mitdasein*." On Heidegger's view, being with others is not some secondary aspect of Dasein's constitution, tacked onto an atomic agent after the fact.²³² It is an essential aspect of Dasein; integration with other people is what one is made of, just as much as one is made of integration with the future. Dasein essentially *is* others, in other words.²³³

Thus, in being-with and toward others, there is a relation of being from Dasein to Dasein. But, one would like to say, this relation is after all, already constitutive for one's own Dasein, which has an understanding of its own being and is thus related to Dasein. The relation of being to others then becomes a projection of one's own being toward oneself "into an other." The other is a double of the self.²³⁴

Differently from other views of what it is to be a human being in a world full of human beings, Heidegger's Dasein is essentially moral. Because others are an essential part of Dasein, one's own "double," Dasein's obligations to others come from his own obligations to his own self. This is simply the sort of critter that Dasein is;

Dasein mirrors others, seeing their situation in terms of the projection of his own understanding.

There is no need for Heidegger to cook up some “ethical theory” to substantiate this fact.²³⁵ Heidegger does not start with an isolated “I” from which must be construed moral bridges post hoc.²³⁶ He starts with a being for whom being *essentially is* being-with-others. These others are not separate persons. They are part of one’s self. Likewise, moral obligations are not separate conditions, as if to be moral is to do something exemplary. They are part of one’s obligations to one’s self. Other theorists miss this point, entirely:

In order to avoid this misunderstanding, we must observe in what sense we are talking about the “others.” “The others” does not mean everybody else but me – those from whom the I distinguishes itself. They are, rather, those from whom one mostly does not distinguish oneself, those among whom one is, too.²³⁷

We are with other people, fundamentally, before there is ever the possibility of being alone. Those “others” are essentially the same as “us,” they are merely “over there.”

A mirror of others from the beginning, one sees one’s self and others in terms of differences. This is obvious in the fact that when we say “others,” we mean how others differ from us. “They are tall; we are short,” “We are rich; they are poor,” “They are old; we are young,” and etcetera. Thus, persons come to understand themselves insofar as they deviate from the others.

This deviance is an aspect of Dasein’s existential spatiality. “Existentially expressed, being-with-one-another has the character of *distantiality*.”²³⁸ When one

differs from another, there is a sense of distance. When two people cannot come to an understanding on an important issue, for example, there is said to be a “gulf between them,” a great distance requiring an equally great bridge to overcome.

Being alone, surrounded by great distances between one’s self and others, is uncomfortable. People tend to stick together for this reason. It feels good to see the world in the same lights as the others one is with. It feels comforting to be surrounded by like-minded people. One’s own understanding seems to be confirmed when others mirror that understanding, when their projections are effective doubles of one’s own. Thus, the common understanding of the world begins to exercise a force. It “prescribes the nearest interpretation of the world and being-in-the-world.”²³⁹ Being in the middle of this understanding is comforting, as if one is never alone. Deviating from this common understanding, however, carries an opposite affect, and one is motivated to return to normalcy:

In taking care of the things in which one has taken hold of, for, and against others, there is constant care as to the way one differs from them, whether, this difference is to be equalized, whether one’s own Dasein has lagged behind others and wants to catch up in relation to them, whether Dasein in its priority over others is intent on suppressing them.²⁴⁰

The anonymous others responsible for the average understanding of the world, from whom one is distanced and “with whom this difference is to be equalized,” Heidegger calls the “they.” “They” have already done it, it has met “their” standards, this is how the world is commonly understood, so we should also be one of “them.”²⁴¹

Yet, being one of “them” carries other consequences, as well. Becoming the average means losing one’s self. Even as “they” did it, it can equally be said that “no

one” did it. Even as “they” understand it, it can equally be said that no one understands it. After all, no one individual person *is* this standard. Certainly not one’s self!

As no one person did it, and as no one person understands it, then the standard for one’s own self also becomes doing nothing, and understanding nothing, at all.²⁴² The standard for one’s self is merely to stay squarely in the middle of the pack, average, one of “them.” There is nothing more to understand. Anonymously, thus, the “they” exerts a positive pressure on each self to remain safely within the body of the group. To do otherwise is to risk deviance. But, in being no different, one is also no longer himself:

Thus the they maintains itself factually in the averageness of what is proper, what is allowed, and what is not. Of what is granted success and what is not. This averageness, which prescribes what can and cannot be ventured, watches over every exception which thrusts itself to the fore. Every priority is noiselessly squashed.²⁴³

“Every priority” is the difference between one’s self and others which is constitutive of that self. It is the self, thus, which the “they,” in their averageness, noiselessly squashes.²⁴⁴

Because of a natural inclination to “taking things easily”, there is an attraction to giving one’s self over to the they, “to averageness....”²⁴⁵ Being in the norm is comforting. Being in with the group carries with it a sense that one is where one should be. Being one of them feels like home. This sleepy existence where things are anonymously taken care of may feel like a boon, but it comes with a steep cost. This cost is freedom, the freedom to understand the world from one’s own unique point of view, the freedom, in other words, to be one’s self.

The upshot to losing one's self in averageness is that one no longer has to worry about what he will make of himself and his life. He no longer feels a need to aspire to his highest potentials, and likewise feels no trouble when he fails to realize this potential. The "they" takes "the responsibility of Dasein away from it."²⁴⁶ In hiding one's self in the examples of others nearby, the "they" "disburdens" the self of such responsibility.²⁴⁷

The "...they presents every judgment and decision as its own." Taking up this common understanding for one's self, one is held to account for himself only when he differs from it. There is a lot of anxiety involved in taking responsibility for one's self, having to explain one's self, having to decide and judge for one's self. So, it is not surprising that many chose to remain in this common understanding, constantly seeking to close the gap between himself and the average taken as the ideal.

This average ideal, this indifferent system of anonymous others which surrounds and judges every action and activity, appears to be an unchallengeable force. Being with "them," one feels as if he may have the blessing, not only of other people, but of all of them. It is this faceless collective which, "can most easily be responsible for everything because no one has to vouch for anything."²⁴⁸ The they is an army of countless numbers from countless generations, and they, all of them together cannot be wrong! Thus, in giving one's self over to the they, one no longer has to worry about accounting for his actions, in this life or the next. The way of the they is simply the way that things are done.

Most persons stay within the fenced range of everyday expectations, living as they always have, letting “them” do what needs done, and doing their own part only to meet the average expectation. This way of being is essentially closed off from the world.²⁴⁹ This is an easy life, following in well-worn ruts, never risking adventure away and on one’s own. This is life lived half asleep. Just imagine the sense of relaxation in the phrase “they will take care of it.” This is taking it easy, and living under its rubric like taking a life-long nap. No need to get up...

Awake, however, is not always so pleasant. One is exposed to forces from which being in the “they” is insulation. One feels responsible, even agitated, anxious, tense. Affected by these pressures, one becomes moody.²⁵⁰ These moods further separate one’s self from the others. Moods, however, are signs that one is open to the world, and especially to the forces stemming from his genuine relationship with it. These moods are signs that one is attuning himself, not only to the average understanding and to the requirements of faceless others, but to the world as it is, and to himself within it. “The moodedness of attunement constitutes existentially the openness to the world of Dasein.”²⁵¹

To be open to the world is to let things come to matter. Being open to the world is making room for the things of the world in the clearing of one’s own life. There is anxiety in letting things come to matter, however. It is this anxiety which lifts when one lets the average understanding of what matters stand in for his own. If it doesn’t matter to them, then it doesn’t matter! Enough said. This is a great release of tension, as if some burden were removed by “them.” This is the attraction of residing in the clearing

of the “they,” rather than clearing the way for one’s own understanding. It is easy. Nothing to worry about.

In this easy clearing, however, lies the implicit opportunity for escape. But, escape doesn’t come easily. It is not as if there is some magic key. It is more like climbing out of a well than dashing through a hole in the wall. After all, one’s self is the wall! In order to overcome the barrier of anxiety that comes with letting things come to matter, with caring, “Dasein can, should, and must master its mood with knowledge and will.”²⁵² In other words, reclaiming one’s self from his lostness in the “they” takes courage.

It takes courage to hold out for the truth, to be one’s self, to do the right thing instead of what “they” are doing. It is easier to go with what “they” said, do what “they” do, and be like “them.” But, only with the courage to open to the unknown forces of the world is Dasein free to become himself.²⁵³ Different. And only from this perspective can he take himself back from the “they.” But, even here, there is a further cost. Having the courage to care is only the beginning. One is bound to the things for which he cares. Escape from the “they” is an escape into a sort of bondage, an escape into a world where things matter. Most of all, what comes to matter, is one’s own self.

Heidegger calls all the things in the world which matter to Dasein the “referential context of significance.” One’s self is not to be found in this context, however. One’s self is never just another thing out there in the world. Instead, one’s self makes all the things of the world relevant, in the first place. It is the locus of the world’s significance. And, the things of the world become significant in terms of one’s own highest

aspirations. Reclaimed from lostness in the “they,” the world is understood in terms of that best person, up ahead, that person that one wishes himself to become:

The referential context of significance is anchored in the being of Dasein toward its ownmost being – a being which cannot be in a relation of relevance, but which is rather the being *for the sake of which* Dasein is as it is.²⁵⁴

Given over to the they, the significance of the things in the world is determined by everyone and no one. Once separated from the they, the order of the world and one’s place in it suddenly becomes one’s own responsibility. Coming to terms with the world, caring for the things of the world, becomes one’s purpose in life. This causes moods, anxieties, worries and concerns. This causes stress, strain, and forces the person to confront forces beyond his control. Primarily amongst these is the imminent threat of death and dying, of the loss of all the things that come to matter when one frees himself to make his world, and his life, his own. Facing one’s mortality also takes courage.

The feeling that one’s mortality is imminent, and that one is alone responsible for what comes by way of his life, is called Angst. When someone says he is “struggling under the weight of the world,” this is angst. Angst is about life itself. Angst is about one’s *entire* life, transfixed by anxiety and crammed into the space of a moment. “Being-in-the-world is both what Angst is anxious in the face of and what it is anxious about.”²⁵⁵ Because one is mortal, first, and everything else appears only along the way of his life, Angst is also the *fundamental* mood of being in the world.²⁵⁶ Other moods are only derivations thereof. It is this mood, Angst, that the “they” primarily shields one’s self from having to endure.

Angst is characterized by a feeling of uncanniness; “uncanniness means ... not being at home” in the world.²⁵⁷ Uncanniness is the feeling that something doesn’t fit, like something isn’t right about the situation. It is uncanny that George H.W. Bush shows up in pictures on the steps of the book depository during the assassination of John F. Kennedy. It is uncanny that Dick Cheney’s interests in Halliburton made him one of the wealthiest men in the world during the occupation of Iraq. It is also uncanny when one’s garden gnome shows up in pictures of a flea market in Florence, for example.

In every case of uncanniness, what is uncanny is one’s situation relative to some particular thing. In the case of Angst, however, what doesn’t fit is not merely some thing. What doesn’t fit is everything, altogether, and at once. Angst is the feeling that, what doesn’t fit in the world, is one’s self:

In particular, that in the face of which one has angst is not encountered as something definite to be taken care of; the threat does not come from something at hand or objectively present, but rather from the fact that everything at hand and objectively present absolutely has nothing more to “say” to us. Beings in the surrounding world are no longer relevant.²⁵⁸

Angst calls into question the *entire* context of significance. The question is not “why should I care about Dick Cheney or a garden gnome?” The question is “why should I care, at all?”

The uncanniness with which Angst confronts Dasein is the possibility that *what does not fit in the world is one’s self*. As one’s self anchors the total context in which things are relevant, when one’s self does not fit, nothing is relevant. If nothing is relevant, and what is relevant is relevant only in terms of one’s own life, then what is the relevance of one’s own life? Angst confronts a person with this question. What is the

point, what is the purpose in life, when nothing seems to matter? Without a sense of purpose, and with nothing relevant, angst is a feeling that one's own life does not matter. Angst confronts one's self with the nullity of his own life: perhaps one's life will come to nothing, if it has not come to nothing, already.

The feeling of having come to nothing is the feeling of *being* nothing, death. This is the ultimate aloneness. After all, one might share the world, but his death, his exit from the world, is only ever his own. Through angst, "Dasein is thus essentially individualized down to its ownmost potentiality of death as the *nonrelational* possibility."²⁵⁹ This is the depth of anxiety of which one is relieved when he gives himself over to the they. In taking himself back, however, one is left alone to deal with his own mortality, and to answer the questions of the meaning of his own life. Angst is the mood that reveals these otherwise safely hidden aspects of one's self:

It clears away every covering over of the fact that Dasein is left to itself. The nothingness before which angst brings us reveals the nullity that determines Dasein in its ground, which itself is thrownness into death.²⁶⁰

Death is that situation in which there is no situation. One cannot imagine *being* dead, this is why persons speak so often about "life after death." When one tries to imagine what death is like, the situation has the indefinite sense of the "nothing and nowhere."²⁶¹ It feels as-if being in a *non-place*, a *netherworld*. Because one's self is the clearing of being, is essentially the place of life, death confronts Dasein with *non-being*, and with the fact that non-being is its *only* certain end. Every life ends. Everyone dies. This is one's only guarantee. When and how one dies are the only real questions, but there is no getting around it. Even as one escapes from the "they," he escapes only into

a sort of bondage. He is bound to experience Angst, and to the certainty of death. He is bound to imminent *not*-being, and from this situation, there is no escape.

Individuated, left alone to confront the certainty of death, is not a situation that many people are willing to seek. But, with the courage to confront angst, and to master this foundational mood, one is rewarded with the most valuable opportunity:

The insignificance of the world disclosed in Angst reveals the nullity of what can be taken care of, that is, the impossibility of projecting oneself upon a potentiality-of-being primarily based upon what is taken care of. But the revelation of this impossibility means to let the possibility of an authentic potentiality of being shine forth.²⁶²

Angst strips away the significance of all worldly objects and so calls into question the very meaning of existence. Yet, without anything relevant, what constitutes the “possibility of an authentic potentiality of being” that Heidegger paints as the upshot of answering Angst in the affirmative? It is freedom! Without the significance of objects in the world predetermined by an average understanding, Dasein is free to determine what is significant for itself. And, as at the center of any context of significance is one’s own self, “Angst reveals in Dasein its being toward its ownmost potentiality of being, that is being free for the freedom of choosing and grasping itself.”²⁶³

In getting one’s self back from “everybody’s” standard, one opens oneself to the possibility of self-determination. Self-determination is the freedom to ascribe for one’s self the ways in which the things of the world are relevant, around the theme of one’s own highest potentials. As each Dasein understands uniquely, he can choose to test his understanding against that of others who have understood for and before him. He can then advance the common understanding, and so make history, move it along.

Taking up what has been given, testing its terms against one's own experience, and transforming it, advancing it, is what Heidegger calls "authentic." One chooses to be one's self, and chooses to do so for the sake of one's self, and others. "In choosing to make this choice, Da-sein makes possible, first and foremost, its authentic potentiality-of-being."²⁶⁴

Making this choice, and executing a life on its terms, takes courage. But, courage can mean many things to many people. Socrates, for example, inquired into the meaning of courage and was confronted with responses as varied as were the respondents.²⁶⁵ Heidegger wants to avoid this confusion. Heidegger calls the preparedness for angst that the authentic life requires "reticent resoluteness," or more simply "resolve," or "resoluteness." "Dasein is authentically itself in the mode of primordial individuation of reticent resoluteness that expects *Angst* of itself."²⁶⁶ Reticent resoluteness means confronting death by taking responsibility for one's life, past present and future. This is genuine courage, by another name.

Resoluteness is the mood through which one masters angst and the anxieties of loneliness that come with deviance from the "they." "Resoluteness means letting one's self be summoned out of one's lostness in the they."²⁶⁷ In resolve, one holds one's self open, to see things as they are, to find opportunities otherwise hidden by the average understanding of what is good and worthy of pursuit. Resolute, one is "authentically "there" for the disclosed situation in the "Moment."²⁶⁸ Instead of doing as has always been done, or as expected, or according to convention, Dasein has the potential to discover otherwise. In resolve, he has the potential to discover the truth

Conscience is the beacon of this freedom. It is the summoner from lostness in the they. Resolve is merely the mood which makes answering this call a possibility in the first place. In other words, it takes courage to have a conscience.

The conscience calls one's self to reach for one's highest potentials, and not to close off into a predetermined way of life. It calls one's self back from his entrenchment in routine, and his lostness in the everyday ways of the "they." Conscience calls one's self as an individual, individuated from the faceless others in whose company one normally hides. "The call of conscience passes over all "worldly" status and abilities of Dasein in its summons."²⁶⁹ The conscience calls one's self to his purpose in life. Keeping one's self open to possibilities, which are not those of the average understanding, is the mode in which a person is most himself. "This potentiality is that for the sake of which any Dasein is as it is."²⁷⁰

Though we begin with others and live according to a public standard much of the time, conscience shows us that our lives are our own. Conscience discloses the opportunities to be one's authentic self by calling "Dasein forth to its own unique possibilities."²⁷¹ In being called to his "own-most"²⁷² possibilities, however, Dasein is not called away from the world and from others. Resolve is the courage to accept the sufferings and situations of others as if they were one's own. Resoluteness "pushes" one's self "toward concerned being-with with others," and not away from them at all.²⁷³ In answering the call of conscience, one is individuated only in his unique capacities to care. So individuated, one never feels less alone.

Recall the talk of Dasein as the “clearing” of being. A clearing is an open space. An authentic clearing is shared, it is not closed off to others.²⁷⁴ In resolve, Dasein is open to being this “clearing” for himself and others. In resolve, Dasein is open to the future, one’s own with others. Instead of bowing to angst in the face of death, Dasein is open to the opportunities which living for and with others presents. Thus, it is the person with the resolve to take responsibility for the way the world turns out whose job it is to make sure that the world turns out well:

Resolution does not escape from “reality,” but first discovers what is factually possible in such a way that it grasps it as it is possible as one’s ownmost potentiality for being in the they.²⁷⁵

Having recovered one’s self from others, individuated, and having become one’s own unique project in discovery, one still must go home, to the shared clearing of the world, to be with “them” again. What one discovers and takes home with him is the product of his own unique perspective, his own unique understanding. The highest form of this understanding is the truth. But, truth is insignificant if kept all to one’s self. Though we trek out and rob the world of some discovery, alone, for ourselves, the value of this discovery is for everyone. “When we do that, we may be said to “want to have a conscience” in the sense of being prepared to supply, out of one’s own resources, what is not in any case forthcoming from any other source.”²⁷⁶

Resoluteness is this openness to discovery, which is embodied in the mode of “wanting to have a conscience.” Resolute, Dasein is “brought to the existence of his situation.”²⁷⁷ Resolute, Dasein is open to the realization of the situation as it presents itself, and not merely how it is given:

But this means that it simply cannot become *rigid* about the situation, but must understand that the resolution must be kept *free* and *open* for the actual factual possibility in accordance with its own meaning as disclosure.²⁷⁸

This is what Heidegger means by “Dasein must... master its moods” in order to reach its highest potential. Resolute, Da-sein is “all the more authentically “there” for the disclosed situation in the “Moment.”²⁷⁹ Dasein’s purpose is discovery, being the being whereby and wherein things come to matter. “The Moment brings existence to the situation and discloses the authentic “There.”²⁸⁰²⁸¹

As *mitdasein* is a foundational aspect of being, the authentic “There” is being with and for other persons as an essential aspect of one’s own situation. Even if these others will outlive one’s self, will live remotely from one’s self, and even if these others have not yet been born at all, they already share the authentic “There.” It is authentic as it is one’s own, taken for one’s own, felt as if one’s own, and not simply accepted as the product of an anonymous other’s understanding. It is authentic because one takes the shared situation as true, as the real situation. It is to this situation that conscience calls one’s self.²⁸² Conscience calls one’s self out of closure, dogma, and routine adherence to the established patterns of the average understanding. Moreover, this is not a one-time thing. Wanting to have a conscience is a way of life:

The holding-for-true that belongs to resoluteness tends, in accordance with its meaning, toward *constantly* keeping itself free, that is, to keep itself free for the *whole* potentiality of being Dasein.²⁸³

The mood which qualifies this constantly keeping one’s self free for discovery is “anticipatory resoluteness.” It is resolve in the face of the future. This mood marks the

preparedness to seize on the opportunities present in each approaching moment, opportunities understood in terms of self and others, opportunities to discover the truth of the situation, and not merely to reinforce some existing dogma. Anticipatory resoluteness means having the courage to confess that, in the face of the changing world, he knows nothing, at all. This is a life of active discovery, revising one's understanding, remaining open to the truth, every moment of every day, for one's self and everyone:

Anticipatory resoluteness discloses the actual situation of the there in such a way that existence circumspectly takes care of the factual things at hand in the surrounding world in action. Resolute being together with what is at hand in the situation, that is, letting what presences in the surrounding world be encountered in action, is possible only in a making that being present. Only as the present, in the sense of making present, can resoluteness be what it is, namely, the undistorted letting what it grasps in action be encountered.²⁸⁴

In resoluteness, one is open to come to terms with the situation, not as he wants it, or as he thought it to be, but as it is.²⁸⁵ This is how one comes to understand one's situation. In fact, it is only through resoluteness that the situation is understood at all. "Situation is the there disclosed in resoluteness... situation *is* only through and in resoluteness."²⁸⁶ If not coming to terms with the world, Dasein is "closed off" from it.²⁸⁷ Where the latter rigidly maintains some prior understanding rather than make room for the things of the world as they present themselves in every new light, the former is open to new determinations, to further discovery, to the truth.

Let's review. We can understand being in the world as a clearing. It is a clearing in a number of ways. In one very important way, being in the world is clearing the way

of obstacles which lie between one's self and one's object. The most important obstacles arise from the future, because the most important object in one's life is one's own future self, up ahead. If we stick with what everyone else is doing, and remain in the common clearing of the average understanding, then we don't need to worry about these things. We will simply become like "them."

The call of conscience is the voice of angst. Angst individuates one's self and provides the opportunity to act, and to become one's self, according to one's own unique understanding. This is one's highest potential. Conscience calls one's self toward this highest potential. Angst also confronts one with his only guaranteed possibility, a possibility which cannot be avoided: the certainty that is death.²⁸⁸

Being open to angst, and to the further possibilities that authentic understanding brings, is called resolve. Through the openness that is resolve, new things arise with previously unthought significance. These things are significant in terms of the authentic situation. The authentic situation is shared. The discovery of this situation is man's highest calling. Conscience calls a person to make this discovery. Wanting to have a conscience, wanting to discover in this mode, is anticipatory resoluteness. In answering the call of conscience, a man answers not only to his own highest potential, but to that of humankind, altogether.

With that in mind, one might ask: to what end, exactly? What is a self-discovering project of self-discovery, in love with others, in terms of others, alive with others and dying for others, what is Dasein to do with this life?

Thus, Dasein must explicitly and essentially appropriate what has also already been discovered, defend it against illusion and distortion, and

ensure itself of its discoveredness again and again. All new discovery takes place not on the basis of complete concealment, but takes its point of departure from discoveredness in the mode of illusion. Beings look like ... that is, they were already discovered, and yet they are still distorted.²⁸⁹

We have encountered this answer, already; one must live authentically. One must take the given, "illusory," understanding, test it against his own unique experience, from his own unique perspective, transform it, and return it to the understanding from which it is derived. Heidegger tells us that our highest potential is to understand, to discover, and to make sure that others understand, and have opportunities to do the same. What more can we do, what other freedom do we have, than to hold out for the truth? We can make sure others can do so, as well.

Heidegger, hereby, shows us that the conscientious person is a powerful force in culture. Open to the turmoil surrounding the seeming quiet of conventional life, the conscientious person plays a crucial role in maintaining the viability of this conventional order. He reaches past the fringes of this order, into the seeming chaos of the world outside the given understanding, and he orders it, comes to terms with it. He does all this on his own, and then returns to the shared clearing of being in order to express this newly discovered order so that others are aware that these are the true terms of their situation. Ironically, however, confronted with the truth, others often respond, not gratefully, but violently, spitefully, out of fear, *Angst*, out of cowardice to take responsibility for their own lives, like an angry drunk awakened to see what he has done in his stupor.

Tragically, the conscientious person is often ignored, dismissed, lampooned, or worse: targeted, persecuted, executed. There can be no doubt: one's life is made more difficult for caring. But, doing the right thing at the right time has little to do with what appears to be the right thing at the right time for one's self, alone. Living to do the right thing is living for the sake of the only thing worth dying for, the best possible situation, universally. And, though one may not live to see it, himself, and, though others may not appreciate his sacrifice at the moment, doing the right thing means doing so for those others with whom one shares the world, for whom one essentially cares. What else is a good person to do?

There is only so much time for discovery. One can only open to the world so long as he is alive. Heidegger reminds us of our mortality. Heidegger reminds us of the urgency with which life is lived, and points to the relevance of things to which one's livelihood is attached. He reminds us why we run from the truth. Life is not primarily an exercise of rationality. Life is an exercise of bone and blood, birth and rebirth. One's mortal body is the locus of all of his experience, and death often the source of his greatest concern. Life is not simply an exercise of some higher over some lower aspect thereof, or vice versa. Life is an ongoing discourse between one's self and his world. The trick is to reach out for the right ends, and to do so in a timely manner. The potential to get this work done in the space of one's own life is the focus of the following sections.

10 Conscience, and the fact of matter.

Then what is the meaning of that which is written: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

-- Jesus of Nazareth²⁹⁰

I know the pieces fit, because I watched them tumble down.

-- Toof²⁹¹

Life is a local countercurrent to entropy.

-- Holmes Rolston²⁹²

There is an essential difference between persons and non-living things like rocks and bar stools. The difference has to do with the types of changes they undergo.

Consider the distinction as laid out by Edward Ballard:

The contrast between the kind of change which objects undergo and the more radical change to which a self is subject is often expressed by noting that human self-change consists in acts which are self-determined, whereas the changes undergone by objects are determined by something external to them.²⁹³

Ballard is claiming that the subject can change himself, while things like rocks cannot. A person is something more than a rock in this way. Ballard is pointing out that persons are objects of change, as well as subjects of change. Persons are able to experience change, as well as to change themselves through "acts which are self-determined." In the pages to follow, I will try to clarify how freedom to change through self-determination is possible. Next section, I will focus on which sorts of acts, within our power to determine, are most effective for self-determined self-change.

As one begins life, and aims for the person he wants to be, his body is there at every step along the way.²⁹⁴ There appear to be two different types of change we may

undergo, however. In one case, it is that of a subject opening to change through a basketball game, for example. In the other, it is that of an object getting crushed by a bus. The body is there before and after the basketball game, so also before and after the bus crushes it. The difference between the two is that the subject opened himself to the former, and was merely overcome by the latter.

We have seen how conscience works at opening the spaces between one's self and the ends of actions in earlier chapters. We can see how conscience works at presenting the situation post basketball game, and how it motivates a man to seek this end for fitness and health. In the case of getting hit by a bus, the victim's conscience did not do that work. He may have been motivated to move toward the basketball court for health, or even to a hot dog stand for another reason. He stepped from a curb and found himself in no situation at all, dead. This was not the situation in which he thought he would find himself, at all.

Conscience has to do with self-change in two ways. In one, wanting to have a conscience means being open to the situation for what the situation is. In being open, things arise which had otherwise not appeared to be significant. For example, this is what happens when a person is open to reading a challenging monograph on the nature of moral obligation, and is able to look around, thereafter, exclaiming "that book changed my world!" In such cases, conscience calls one to come to terms with the world as presented, and not to close off from it into one's own prior understanding. Thus, a person is changed.

In the second case, conscience discloses definite possibilities in light of one's highest potentials. In disclosure, conscience presents the space of future situations in the world. We have seen that discovery, coming to terms with the world in understanding, is man's highest potential. Conscience calls on one to become himself, to become the best he can be, through the exercise of his own unique understanding. Conscience calls one's self to his own unique future situation. Being open to the world is being open to one's own future self. Moving toward that sense of one's self, thus, a person is changed.

As we proceed, we shall examine how one may exercise conscience to fulfill this promise. In order to "explicitly and essentially appropriate what has also already been discovered, defend it against illusion and distortion, and ensure itself of its discoveredness again and again,"²⁹⁵ one must understand himself and others. One must come to share this understanding. And, this, in turn, depends on one coming to understand of the objects of the shared situation.

In a recent article, William McKenna offers an analysis of inter-cultural objectivity as a tool toward achieving this end. His discussion begins with the notion that members of diverse cultures have an accordingly diverse understanding of the world and of their places in it. He notes that when such a culturally given an understanding is naively appropriated, the differences between other cultural views can lead to "bias" against those different views and against the members of those cultures who hold those views. In order to overcome such bias, McKenna offers a method, "situated objectivity," which

“requires the participation in different cultures in order to be achieved.”²⁹⁶ Let’s see what this adds up to.

“People in different cultures have different ways of understanding and experiencing the world that are due to cultural differences.”²⁹⁷ According to McKenna’s analyses, this is because the experience of members of different cultures is “partial.” “Partial” is a loaded term. It means both being a part of a whole, and being actively biased. “Partial,” in other words, can be employed both as adjective, and as adverb. In terms of everyday culture, partial as adjective and adverb implies both that one has experience of baseball and apple pie, rather than other things, like cricket and baklava, *and* that one favors those aspects of the world revealed by their experience, over other things. Thus, we might say that persons raised in the 20th century United States are “partial” to baseball and apple pie, both in the sense of adjective and adverb. Or, in Heideggerian terms, one’s “clearing of being” may be only partially discovered, but a person tends to like what *has* been discovered, anyways.

There is nothing unusual in this result. Every subject begins in the clearing of his culture. He begins life hopeful about a future understood in terms of his relations with those nearby, the objects of his environment and with those he loves and who care for him. He naturally wants to become successful in the terms set by his parochial way of life, to find esteem in the eyes of others most like himself. He does what his partial understanding dictates to be the right thing to do and the right time to do it, and he is partial to these ends and actions over possible others. This is how partial as an adjective leads to partial as an adverb, and why what one knows becomes what one

does. Echoing Socrates from earlier sections, persons do what they think is best, but are all too often underinformed. Partiality, thus constituted, is not simple bigotry; it is what one thinks he needs to know and to do to succeed.²⁹⁸ McKenna calls this attitude “naïve.” McKenna reminds us that, naively, members of cultures take what they know and do, not as merely *one* way of doing things, but as *the* way of doing things. McKenna calls these originally given, uncritically accepted ways of being in the world “cultural natural attitudes.”²⁹⁹ One’s culture prescribes what is the right thing to do and the right times to do it. This is the starting point from which all members of all cultures begin their subjective lives. Raised in terms of a given culture, and measuring personal success according to its practices, a person *naturally* comes to value his partial understanding as *the right* understanding of the world. There is nothing necessarily wrong about that! However, this process does often lead to problems. The implication in taking one’s own understanding as the right one is that any other understanding of the world is simply not right, and this makes relationships with³⁰⁰

When a member of one culture comes into contact with another culture the strength of his cultural natural attitude leads him to experience the other culture not simply as different or strange, but as wrong ...³⁰¹

It is toward reconciling the bias between limiting perspectives, by which see each other not merely as “different,” but as “wrong,” that McKenna develops his method of “situated objectivity:.”

However, McKenna is not the first to suggest this method, bridging biased positions through philosophy.³⁰² Writing in 1919, for the veteran French of the First World War, on the conflicts between men, Emile Boutroux proposed an approach

strikingly similar to that which we will find McKenna developing, here. Boutroux noted that the reconciliation of contrary perspectives is “insoluble so long as each of the two parties nourishes a secret scorn for the other,” and that the “problem ... becomes simplified if every man is able to find the substratum of truth in the beliefs he does not share.”³⁰³ This substratum of beliefs is that clearing of being which one already shares with others. It is this common clearing that grounds the contrary positions that now require reconciliation, in the first place. How, exactly, is this substratum to be discovered?

In McKenna’s terms, bias, taking another’s way of life to be “wrong,” is tantamount to “scorn.” With these terms in mind, let me restate the problem captured in Boutroux’s formula. If the naïve natural attitude is the attitude through which every party to conflict approaches difference, then there is no hope for the peaceful reconciliation between these ostensibly contrary ways of life. Scorn does not breed peaceful coexistence. Scorn, as Boutroux understands, leads to war. To demonstrate that there are objective – read non-biased - means by way of which such natural differences can be overcome is McKenna’s ultimate purpose.

McKenna’s effort stands as a clear advance on Boutroux’s in this following regard. Where Boutroux asserts that “... all real and lasting peace is impossible, unless, amid all differences in principle and point of view, human beings have mutual understanding and esteem,”³⁰⁴ McKenna details the steps of the method to overcoming the partiality and bias that make peace impossible.³⁰⁵ Again, however, McKenna is not the first to suggest this method. This is a traditional, phenomenological method.

Reconciling seemingly contrary perspectives is a basic problem in phenomenology. To reconcile differences requires that a single person take on two perspectives at once. Though, typically, the problem for the phenomenologist is not a moral problem, but an ontological one, bridging the gap between appearance and reality. In either case, the method is the same. And, one is led to ask: where does this *other* perspective come from? No matter the phenomenon under my purview, the view is from *where* if not from *here*? How can anyone take up another perspective than the one he has come to? What avenue of access is there to such a state? Do we just make it up? J.N. Mohanty writes: "Accordingly, a phenomenological philosopher has to face a paradox, a paradox that is involved in his very method."³⁰⁶

The phenomenologist has to take up one attitude, the natural attitude, only to transcend it, "to suspend belief" in order to "describe" the difference. The goal for the phenomenologist is to see things from an objective stance in order to deliver a science of phenomenon, a science of subjectivity, a science of shadows, so to speak. The goal is to take an objective perspective on a situation fundamentally subjectively understood. But, how? For Mohanty, the answer is simple:

This paradox cannot be resolved, and has to be accepted: this simultaneous participation and transcendence – which in fact provides the key to phenomenological philosophy. The philosopher therefore need not accept the beliefs of unreflective attitude just as he need not also reject them. Achieving the needed transcendence, his job is to tell the tale.³⁰⁷

Mohanty sets out the role for the phenomenologist. His job is to get an outside perspective as-if from the inside, and to report on the situation. He must put himself in any given situation, and report objectively on it. He need not endorse any given

situation in order to put himself in it, but he must communicate the news of what it is to be in such a situation to those who are not so situated. His job is to objectively tell the tale that is what it is like to be subject to that situation. This is the phenomenological science of subjectivity, and this is its method.

The encompassing idea, here, is that, because of the objectivity of the report, one phenomenological tale hooks up with all the others. In fact, we can state this even more strongly: the idea is that it is only phenomenology which can bind contrary stories together in the first place. All situations have objects in common. All objects have *the fact of* their appearances in common. The trick is in showing that there is no contradiction in seemingly contrary appearances.³⁰⁸

So, it is 'back to the presences themselves' in order to discover the basis for reconciling conflicts between non-reflective attitudes. The job is to make this journey, again and again, and in every situation to "tell the tale." McKenna develops this fundamental task of phenomenological philosophy into a method which anyone, philosopher or not, can engage.

This is important because, though everyone is partial, most persons are not phenomenological philosophers. McKenna, in redeploying the phenomenological method to address everyday moral problems, must convincingly communicate what is required of the method in everyday terms to everyday people. But, here is the problem. Because one's partial understanding may appear to work well enough in an everyday way, in the cradle of his own culture, from this naïve starting point, it may seem that there is nothing more one needs to know about the world, at all:

The problem can be that the bias motivates you to take what is in fact a partial knowledge as the whole knowledge (we can think here of the fable of several blind people having experience with different parts of an elephant and each claiming that the elephant is entirely what their experience gives them of it. One, who holds the tail, says that an elephant [is] like a snake, and others say similar things on the basis of other parts of the elephant that they experience.)³⁰⁹

Thus, in an everyday way, McKenna makes obvious the limit that personal experience imposes on what one takes to be the objective world.

Note that the focus here is not on culture. McKenna is not calling into question the value of one set of attitudes or another. He is calling into question the universal limit that personal experience imposes on how one comes to see the world as a whole. It is personal experience which hardens partiality into bias, whether this is reinforced in cultural terms, or in terms of some other personal experience. The power of experience in shaping bias is most evident when one's personal experiences are extreme in one dimension, and irreconcilable with experiences in other dimensions. And, this has little to do with one's culturally given attitudes, *per se*.

Extreme experiences have a polarizing effect on a person. It need not be an entire culture of prejudice which leads persons to bias on the basis of partial experience. Personal experience alone can bring one's self to a similar rigidity. Though cultural attitudes are reinforced because others in the culture subscribe to them, as well, one's own experience reinforces, and even amplifies, certain attitudes when this experience is especially significant. Consider the following illustration from another author, Lewis Feuer, in 1959:

For instance, let us suppose that a man has lived through some years of

concentration camp experience, or relentless political strife, or the embitterment of racial discrimination. He may then, like Freud, tend to regard the world's history as the resultant of a dualistic conflict between love and hatred... His experience and its standpoint were not the outcome of childhood anxieties or fixations. They came to him in the fullness of his powers and observations. His world is one which he cannot negate as fantasy. It is obstinate and unyielding to analyses.³¹⁰

It resists analyses because this world is the realized product of his personal experience. What else does he know?

Partiality is simply that part of the world one has come to understand. This understanding may be of a world drastically different than that in which one grows up. It is not a fantasy world. It is the world to which one has come to terms, the world in which one has come to live. And, the fact of its appearance has been hardened by personal experience. It appears to be a world torn in strife, and one's experience is that he is caught in the middle, perhaps forced to choose a side.

Everyone has a partial understanding, but Feuer is pointing to the force of extreme experience in forming the attitude that one's own understanding of the world is not only right, but complete. His experience allows him to account for both sides of perpetual conflict, already. There is little hope in coming to terms with another in this frame of mind. This attitude excludes the possibility of any "substratum of truth" besides the fact of ongoing crisis and polarity. This attitude is one which resists change, because it scorns its opposite.

Moreover, polarized by personal experience, where there is no such opposite to be found in the world, this attitude will make one up. For instance, in every situation, whether or not there is good or evil present, the concentrationary understanding will

look for it, and find it, and will not rest until he does. It is the bipolarity of one's experience which "puts" good and evil into the situation, first off. Here is a perfect example of the active bias of partial understanding. This is life as a witch hunt. This is the bias of limited personal experience taken to be determinative of the objective world, as if there is only one righteous view on it. This is the bigot: the man who takes himself to be the measure of all things.³¹¹

This polarized person did not have to be raised in a polarized situation, his whole life. He simply had to come to terms with one, and this attunement can have a lasting effect. Although being raised in a concentrationary situation leads to an equally polarized naïve cultural attitude, Feuer points to the fact that bigotry can arise through polarizing experiences, later on. Thus, this attitude is anything but naïve. It is learned. The fruit of this education is that there is no space for the reconciliation of the poles put forth in experience. Good and evil, love and hate, these opposites are taken to be basic constituents of the objective world. This attitude presents a special challenge for the phenomenologist interested in overcoming bias. It is a certain sort of learned ignorance. If it can be learned, however, perhaps it can be unlearned. Let's find out how we may go about doing this.

Let's begin by imagining what it is like to come to terms with a "concentrationary" culture. A concentrationary culture is one in which all things are polarized. In a concentrationary universe, there is "us" and "them," "good" and "evil," "free" and "enslaved," "on" and "off." The leaders of a concentrationary world say things like "You're either with us or against us," and "Death to America." Each different party of the

world is essentially an obstacle to each other party's aims. Each party thinks he is right, and the other wrong. Naively taking one's given way of life as *the right* way of life is to take one's given way as objectively basic, and all others as objectively adulterations thereof. This is to take one's own way of life as "true." "Our life world is the "objective world"; theirs is some subjective interpretation of it."³¹² Theirs, in other words, is "false."

This attitude takes the world from its partial perspective to be the objective standard. In the concentrationary universe, this leads directly to bias and scorn. Because one's way is *the right way*, others must be just that: others, and mistaken others at that. This is the attitude of an enforcer of rigid laws, for example, in whose bullying paternal wisdom others are seen to be better off objectively dead than subjectively wrong.³¹³ McKenna's method in overcoming this bias, as noted before, is "situated objectivity:." Situated objectivity is a method of overcoming subjective bias by *requiring* the "participation" in "different perspectives in order to be achieved."³¹⁴ It discloses to an individual the partiality of his own perspective by revealing otherwise hidden aspects of the world around him. One's partiality is revealed as he discovers another way to engage the world. This disclosure takes place on the basis of a common participation with objects. That is, he sees the world from another's perspective by actually living in the world, engaging with the objects of the world, as if he were that other person.

Consider the following brief example. Imagine that you are in a passenger plane and it crashes. You find your self on an island with natives whose practices are a mystery in every way. The flora and fauna are seemingly alien. You are getting hungry,

and thirsty, and tired. In order to begin to understand how to live in such a strange world, you follow the natives around and reproduce their actions. In this way, you reproduce the engagements with the objects of the strange land, and come to understand their significance. In a short while, you will have begun to understand the native situation by participating with the objects in common. And, you may live to tell the tale.

By participation, McKenna does not mean the participant observation of the “tourist.” In the case of the tourist, the foreign point of view is merely held to be “interesting” in terms of one’s pre-existing standard.³¹⁵ In this case, one may see how the other does what he does, but he will not understand the significance of these acts in terms of the other’s life. It is merely observation from the outside, without a subjective understanding of what it is to be engaged with the objective world in that way. The significance of the engagement is merely curious.

Instead, what McKenna has in mind by “situated” is that one must take up the situation of the other for one’s self, and not merely look on in curiosity. This means that one must engage with the objects of the other’s world in a way that reveals the significance which the other attaches to these objects.³¹⁶ By way of this openness, and informed through discourse with the others living as such, one’s own experience is compared with theirs. In this way, one can check with the other to see that one is indeed seeing things from the other’s point of view. Thereby, otherwise hidden aspects of the world are revealed, and one may transcend his own prior limitations.

Whatever you are experiencing in common is experienced differently by both, and *is* different in the ways experienced... These objects have two

“sides,” and, up to the point of the encounter with the other, you were unaware of the other side. To learn about it through dialogue with the other can never give you the first person experience of it that is primary evidence, but it can help and clarify your own experience of that alien something that resided within the negativity and disturbance.³¹⁷

What “situated objectivity:” amounts to is putting one’s self in the other’s position, and then engaging with the objects of the world as-if one were that other. The experience of this engagement leads to an understanding of the other’s situation in terms of the objects that determine that other’s situation. In opening to the other’s perspective, one is then able to come to terms with this other situation as if it were one’s own. In this way, what one’s self might otherwise miss is revealed in what the other sees in the objects of the world. This is more than just a field trip of the mind. This is not the mode of the tourist. It is a mode of discovery. This practice reveals the other’s situation directly. It is no longer a question of “what would it be like to live in China?” It is now a matter of “so, this is what it’s like to live in China.”

The aspect of this method I wish to stress is the role of the objects of the world in providing the grounds for the enriched understanding. It is as if there are two sides to every object with which one engages. These objects reveal two sides to one’s situation; one that he knows, and another that he does not. One comes to see the world as-if the other through the medium of these objects. This is possible because both parties are situated in terms of the same objective world, fundamentally, and share a potentially to be situated in terms of the same objects in the same ways within this shared objective world. Thus, McKenna calls his method “situated objectivity.”

The object allows one to move from a perspective “outside” to a perspective “inside” the other’s situation. One goes “inside” and discovers the significance of the object which corresponds with the other’s way of life. In this way, through engagements with individual objects, one can come to terms with the other’s situation as a whole. He also comes to terms with the difference between his own situation and that of the other. It is this insight which is most valuable.

In opening one’s self to the world through the eyes of another, one learns something about one’s self. The object mediates an “objective” view of one’s self, a view of one’s self from the “outside,” from “inside” the situation of another. The understanding that such an exercise generates clearly works toward overcoming bias by permitting discovery of the substratum of truth underlying differences. This substratum is found in common engagements with the objective world, subjective engagements through which the substratum that is the objective world is revealed. With this in mind, McKenna’s “situated objectivity:” can be equally labeled “situated subjectivity.”

McKenna’s method works because human beings are essentially (objectively) the same, so that sharing a situation is effectively being (subjectively) as-if another human being. What is explicitly shared between parties to McKenna’s method is the situation relative to some object. Implicitly, McKenna’s view requires that each individual have a similar capacity to engage with objects, before they can ever come to see this or that engagement as the right thing to do and the right time to do it. The goal in all of this is that the subject experiences his new engagement with objects to be the

right one, as another right way of doing things, and not simply as a different one, or merely as a strange one. The real value in the experience is that the subject comes to understand that his old way of doing things is not necessarily *the* right way of doing this, at all.

But, there is one further requirement hidden in McKenna's method. What McKenna has shown us is a method for reconciling differences between persons of different, often conflicting, naïve perspectives. Different persons come to understand different objects differently, like rocks. One person may say that a rock is an obstacle, and another that the same rock is an aim. These are contradictions. McKenna's method allows for the reconciliation of these contradictory determinations through the mediation of the very object whose qualification is in dispute. What had appeared to be a contradiction is revealed to be merely a biased result of one's own partiality.³¹⁸ Through the sameness of the rock, what had appeared contradictory, is now two sides of the same stone.

However, the fact that the rock had been evaluated in such contradictory terms reveals differences of purpose within that shared objective world. There are very practical reasons why one man sees an obstacle, and another an aim, in the same rock. To overcome these differences of purpose, both parties to the situation must adopt a purpose in common. They must make it their purpose to come to a common understanding. And, this, of course, may be the most difficult problem of all.

Which brings us to a further question. We have seen how situated objectivity is a method for understanding differences between two ways of being in the world when

these are exhibited by different persons relative to common objects. But, will this method work in reconciling conflicted naïve perspectives within the same person? Can this method do the same work when the differences are within the span of a self-same individual's life, the contrary terms within the same life story?

Persons come to terms with another situation through the mediation of objects. What changes in this process is not the object, however; it is the subject. The capacity to invite change through openness is one way in which persons differ from rocks. Stones do not fall in love or take new jobs in Korea, for example, in either case opening to dramatic changes. A rock is merely the object of change; it may be sent to Korea, or be given to someone in love, but it does not choose to do so.

Rocks do not change purposefully. They do not seek some end, let alone open to one. With enough pressure, some people will crack, and some will rise to the occasion, and some will do both. With enough pressure, all carbon becomes diamond. In the right situation, some men change purposefully. They may harden on purpose. In order to be a good fullback, with leisure and opportunity, a man will train himself to be a good fullback. He will instill habits and routines that result in a stronger, faster, more aggressive body. On the other hand, a rock never does sit-ups to be a better engagement ring. Let's rejoin Ed Ballard on this subject:

The same kind of regularity [exhibited by objects] does not determine the changes of the self, for the self who intends and experiences, can engage in radical change so that, upon occasion, the continuity of personal identity becomes problematic. (How complete was the change from Saul to Paul?)³¹⁹

Now, that is a question worthy of immediate review! How complete was the change from Saul and Paul? Let us first review the story of Saul's conversion. Saul was a tent maker and a thug employed by the Jewish authorities to round up or murder Jews who were converting to the nascent Christian movement. He was on his way to Damascus "So that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem."³²⁰

Here, Saul was affected. The Bible reports that he was blinded by a flash and was confronted by the voice of Christ. The voice asked "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" His companions reported experiencing a "sound," but none were struck blind. It is through this incident, confronted by his victims through a religious experience, that Saul converted. Thereafter in Damascus, instead of arresting converts, he "preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus."³²¹ Just prior to his departure, however, he had been a major proponent in the death of a Christian sympathizer named Stephen. This is a radical change. But, was it self-determined self-change? Or, was Saul merely the victim of external forces, like a rock under pressure?

Recent information suggests that the latter account is closest to the mark. Saul may have been different than the others with whom he traveled. The best evidence for this is that his companions were also affected, just not so much. By this view, Saul didn't change so much as demonstrate a sensitivity which others did not share. Saul may have been acutely sensitive to the effects of magnetic fields, which are known to induce symptoms similar to those Saul reported. Saul was likely affected by a magnetic wave which propagated along the fault-line of a distant earthquake. He embodied this

sensitivity long before he was caught on his road to Damascus.³²² Thus, his change is not an example of freedom through self-determination. He did not choose to change. He was merely an object of change. Let me explain.

Religious experience is something that we human beings share. Commenting on the ubiquity of the experience, William James wrote that "Religion ... shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."³²³

Neuroscientists have before and since worked towards understanding the universal physiological grounds for human religious experience, the ostensible basis for beliefs in a god(s).³²⁴ Recently, researchers have made breakthroughs in discovering physiological processes common to religious experience. The physiology underlying the religious experience has a lot in common with one's sense of place in the world, wherein the personal identification with the totality of world, or a sensed presence of god(s), is just one extreme.³²⁵

One team of Canadian researchers championed by the now deceased Eugene D'Aguii has provided a universal interpretation of research data on this affect. On their account, what they call "Absolute Unitary Being," a "sudden, vivid consciousness of everything as an undifferentiated whole" is predictably and reliably reached through prepared mental exercise, such as meditation and prayer.³²⁶ The data includes brain imaging corroborated with self-reports from seasoned religious devotees including both Buddhist monks and Christian nuns. These self-reports cite the undifferentiated blissful one-ness with god(s) and world, experiences which the subjects have in common.³²⁷

The research reveals that the experience is not all that they share, however; the brain images of the subjects have a lot in common, too. The activation patterns of the subjects who reach this state are similar, and these patterns can be reproduced in laboratory.

As it turns out, some persons appear to be physiologically predisposed to religious experiences, while others do not. The activation patterns characteristic of religious experience can be more reliably induced through the controlled application of powerful magnetic fields in these people than in other people.³²⁸ These activation patterns are likewise correlated with induced reports of religious experience. Thus, persons who are physiologically predisposed to religious experiences are prone to have religious experiences induced via magnetic fields in the laboratory. Others, less so.

Saul appears to have been one of these people, physiologically prone to religious experience. How can we know this? Well, we cannot know for certain. However, this possibility explains the reports of his experiences better than that explanation which has been traditionally accepted on faith. Primarily, there is a certain personality which is consistently sensitive to the magnetic induction of religious experience. Saul was, by all accounts, that certain sort of person. Though there is no brain imaging data on Saul's experiences, directly, this information indirectly confirms the scientific explanation. Consider the following testimony from V.S. Ramachandran:

...generally there is a pattern a tendency towards being a little bit egocentric, feeling of self-importance, a feeling of righteousness, righteous indignation, they're often argumentative, often completely convinced that they're absolutely right, there's this tremendous strength of conviction,... and I wouldn't at all be surprised if this was true of St. Paul.³²⁹

Let's look now at the accounts of Saul after his religious experience. After his experience, his closed mindedness to those he had persecuted ended. He stopped excluding people through the biases of old laws, and adopted instead an openness to others in terms of new ones. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."³³⁰

Though apparently open to others, Saul remained strong-willed. He simply leveled his "tremendous strength of conviction" in new ways. He became a righteous champion for Christian tolerance instead of an equally rigid champion for intolerance of Christians. This change is best evidenced in his relationship with the objects which determined his world both before and after his experience: the old Jewish laws, themselves.

Saul suffered what appears to be an inversion. Instead of being closed off from a world of others different from himself, he took an opposite stance. This change in perspective is most obvious in regard to the old Jewish laws. These laws represented the rigid determinations of the objective world for Saul before his experience. He lived by the terms of these laws as-if they were the way the world was. He took them for true, and imposed them terms on others, forcing them to live by the same terms, in the same world by the same determinations, or suffer. These others were not simply different by Saul's rigid standards; they were wrong, and their views were false.

Where before Saul enforced these laws, after his experience, he denied them. "Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."³³¹ His relationship with these objects flipped; his orientation in the objective world determined

by these laws was inverted. In the space of Saul's life, thus, he embodied two perspectives which were mutually exclusive, each corresponding with opposing determinations of the objective world. Where once he lived as-if in one objective world, he then lived as-if in another, the absolute denial of the prior. This appears to be an extremely radical change.

Saul did not change completely, however. In fact, he may not have changed much at all. He still understood himself as-if he had a lock on what the objective world "really was." What had changed was that *this* objective world was opposite to the one in which he began. One is a world of rigid law and retribution, one is a world of tolerance and love.³³²

So, how complete was the change from Saul to Paul? Saul's objective world was not the objective world for Paul. Saul was subjectively closed to the new situation, the new Way that was Christianity, while Paul was open. Saul did not change completely, however. Saul was intolerant of tolerance. Paul was intolerant of intolerance. Some things about Saul remained the same.³³³ Only his orientation in terms of the objective world appeared to change.

Consider Saul's relationship with himself. After his experience, Paul takes his old intolerant way of life as an object from which to close off, and to deny. That way was not the right way to live; it was wrong. He himself is the object in terms of which his opposing situations are mediated. He no longer does as his old way of life prescribed, but he does not understand them as another right way of doing things, at all. He

understands them as opposite, the other end of a polarized world, an end to which he is as closed as at one time he had been to Christ.

This attitude is revealed in the way that Saul, now known as Paul, identifies with other people. In the following passage, Paul identifies with a religious persecutor, and warns him that he will suffer a similar conversion if he continues in his closed-heartedness:

Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun."³³⁴

For Paul, the way of life represented by Elymas, and his prior self Saul, were not simply different ways of life, but were absolutely evil ways of life. Saul had not changed, so much as he had changed sides in an ongoing war between what he thought was right, and what he now thinks is right.

Our discussion on situated objectivity: does offer a method for understanding changes in one's self, even in the case of Saul. Saul took the other to be in terms of his own situation.³³⁵ He had been as this person appeared to be, but by his understanding of the situation, God had affected his conversion. Meanwhile, Saul's traveling companions and fellow animals were not so affected at all. The companions merely reported a "sound." The animals may not have suffered no affect. Neither did persons farther away from the earthquake event, so far as we know. Saul's change was unique,

and uniquely mediated by his own unique body. His body is both the object which mediated the difference between the two positions, and the subject of radical change.

Saul's relationship with the defining objects of his world changed, but everything else stayed pretty much the same. For instance, though the Jewish authorities in Damascus went from waiting for his help to wanting to have him killed, they did not change. Only their relationship to Saul changed. They were always intolerant bullies. Now, they were merely intolerant of Saul's tolerance.

What changed for the bullying Jewish overseers was that Saul, all of a sudden, exemplified the power of conversion to the new Way of Christianity. This was the ultimate objective significance of his subjective experience. He who was once also a violent authoritarian was all of a sudden preaching tolerance and forgiveness with equal authority. This was the same subject with radically different objects. Herein the same subject are two very different gods, two very different objective worlds, two contrary positions, two contradictory sets of law, two sides to the same rock. And, perhaps more than anything the reason that the Jewish authorities wanted Saul dead, was that he was living evidence that they could change, too. Like any other rock, however, we see only one side at a time. With this information, we can ask Ballard's question again. How complete really was the change from Saul to Paul?

If the science is correct, then Saul did not really change, at all. He was affected, a dormant potential was activated by a natural occurrence, but he remained Saul. Saul, if the science is right, was born with a certain sensitivity. What changed was Saul's relation with objects which triggered that sensitivity.³³⁶ Others were not forced to come

to terms with this difference. This makes Saul's situation in the space of history a critical one. He was a special chunk of carbon who, with the right pressures, both cracked and became a diamond. His example is still that valuable.

For others, the value of his experience came through in his expressions regarding objects they all held in common. His situation was different and this difference was revealed in an inversion of basic evaluations of worldly things. He suddenly took different ends to be the right ends at which to aim than he had before his experience. The most telling of these inversions is Saul's difference in regards to himself, and to others as intolerant as he had been. What he had understood to be objectively the right way of life before his experience, he took to be objectively wrong after his experience. This was a radical change.

That a rigid man should come to terms with a radically different objective world in the course of a few days appears to be evidence for the reality of the objective world as Paul came to see it. But, did Saul change himself on the basis of this evidence? Was it self-change? It may appear as-if he discovered the laws of god, and through his dramatic change in perspective, he merely pointed to them. Yet, this is already what he was doing, he merely began pointing to radically different laws of god. We can only see one side of a rock at once, but did this one turn itself over? No. It was flipped by a magnetic field. For our own purposes, in turning Saul over, we have discovered for ourselves this object's underbelly, but we haven't seen a rock present its under-belly on purpose. It's just a rock with a dark side.

In this section we have seen that it is possible to reconcile contrary positions through common engagements with the objective world. We have seen that this is possible both inter-subjectively, between one's self and others, and intra-subjectively, within one's own self. We have begun to see how the body plays the central role in mediating such difference by providing the grounds for the changes which one's self undergoes. It is apparent that one's self is capable of a great deal more variance of perspective than one typically utilizes. What is not yet apparent, however, is whether one can take advantage of this capacity purposefully, freely, and so change himself and his world through self-change and self-determination. What is the role, if any, of the body in grounding freedom through self-determination? Let me briefly lay out the issue.

One's body is the only constant in the whole course of one's life story. It is always changing. It is always one's own. It is always situated. Stories change, situations change, others come and go. If a situation changes radically, the body changes radically, and in this space a person changes radically, too. In situations different enough, one's very identity comes into question. Oedipus went from King to madman in an afternoon, for instance. The physical position of his body did not change, but his situation did, and his life was turned upside down. It was the relevance of objects in his world which changed, and these which determined the end of his life's story, his objective realization of himself. And, even with his eyes torn out, he could not deny the situation in which he discovered his true identity.

Oedipus, subject to the blind mechanisms of the objective world, subsequent object of self-change, appears to be two men at once. It is the difference between

these two points of view which drives him mad. His irony is that he lives, from the subjective versus the objective perspectives, two incommensurate life stories. His tragedy is that these are two positions which he could not reconcile. He simply cracked.

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In tragedy, however, there is hope. On the basis of the body, it is possible to live in terms of a completely different story to a completely different end, all while maintaining the continuity of a single life. This is where we will find room for a person's freedom through self-determination. One can change the stories in terms of which he lives his life, set out what counts as a happy ending to the story of one's life, thereby determining for one's self the meanings of all the things sought after or avoided along the way. But, rewriting the story of one's life even as one lives within it is not an easy task. There is no magic pill for freedom, no ghost writer of the truth. Freedom of self-determination is limited by understanding, and as we have seen gaining understanding is hard work, often stressful, and even risky.

Freedom is anything but free. It comes at the steepest of costs: life. Freedom of self-determination requires nothing less than the discovery of the meaning of life, the discovery of the meaning of one's own life for one's own self, and this discovery requires the dedication of a lifetime. Still, only with this understanding can one be free to determine for one's self not only the end of one's actions, but the end of one's life as a whole. Only with this understanding can one escape the trivial freedom that is the selection of one immediate option from an array of given others, into the freedom of a life worth living, the freedom that is the creation of one's options, near and distant, for

White - *Conscience, the mechanism of morality*

one's self. This is the capacity not to do what one wants, but to live a meaningful life, to live a life worth living, and this life is anything but free.

BOOK THREE

The highest wisdom is established, not on reason alone, not on those worldly sciences, physics, history, chemistry, and the like, on which intellectual knowledge stumbles. The highest wisdom is one. The highest wisdom has one science, the science of the All, the universal science which explains all creation, and the place which man occupies in it. In order to absorb this science, it is absolutely essential to purify and renovate the inner man, and, therefore, before one can know it one must believe and accomplish perfection. And to attain this end, our souls must be filled with that divine light which is called conscience.

L.N. Tolstoy³³⁸

11 Conscience, and freedom.

The man who is really free only desires what he can perform; he can then perform all that he desires.

– J.J. Rousseau³³⁹

Everything I did, I learned from my government.

– Timothy McVeigh³⁴⁰

If one is not content to wait on a magnetic machine to induce ‘Absolute Unitary Being,’ like the electric belts sold on television to take the place of sit-ups, he must exercise for himself. Likewise, if one is not content to wait on a geologic event for an objective determination of the right thing to do and the right person to become, he must figure it out for himself. In this chapter, we will see how to do that very thing.

Every person begins life subject to the world, and makes his life his highest worldly object. Every person begins life in subjective uncertainty, and moves through life in discovery through an understanding of his objective situation. Every person seeks the right situation at the right time, and lives life in preparation thereof. This is our universal condition. Some modes of being in the world prepare one’s self better to do the right thing at the right time than do other modes of being in the world. In these next sections, we will come to understand the limits of our powers to effect what we take to be the right thing to do and the right time to do it.

In life, one wishes to plot his course toward that person ahead he wishes to become. I held this possibility out as a special capacity of conscience many pages ago. We have since found advice on how to reach this goal. Socrates taught us about inner discourse and the good. Kant reminded us how important it is that our lives are esteemed by others alike. Diogenes starred in an illustration of conscience opening a

space of rest in a situation determined by need. Heidegger showed us that even in taking on everyday anxiety, we are coming to terms with the limits of our own mortal situation. McKenna helped us to see how we live together, even beginning as if in different worlds filled with the same things. And we have seen Saul, who through an inverted perspective became "Paul," and came to live in terms of another world, altogether. Through his change, Saul demonstrated a way of life whose object is that conversion even though he was not responsible for this change himself. He is still esteemed as a singular example of the Christian object in life, a rock converted to a mode of tolerance. In this section, the aim is to discover a mode of being which makes such conversion through self-determination possible.

Saul does not demonstrate that sort of self-change to which Ballard alluded in the last section. We see Saul both as an object of change, and subject of change, but this change is not self-initiated. He may as well have been run over by a bus. His example does show that our bodies make it possible to be situated in two seemingly contrary objective worlds. He also shows that the radical conversion from life in terms of one to life in terms of the other is possible. And, he shows that in living in terms of one rather than the other, one person can facilitate a similar conversion in others, thereby changing the world and the course of history. However, he does not show us how to do it on our own.

In the following chapters, as we come to terms with the world to which history has delivered us, an "inverted" world, we will find that we in fact face a similar challenge to that which faced Saul. If a just world, a world set right, is our object, then we must

change, ourselves, the world in which we live, now, and the history that follows from it. In deciding which changes to make, Saul's example will prove invaluable. He serves as an historical guide to what sorts of changes are necessary, even though he doesn't provide an historical example that we can follow after. The trick for us, now, lies in figuring out how it is that we have some freedom to set out for ourselves the terms of our own radical conversion. Self-initiated self change, self-determination, is our object. Freedom. And, we will find it in another object of the meaningful life, the life story. Our freedom lies in the determination of what makes for a happy ending to a meaningful life story. Once set out, we only need to move toward it, and everything changes.

All the discourse and drama as one seeks one's highest calling in life is often called "writing a life's story." To talk about writing a life's story presumes that one has some power over the determinations which constitute such a thing. Considering the terms which Saul had imposed on others prior to his conversion experience, if he had been asked to write his own story from that perspective, he would not have written the story he actually lived out in the end. On his way to Damascus, a happy ending may have included a number of dead Christians. Afterwards, a happy ending included countless Christian converts. These are radically different ends. Saul, however, does not demonstrate self-change through self-determination. He does not choose his ends. Saul does demonstrate a bodily capacity for radical change, radical change that is possible for others. However, his example doesn't show that he determined these changes for himself. He was not free to do so.

In the choice of ends towards which one strives in his life time, there is the possibility to write the story of one's own radical conversion. This is the freedom of self-determination. And, from this freedom is derived the power to affect the course of history. As one sets out and lives for some ends rather than others, one is free to embed one's life within larger narratives, stories, and myths, and even determine them along the way. One can be free to live for ends which he will never in his life time realize for himself. It is in terms of these larger stories and toward these distant ends that future persons will be born and live. Thus, in effecting the terms and ends of these larger stories, there lies the power to change the course of history.

The heroes of every epic story are heroes who live and die for the ends of a story bigger than themselves. These heroes exemplify the fact that one can do the right thing and yet not be the hero alive at the story's end, alive to personally enjoy the fruits of one's labor. Think of Martin Luther King, Jr., here. He is the hero, but he is not here with us. This does not mean that happy endings did not come by way of his efforts. It only means that a man is free to live for ends so that others may be happily situated within them, if not himself. One is free to live for another's happy ending, to take the other's happy ending for his own, and sacrifice himself to realize it. One can determine for one's self that this is the good toward which one will strive. This is a man's most radical freedom, and Martin Luther King exemplifies it. The happy ending toward which King strove is a just world. A "promised land."

In effect, in reaching out to this end, he gave up membership in the unjust world the birthed him. He lived as if a member of the world that he was after, instead. In so

doing, he exemplified a capacity to determine for one's self those ends in terms of which one lives his life. Freedom. Freedom to live as-if in another world, so doing what one *can* rather than what merely appears necessary, to *do what is right* rather than what is merely conventional. This power, to refuse membership in an unjust world in order to gain entry to a better one, has religious overtones. It is the power of *redemption*. Redemption can be deconstructed into re-demption. "Re-" means "again" or "back," as in "return" which means "go back" or "regain" which means "get back." "Deme" means group, neighborhood, or population. "Population" means "the people of a place." From these we have "demography," "picture of the people of a place" (not of other people in some other place) or "democracy," "rule by the people of a place" (not by other people in some other place). Redemption, thus, means "to return to the people of a place." It means to belong again, to regain a membership that was lost. It means going home.

Redemption can be granted posthumously. Even in death, one can be redeemed. One can die for the right things, even if he lived for the wrong ones. One's story, thus, may bring a happy ending for others to whose group he properly belongs. They may reach a just world, a promised land, even if he does not, himself. In opening one's self to this possibility, one can live as a citizen bound by the terms of a just world, a promised land ahead, rather than in terms of the conventions which mold others who inhabit the world as it is. One can live as if justice were his cultural, natural, even naive attitude, and make his way of life a demonstration in how to engage with common objects, justly. In this way, one can lead by example for others to seek the same ends.

They can read the story of one's life, so to speak, and live according to its terms. Then, everything changes.

No matter the terms by way of which one had lived his prior life, if one alters its course, one can be redeemed. And, this is exactly the sort of self-initiated self-change that we are after. Granted that the present world is not in fact a just world, to live as if were requires that one deviate radically from the daily routine. But, this conversion need not happen all at once, as was the case with Saul. In aspiring to meet the terms of the just situation, one must invite self-change which suits that end. But, one can change to meet these terms as they are revealed, one at a time. Slowly, as these changes take effect, one's course in life will change.³⁴¹ And, the world will change with him.

We will take a slow course, plotting the course of our own redemption through the following five chapters. First, in order to understand when this course is complete, one must have an end in sight. So, here, we will begin with the end toward which all persons aim. We will return to the notion of narrative, inquire into the construction of the meaningful life story, and gain an objective view on the aspiration of every living person: a happy ending.

Plotting one's course in life is the practical side of writing one's life's story. Writing a life story is "emplotting" one's self in terms of the objects of the world. "Emplotting" is a process of making the intelligible out of the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary from the episodic."³⁴² Writing a life's story is the difference between a meaningful life and a series of random disjunctions. If one does

not set out to plot the course of his life, there is no story, at all, only a series of updates. There may be a life lived, but without a narrator giving directions, expressing anticipations and even sitting in silent reflection. There may be a path of action, but no plot line, information without narrative. "The function of narrative is to artificially order discordant experience by emplotting it."³⁴³ The function of narrative is as the threads that run through the tapestry of fate. It holds the things together. It binds beginning middle and end, collects the extremes and makes them a single whole. It is, thus, only in the space of narrative that there is any sense in talking about happy endings, at all. Otherwise, there are no such things. No plot. No rhyme, no reason why. Life simply stops.

It is through narrative that individual experiences hang together. Unless they are arranged by way of some global structure like a strand of narrative in the world fabric, there is merely a series of causes and effects, either without any necessarily significant relationship with one another.³⁴⁴ The story of one's life is the thread through which otherwise paradoxical experiences come to be continuously spun out in one ongoing tale.

One's story begins by coming to terms with the objects of one's own situation. It is in terms of that place into which one is born and raised that objects come to have special significance.³⁴⁵ We saw last section how such natural attitudes inform one's sense of self, other, and right and wrong. Persons identify themselves in terms of their way of life, and emplot themselves accordingly. One's cultural attitudes prescribe what

is the right thing to do and the right time to do it. Emplotted accordingly, a life story is a telling series of the right things getting done at the right times, or not.

It is natural for persons to think of their lives in terms of stories. Here, I do not mean a mere iteration of some series of events. I mean myth, drama, comedy and tragedy. These are all products of culture. These stories begin with culturally significant objects and patterns, transforms them, makes them explicit, and reveals the hidden significances of relationships between one's self and his world. They are forces of culture, as well as objects of culture.

To be in a culture is to be enculturated. To be enculturated is to be emplotted in terms of one's native myths and stories. One is not born merely to a group of persons in a cleared area of land with a given geographical character. One is born into an ongoing narrative, the collective story of others all writing their stories, and writing their stories together in terms of a shared situation, itself determined by the great cultural stories, myths, and religions. To be enculturated is to have one's own story interwoven with others', interwoven with myths, with all of these together forming one broad-cloth spun out over generations.³⁴⁶

One is spun into this world story at its open end, and moves ahead from there. The ongoing narrative into which one is born is a fundamental factor in one's own life story, as "who one is and what one will do will be determined by the story one sees oneself a part of."³⁴⁷ Thus, it is natural for a man to find meaning in his life through the medium of the broader narrative through which his own life threads:

The fact that people have been willing to give their lives in the service of a larger story of possible human liberation, peace, growth, or flourishing

attests to the human drive for narrative meaning.³⁴⁸

In her text, *Internarrative Identity*, Ajit K. Mann argues that traditional views on what makes for a good life story carry implicit, and arbitrary, constraints on what one takes to be the right way to live. The presumptions of what makes for a good life story inhibit the freedoms one might otherwise have to do otherwise. One can hardly be free if he is bound by the very form of the very story he lives, even before he begins to live it.

Mann's problem with traditional narratives is structural. If one assumes a certain form of life story, one assumes a way of life which makes that form of story work. This goes for any narrative structure, so long as a certain structure is presumed to encourage the employment of all positively regarded, "pro-social," ways of life. Mann's primary concern is some very pro-social lives are undervalued by the presumptions of traditional narrative structures. These structures pressure against different ways of life, primarily by failing to value certain types of experience:

The basic principle of narrative identity theory is that personal identity is correlative to plot, that the only sense in which a self can be identified is in relation to the stories one sees oneself as a part of. The problem with this conception is that identity is not simply emplotted, it is emplotted in a very particular type of narrative structure – one that admits only a particular type of assimilated experiential material.³⁴⁹

According to Mann's analyses, the traditional narrative schema is selective for a certain type of life-story. It does so by discounting certain experiences, while trumpeting others. It determines what is virtue, and what is vice. This encourages certain modes of engagement with the world, and discourages others. How one thinks about stories imposes terms on how one thinks about his own life story. What this means is, how one

thinks about stories influences how one lives his life, and what one takes to be the right thing to do and the right time to do it. This leads to the biggest problem, how one thinks about stories imposes terms on what one takes to be the right life to live, and the right ends for which to live it.

Mann's concern is of the latter scope. The problem is that certain aims in life, happy endings, are selected *against* by way of traditional narrative standards. Specifically, the concern is that not just any ways of life, but ways of life which are *good*, are denied value by these standards. For example, the story of a selfless mother is certainly one which aims for a happy ending, but it is certainly not the narrative which is recommended by traditional standards. "The hero of a traditional narrative is defined by an exclusionary means, by separation, by uniqueness."³⁵⁰ The selfless mother, on the other hand, lives in the mode of inclusion, by caring for others as if her own self, and by sacrificing her own uniqueness in order that her children thrive in the pursuit of their own. Yet, who would argue that a selfless mother is not a hero?

By traditional standards, a life story is a good one when one player, one's self, pursues and satisfies a set of intentions which are the necessary and sufficient conditions for the completion of one's life projects. My favorite example is *The Count of Monte Cristo*.³⁵¹ This story emphasizes one identity and one aim. Other persons are integral to that, but the aim is the hero's own end. The story is not about the girlfriend. It is not about the gold. It is not about anyone's mother. It is about one man's redemption. It is about himself.

This narrative structure forces the evaluation of all intermediary events and actions in terms of the ultimate end of one hero's own life story. In *the Count of Monte Cristo*, Edmund Dantes' ultimate end is the restoration of the situation in life which was unjustly stolen from him. He begins a newly appointed ship's captain and, spurred by the promise of that promotion, becomes engaged to the woman he loves. His life is destroyed by false accusations. He is imprisoned. He suffers, and struggles, and frees himself through resolve fueled by desperation. Dantes himself is transformed through his experience. Where in the beginning he is fair and patient, in the end he is calculating and hard. He takes on roles at both sides of the law, gains a fortune by luck and becomes, instead of Edmund Dantes, "criminal," The Count of Monte Cristo, "hero." It is still his story, and its tale is the transition from subjective loss to objective redemption.

The tale is told in terms of Dante's distance from his ultimate aim. His love, his home, his life. It is also told in terms of the distance of this good man from himself. To return home, he must change. To reclaim his unique situation, he must become a different man. Edmund Dantes could not regain his station. Edmund Dantes could not regain his love. To do this, Edmund Dantes must become Monte Cristo. This man, excluded, separated from the world he cares for, is uniquely attached to a certain end. Happily, so the story goes, he succeeds in living to this end.

Emplotting a life's story in terms of a traditional narrative like this one, everyone wants a fairy tale ending uniquely his own. The problem is that, in order to live this life story, there have to be evil men, and monsters to kill, and gold to find, and damsels to save, and all for one's self.³⁵² There have to be persons to exclude, to murder, and

maybe overcome. The structure of the story prescribes that finding evil in the world and fighting it is the right thing to do, and any opportunity to do so the right time to do it. This is the traditional narrative structure, a singular hero with a happy ending struggling, one pole, alone, against the polarized world. End of story.

The problem is that the story of the exclusionary and unique hero of traditional narrative may not be the right story to live. The problem is that the ends which this selfish character seeks may not be those which the situation demands. The problem is: how can one be free for self-determination when these determinations are already evaluated as good or bad by a narrative structure which, itself, is not freely self-determined?

This is where others become so integral in exerting the formal narrative pressure which Mann warns about. Other people with whom one lives beneath the umbrella of traditional narrative judge one's behavior to be intelligible, or not. If one consistently finds the socially significant object, and does what is expected with it, then his behavior is intelligible, and even intelligent. He does the right thing at the right time as defined by what makes sense to others. If one fails to find and kill the evil man or monster, he does not fit into the story. He appears to be doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. Others may find his behavior unintelligible, or simply unintelligent. If one does not follow the rules, his capacity to live a coherent life story is brought into question. Indeed, his value as a human being is brought into question.

Subjects are intelligible in terms of the narrative structures in which they and others reside. That is to say that "intelligible" persons live consistently in terms already,

routinely, considered to be socially significant. “Intelligible” subjects are the effects of rule based signifying practices and these rules operate through repetition.”³⁵³ Think again of the traditional narrative structure. Within this given structure, ogres are significant because they must, as a rule, be destroyed. One is intelligible when he says “ogre” and draws his sword. He is equally intelligible, however, when he says “ogre” and runs away. He is unintelligible when he says “ogre” and then tries to reason with the “ogre.” This engagement is not only unconventional; it is essentially impossible! Ogres, after all, do not reason. How many times does one have to be told that? Trying to talk with an ogre is simply the wrong thing to do, and while the ogre is alive, it is the wrong time to do it. Running? Now, that makes sense.

This illustrates the force of the narrative structure pressuring one to live a life story commensurate with that of others. This pressure shows up in every engagement with every significant object throughout the course of one’s life. The pressure, to live consistently in terms of the conventional significance of common objects in the world, depends on the presumption of a certain way of life as a standard. The ubiquity of this pressure captures how critical this concept is in understanding the inter-subjective force of narrative structure on the shape of a person’s life.³⁵⁴

One is intelligible to others in terms of the presumptions of a shared narrative structure. Insofar as one understands himself in the same terms, he is intelligible to himself by the same standard. It is in terms of such a structure that one makes sense of his experiences, at all. Consider, if there were no such standard, there would be no such thing as failure or success. In terms of the narrative structure in which one lives,

the failure to reach the prescribed end is not simply a matter of reaching a different end, but is a matter of reaching the wrong end. It is not a matter of succeeding in doing something else. It is a matter of failing to meet the terms for a happy ending implicit in the very structure of one's life story in the first place. I will leave it as a given that no one wishes to identify himself as a "failure," whatever narrative he lives within.

Presumptions about the way a life story is supposed to go imposes constraints on what one takes to be the right thing to do and the right time to do it. One is successful in terms of his narrative structure so long as he does the right thing, as prescribed by his position within that narrative context. For example, in traditional narratives, one is successful if he becomes king and saves the damsel, and a failure if he lives the lonely life of a destitute philosopher. This is all well and good if the narrative structure in place actually prescribes the right things to do and the right times to do them. It may be the case that philosophy is not the right thing to do, especially if there is a damsel who needs saving. The problem is that traditional narratives insufficiently provide for all contexts in which the question of the right thing to do arises. Most of the time, there is no damsel in need of salvation, and most cannot be king.

Mann's criticism is that traditional narrative structure is not only insufficient, but that it is "psychologically oppressive." By her analyses, it actively discourages the possibility of plotting a life's story which does not fit that of the traditional hero. Not every life story needs to be of one man becoming a hero against all odds and against all others, who finally through strength of will, and at all costs, forces his terms on a final situation.³⁵⁵ In the real world, there needs to be other lives lived for other things, too.

Many times life is peaceful and filled with family and community. What then? Do we go out in search of the ogres amongst them, until only a pure race exists? And, what then? Do we search amongst even these survivors for the stragglers, the dreamers, or the weak?

What of stories which do not presume such extreme experiences, one man against the world? What of stories which are lived in terms of love, home, and life which is not unjustly lost to evil men and monsters? What narrative structure provides for doing the right thing when that doesn't mean discovering gold and damsels to rescue?

Mann faults the traditional structure for failing to account for those life stories. Without the isolation and the separation which motivates the traditional hero, an alternative life story may be lived toward the successes of others' projects, of others' lives, and not necessarily toward the successes of one's own, alone. In fact, this story is not uncommon; it is much more common than that of the uniquely individuated hero. This is the story of all those countless persons who through history have been "willing to give their lives in the service of a larger story of possible human liberation, peace, growth, or flourishing."

Such a "narrative" does not necessarily aspire to traditional determinations of what makes for a good life story, one in which a strong character suffers and succeeds in a final redemption.³⁵⁶ In fact, such a narrative may not come in terms of a single thread at all, but may consist in multiple narratives, and by some narrative standards not consist as a single "story" at all.

Consider again the story of the selfless mother. Her life story may consist of many threads, each consisting of the narratives of her children and spouse, her home and her house. Her own life is spent meeting the needs of these others. Her own life story is not a single strand of narrative, but a rope of many strands woven around her own selfless core. Without these others, there is no story of a selfless mother. Without these others, she would have no life, at all. Angst.

The scope of this analysis is not limited to the nuclear family. A similar structure can be found in the life of the selfless philosopher. Picture Socrates astride in the markets conversing on justice and virtue. He never charged for his philosophy. He always began dialogue with the terms of the other, and moved from their starting places toward only what all present could consign as the good. Without these others, there is no story of the selfless philosopher.

Instead of being a long strand of narrative soliloquy, this life story is already interwoven with those of others through the great tapestry of human history. On this view, there is no single aim and no single main player. One's life story is written with others' inseparably. This is a narrative which isn't driven to satisfy some heroic standard. This is a narrative whose focus is doing the right thing at the right time by a selfless standard. These are the stories which weave the very fabric of society, and create that substratum underlying all differences between men, no matter how heroically individuated. These are not the stories of men off on their own. These are the stories of communities, woven by way of its members.

By Mann's thesis, contrary to traditional narrative structure, one's life story is not necessarily bound within the horizons of one's own personal projects. One's life story is bound within the horizons of one's society, one's culture, one's world. It is in terms of this greater story, thus, that one identifies himself. "[The] emphasis is less on individuality and more on community; that is to say, there is identification through relationship rather than through individuation."³⁵⁷ On Mann's view, thus, I do not live my own life story. I live ours.

Inside of the traditional narrative form, there appears to be no object to this sort of narrative. Once one finds himself inside of the traditional narrative structure, all that is left for him to do is to discover objects in its terms. This life story is written about overpowering bad guys and saving damsels, overcoming obstacles and securing objects for one's own. From this point of view, if one is surrounded by family and friends, community and caring, he must go off on his own to find a story to write. If there is no evil to struggle against, it is not that things are good; it is that something is missing!³⁵⁸

There is pressure to be the hero, the princess, and to aim for that one holy object of desire. This is not to say that there is necessarily pressure to kill ogres, to kiss frogs, or to seek grails. Not literally. The critical issue here is that there is pressure to think of one's life in a way which finds ogres, and frogs, and grails in the world. It is as if those who do live in terms of such a narrative, live in a world which really contains evil, and ogres, and fairy tale endings where the good live happily and the bad suffer righteously whether this is, in fact, the case or not. There is pressure, in other words, to live in a

“concentrationary universe,” not because one’s prior experience demands it, but because that is the experience that the narrative structure itself demands.

The structure itself exerts pressure through the expectations of others that everyone will do the same. The others exert pressure through the presumption that the common tale of life will be, in every person, repeated. Some may meet the terms of the happy ending, others will fail, but this is beside the point. Each person is held to this standard. Each life story, thus, is a repeat, a mirror image, of the last, at least in terms of its structure.

To deviate is to risk unintelligibility. To deviate is to risk loss of membership in the community. This is to risk isolation, alienation, loneliness, and Angst. Deviation is still an option, however uncomfortable. At best, the pressures to conform are only inter-subjective. These inter-subjective pressures are not objective forces. These may be felt as if they were objective forces shaping the course of one’s life. But they are not; they are social pressures. There is still room in the world to do otherwise.

If we are to escape from the concentrationary confines of the narrative into which we are born, we must have somewhere to which to escape. We must begin by coming to terms with a different sort of ending. We must begin by setting up a different sort of aim. This aim is an ending which suits any and every pro-social narrative. This is an ending which is for every person at all times a happy one. This is an objective aim. It is a universal aim. This ending will be that in which every action of everyday along the way is evaluated. This is an ending in terms of which a man lives justly. This is not to say that one does what one wants and then sees where that takes him. This is

choosing a situation in terms of which one would want to live, and then living as if one were there. It is this end, and this freedom, which is the meaning of a just person's life.

The meaning of life... For Socrates, as discussed in depth earlier, his end, his aim, is a just world. He lives as-if in its terms, and stands out from others who do not. Walking innocently as if in a just world, Socrates marches to the beat of the proverbially different drummer. He walks the walk of a just man. Talking as if in a just world, Socrates is targeted by power hungry sophists, professors to wisdom and would be leaders of Athens. Yet, he continues talking the talk of the just man. Living openly as if in a just world, Socrates is ridiculed by the ignorant masses. One man alone in an unjust world, Socrates exemplifies the conscientious way of life. He was unable to convince many that his was the best life story while he wrote it. Fortunately, we have his example on record. And, through this record, his tale, he may yet be able to fulfill his ultimate aim in his death. It is toward coming to terms with the limits implicit in his life story that we now aim next. This limit is the freedom to do the right thing at the right time regardless of the situation.

12 Conscience, and the just life.

Should any American soldier be so base and infamous as to injure any [prisoner]. . . I do most earnestly enjoin you to bring him to such severe and exemplary punishment as the enormity of the crime may require. Should it extend to death itself, it will not be disproportional to its guilt at such a time and in such a cause... for by such conduct they bring shame, disgrace and ruin to themselves and their country.

– George Washington³⁵⁹

This war is so fucking illegal.

– Pat Tillman³⁶⁰

Persons note changes in themselves in relation to objects, but the only changes of which persons are aware are those of their own bodies. In fact, it is impossible to imagine change without some affect of the body indicative of the dimension of said change. The change is itself only a matter of a difference between a before and after of an embodied situation.³⁶¹

We have seen in McKenna's work a method for coming to terms with others' situations. His method is to identify with the other by taking up his situation in terms of the objects therein. On McKenna's program, the locus for the identification lies in the common objects. Through common engagements with these objects, one begins to come to terms with the other's situation. This presumes that the other is a similar critter, a human being with a body which needs similar things in similar ways at similar times. On top of this, one and another can try to talk out their differences.

For Mann, the locus of the identification relation with others is the body, itself. Her focus is on how one person can live a good life story in terms of more than one's own selfish narrative. Her interest is in discovering how this can be the case, when the traditional theory assumes that the good life story proceeds on the model of the

individualized hero. What she finds is that, in every situation, the body is common, and that it grounds more possibilities than traditional structures utilize:

The only constant through spatial and temporal discontinuity is the body. One may not have an over-riding narrative which unifies her experiences. There may be multiple narratives which differ from place to place, but they are all housed in one body.³⁶²

Our bodies show up every place we go. The body's movements constitute the moments of one's life story. Each step in the plot is a situation in a series of situations from birth until death. No matter who we care for, whose terms we meet, whose lives we place above our own, how radically we change or what object we fumble over, our bodies rise, rest, and change along the way. One's narrative, no matter how diverse, diffuse, or extended, threads through the single body.

The body is situated in terms of objects, aims and obstacles, and these are nestled in narrative form. The body is situated in terms of an unfolding life story, however conceived. Mann argues that one's life should not be constrained arbitrarily by any given narrative structure, however traditional: "assuming that narrative structure affects action and identity, narrative choice should include not only alternative plots in terms of content but also alternative formal structures."³⁶³ The formal structures, themselves offer terms by way of which objects and ends are evaluated throughout the emplotted life. It is in his choice of narrative that one comes to see himself the way that he does. It is in his choice of narrative that one comes to see actions as either right or wrong. It is in choosing again, differently, that one is free to become otherwise than he is.

Earlier, we saw how one's self arises in terms of differences from others.³⁶⁴ We have also seen how objects serve to mediate these differences. We now see how one's life story is such an object, and the direct influence of language on this process of mediation is becoming clear. When ogres signify something to be killed, linguistic signifiers express this relevance. Others take up this attitude, act on the basis of this vocabulary, and repeat, as if they are unable to determine otherwise. Repetitive signification is what makes language more than a bunch of random sounds. It is routine. Others repeat utterance and action, and become so situated, so determined. This is simply the way things are.

Accordingly, repetition grounds narrative. Every story is a life's story, or part of one. Every story is something we hear along the way. Every story becomes part of our lives, an object of the world with a peculiar quality. We can see ourselves in it. A person identifies with the actors in a story, otherwise it is not a story at all, but instead a mere report on a series of events. A person sees himself similarly or differently from the actors in a story. In every story there is implicit the question: could I repeat this story as if it were my own? Where do I fit in?

Life stories can be good or bad. If it is a story about killing ogres, then, in traditional terms, it is a story of a good life. If it is the story of an ogre alive and happy, then this is not the case. Ogres, after all, are not good. There is no happy ending with a live ogre. So long as he lives, there is something more to do. We repeat the actions which eventuate in the deaths of ogres, or we do not live a good life story on the traditional form.

This may be a life worth repeating, but it is hardly heroic. Considering how often, and uncritically, this story is played out, the main actor is hardly going out on a limb looking for ogres to kill. True, there is no life story in a random series of words, but one need not merely act according to whatever terms are given through enculturation. New terms, new stories, are good things, too. This is not to say that every aspect of a different way of life is worth repeating just because it is different. Doing differently invites risk, and some risks are not worth repeating. To deviate from prescription, of course, requires experimentation, and experiments often fail. Cultures are also experiments, on a grand scale, and these often fail, too. Especially in the case of failing cultures, however, deviation is necessary. Change is necessary. Heroes are necessary.

One may open himself to new, even revolutionary, ways of life by opening himself to a world of objects outside of cultural repetition. One may become an agent of change. He may speak differently, and act otherwise. He may open himself to new evaluations of the objects in his world. He may discover hidden significance. This is risky. Discovery takes courage. He could be hurt. He could be killed, accidentally or assassinated by the powers that be. He could be revered. Everyone understands the value in these situations. Not everyone has what it takes to achieve, or to avoid, them.

Opening one's self to new evaluations of objects in the world also involves opening one's self to the significance of one's own body as a vehicle for change. One can *do* otherwise than what is prescribed, and he will *become* otherwise by way of it. One need not merely repeat the evaluations of the objects of the world which had been

handed down in repetition, or even to which he had come in prior experience through his own repetition.³⁶⁵ This fact brings us face to face with human freedom: “agency,’ then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition... it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible.”³⁶⁶ It is only by variation on repetition that one can become otherwise than he is. It is only in opening to change that there is freedom. One must be careful however; one man’s experiment is another man’s monster.³⁶⁷

Open to the changing world, one also changes. And, he does so of his own initiative. Instead of going with what is given, with what “they” say or with what “they” say that god(s) says, one can open himself to objective alternatives. Instead of closing off into one’s own world, into prior understanding, repetitively acting on its terms, these habits can be broken. If one opens to the world, and discovers what is hidden in it, he can live according to his own unique determinations. He can discover rather than sleepwalk through life on the basis of a map to some magic end drawn by generations past. Human freedom is the self-determination to do otherwise.

What, then, does stand for a good life story? It is the life of self-discovery, self-examination, self-determination and self-creation. Once we are freed from pressures implicit in prior determinations, our story is ours to write, our situation, our selves, ours to determine. “The reconceptualization of identity as an effect, as produced and generated, [as opposed to something you are born with] opens up new possibilities for agency that are closed by positions that consider identity fixed and foundational.”³⁶⁸

As we have seen, our bodies allow for radical change in the course of a single life. We are now seeing how this radical change is within our power to initiate. All that is left is to explore the limits of this power. Freed from the artificial constraints imposed by one's narrative tradition, the limits to change are simply those of the body to mediate. Freed from the inter-subjective constraints of conventional determinations of the good life, one is free to live by other terms, and to become otherwise, instead.

One is free to seek other ends, but this freedom is limited. This limit is one's understanding of the objective situation, and his embodied capacity to meet these terms once they are understood. If one goes out on a limb, and acts with a partial understanding of the way the world works, his risk is great. At least life is safe in terms of the old narratives; there is some reliable record of success. There is always this strategy in life: "stick to the tried and true." But, what if the terms of the old narratives no longer hold up to scrutiny? What if the terms in which persons have lived their lives are no longer effective, or even vicious? Is it enough to simply reject them? What if the markings on the old moral compass no longer show north? If not in terms of the tradition, where does one look for orientation toward the right ends?

We look to conscience. Conscience is an aspect of embodiment. Conscience gives the sense that one is a body in the world of other bodies more or less alike in situations to be compared. Conscience gives the sense that there are other ways to be, and other places to be that way. Thus, the question becomes not *is there happiness ahead?* But, it is *in what terms will it be realized?* What is left is merely the getting there.

What we really need in freedom through self-determination is to be able to see *objectively* who one *subjectively* would like to become even before he becomes so.

That we are able to see ourselves as either subject or object in the world is a given:

It is because we are embodied consciousnesses that we can view ourselves from two different standpoints: as objects of theoretical understanding (from a third-person perspective) or as the originators of our actions (from a first-person perspective).³⁶⁹

Here is where it is good to have a guide. What differs between persons³⁷⁰ is the understanding which is brought to bear from either perspective. That we are embodied consciousnesses grounds a native capacity to see ourselves from both subjective and objective standpoints. This grounds further judgments that some situations are good and others not so good; but, doing the right thing, living the good life story, takes more than that. One must have been subject to various determinations of worldly objects in order to see himself, and others, in any terms other than his own if he is to see ahead of himself. Thus, as we exercise our human freedom for self-determination, the crucial difference between persons is practical wisdom.

I have maintained throughout this text that one's understanding is a product of one's experience coming to terms with his ever-changing situation. This is universal to all embodied consciousnesses. One begins a subject in the world, and increasingly comes to self-understanding through a cycle of action, and the realization of the situation resulting from action. It is in coming to terms with one's changing situation that one comes to understand himself and his place in the world. There are good ways, and bad ways, to go about this.

If one comes to terms solely with other persons' prior given situations, then one's situation is determined solely inter-subjectively. This situation is defined by the partialities, and even biases, of these other persons no matter how wise and experienced they may have been. The understanding which such a limited sensitivity produces is a purely conventional understanding, or at least an arbitrary one based in the partial understandings of others more or less alike to one's self. This leaves room to do otherwise, but on what grounds should we dismiss others' determinations in order to discover differently?

There must be an objective grounds for such deviation, for the freedom to do and to determine otherwise, besides merely repeating the old mantra – “you are not the boss of me!” There is discovery, and then there is mere disputation. Only one of these ways of life is, objectively, good.

Very early on in this text, I introduced a concept, *kairos*, which the Greeks took to signify objective constraints on right action regardless of context. No matter the narrative in which a moment is couched, each moment is essentially the same. No matter the moment which calls for action, every moment shares a fundamental structure. Each moment has a beginning, middle, and end. The opportunity for right action approaches from the future. The capacity to see an opportunity, however, is a product of what has past. The right thing to do is always up ahead, but the wisdom of what to look for is something one must discover first.

Along with *kairos*, I introduced the concept of *logos*. *Logos* was defined as “the form of the practice which fits the situation requiring action.” The capacity to arrive at

this form of action was defined as practical wisdom. It is clear that the crucial step in doing the right thing at the right time is recognizing the opportunity to do so when it arises. This is to maximize one's capacity to recognize opportunities before they arise by becoming practically wise in the first place. To this end, as we have seen, there is the conscience.

There is one mode of conscience in particular which is productive of practical wisdom. I have described it variously as the open mode of conscience, being open to the world, to the terms of the situation, to the terms of the moment, and also as the mode of conscientiousness. In being open to coming to terms with the situations of others, and with other situations, one comes to understand what is common to these situations, what is universal. As one accumulates this experience over the course of a life, one comes to see what is universally good in all situations. The wealth of this wisdom is only possible if one is open, not only to others, but to the things of the objective world which determine every situation equally. This includes other animals and plants, and also rocks and clouds and stellar bodies.

It is in terms of these things which all human situations are universally understood.³⁷¹ It is only in terms of these things that one can say he understands, anything, at all.

In being open to the terms of the moment, one lets things be seen rather than to see only what prior understanding predetermines.³⁷² One lets what he engages in action stand for itself, rather than stand as some extension of himself.³⁷³ For example, imagine walking over a steaming grate on a big city sidewalk in the winter. Homeless

men huddle over garbage cans nearby. The heat from the grate is comforting, even for a lonely philosopher on a short walk between strange pubs. Subjectively, this brief steam-bath is mere reminder of the cozy stool and cold drink inside. Objectively, however, heat is life or death for an even lonelier man, a homeless man. Objectively, this heat is what it takes to see another sunrise. Subjectively, this heat is a clue for both men to the difference between one's own and the other's situation. Experiencing this difference, as the philosopher comes to terms with the life of a man on the street, he comes to something objectively new about his own situation. He also understands some small part of the other's situation: what it is like to be a homeless man on a heat grate in the cold. Experiencing this difference, a man's world comes to hold others within it. Reconciling this difference, a philosopher becomes concerned. His situation, inclusive of others, is not the same. He now is burdened with the feeling that things could be made better.

In this way, being open to the terms of one's own and others' situations is productive of an understanding of what is universally good. The terms of this understanding apply equally to all persons in all situations. It is this understanding which recognizes unique opportunities within those situations. This, again, is practical wisdom. It is with this understanding that one is able to live in universal terms, as if in a just world evaluating every action along the way by universal standards. Meeting these terms is the motivation for actions as a man moves from moment to moment along the way.

It is important to note that this objective situation is that toward which one aims in life whether he understands so or not. It is equally important to note that, with an understanding of what it is to be anyone, anyplace, at anytime, the practically wise man is able to live as if in a universally good world, and to aspire to meet its terms as an act of free self-determination. This is what makes life meaningful, what makes life worth living, and is the work of the conscience.

With an objective understanding of what is universally good comes an understanding of what is necessary so that anyone may live a life with an opportunity to become good, bad, happy, sad or otherwise within it.³⁷⁴ With an understanding of what is universally good comes the picture of a world wherein all persons are held to objective standards for the evaluation of actions. Conscience motivates Socrates in terms of this end, to justice, throughout his lifetime. Taking these terms as his own, any person may live a just life, too. Otherwise, his life is lived for the sake of less.

Being open to the realization of a just world is not a passive mode of being. Very early on in this text, we found Martin Luther King, Jr. in a jail cell saddled with the task of reconciling seemingly contradictory ascriptions of himself, his own and those of others. He was a practiced peaceful man, though by the community of clergy he was simultaneously understood as an “inciter of violence.” He was a man struggling for the freedom of others, yet simultaneously caged for his personal sacrifice. He was a man who rose to meet the terms of the moment, while his actions were widely reported to be “untimely.” He was a man who marched, who risked his life, who suffered, for a just world. He was a man of action.

King put himself in the crux of conflict and contradiction. One side proclaimed its equality, the other denied it. One side maintained the old order, the other sought to have that order remade. King put himself in positions in which he had to come to terms with both sides at once.³⁷⁵ He put himself in the middle. In opening to both sides at once, he came to new determinations of the shared situation. These new determinations he expressed in new language. He recast the conventional vocabulary to describe the world he came to understand through this open reconciliation of apparent contradictions. In coming to this understanding, King was able to discover an opportunity for equality where otherwise there was none, from within the confines of a jail cell. Through his understanding, through the bars and past the guards, he opened the opportunity for a “promised land.” Even though he would never come to stand in it, his own understanding became this promised land’s fertile grounds.

In the next sections, we shall put the tools of conscience to the test in creating for ourselves the vision of a better world to aim for in life. For the moment, however, I wish to remark briefly on the Socratic example of conscience, and the role of irony in the development of practical wisdom. It is a worthy end to die a good man in a world full of bad people, even though these others look on one’s own way of life as a mistake, or as a story badly written. However tragic, this end is one worth living toward, and is even inevitable for a just man in an unjust world, such as was Socrates.

The final movement of Socrates’ life is detailed in Plato’s dialogue the *Crito*. We find Socrates, as we found King, jailed, in a cell. He too is forced to reconcile a certain tension. He is the most just man in Athens, he is the wisest man in Athens, he always

aimed for the common good. But, he awaits execution on charges of corruption, leveled by some who claim to be Athens's true leaders.

Awaiting execution, Socrates' friend Crito is trying to convince him that escape is the right thing to do and that now is the right time to do it. Socrates politely entertains his friend's plea. Finally, however, he asks whether Crito would think it right for him to break the laws of Athens, now, when he could have left Athens for another city at any time prior, or, barring that, when he might have convinced the people of Athens that the laws were in need of correction.

According to Socrates' analyses, in escaping, he would offend Athens in many ways.³⁷⁶ Athens is the place of his parents, and in fact is like his own parents. It is the place of his birth, and the womb of his development into the philosopher. Socrates began his life as an Athenian, had taken up the philosopher's mission, and had made no moves since to change his residence. It was the place in terms of which he sought to be the man he would become. To escape Athens would be to become a scarecrow of himself, to deny his own integrity, his own ends and his own way of life.

In fact, that very way of life speaks against escape. Socrates lives in the mode of discovery, of what is objectively good, not of what he merely thinks is good. He was always the City's most ardent critic, at once its greatest champion. Its foundations were in part a product of his own influence, after all. Being a stone-mason by trade, and a son of a stone-mason by trade, his life was inseparable from the objective situation that was the City. He was Athens' "most constant resident," leaving only once in his life besides those times he had been sent away in Her defense. His military service was

also exemplary, and selfless. For example, he deferred an award for courage to his friend, Alcibiades, instead of accepting it for himself. To escape his lawful death would be to deny that, in his life, he had shaped the situation which was the Athens that ordered his execution, in the first place. This City had made him, and he it. They were stitched together as one, such was his fate – to stay, and to die.

Athens had made Socrates the man he was. This is the culture into which his own life story was threaded. He had made no moves to unthread himself from its history. He had lived his life in discourse with the people there, purposefully integrating his own story into the unfolding life stories of the City. It is in fact this work at shaping Athenians, themselves, which landed him in court in the first place. It all hung together, he with his City and the people: one rich fabric. To escape would be to begin a thread of life anew, apart from his prior integration, and at his age this narrative promised to be very short. There would have been no rethreading of his narrative into that of another City, and if there was, what story would there be for him to write?

For Socrates to escape is for Socrates to die alone, lost, deficient in his exile. And for what? For nothing except a momentary freedom from the very social responsibility for which he had always already lived. A just man unjustly imprisoned, to escape would be to arbitrarily deny his own past, his own present, all for a future in which he could not find himself as the man he had always already lived to become: a just man, living for just ends.

After all, the injustice stemmed less from the laws than from the people who misused them. Socrates was a champion of, and not an enemy to, a justly ordered City,

as he was champion for the justly ordered person, and championed the notion of a justly ordered cosmos. Laws play crucial roles in these constructions. Thus, Socrates does not take the lawful order of the City lightly.³⁷⁷ Escaping, what sort of City would he leave behind, what would he have made of the situation he had worked so tirelessly to erect, and would others follow suit?

As he speaks with Crito, it is in terms of the City's lawful order which he finally judges himself. Taking up the perspective of the City he would leave behind in terms of the laws he would be breaking, Socrates finds no motivation for escape. Taking up the objective perspective, he sees himself as if any other citizen, and judges his escape accordingly. He takes the lawful order of Athens for his own, even as this means his death. This is the future Athenian situation, and a defining aspect of the ongoing narrative into which each future Athenian will be born. Though he understands that his own situation is unjust, these are the laws and they suit everyone equally. It is not his place to deny them arbitrarily. It is his place to suffer a tragic irony, to die by the law because he respects the law as if himself. It will be for those who are left in Athens to repair the situation, if it is one that disgusts them, if it invites them to become men with whom they are disgusted. His place is to demonstrate that something is wrong, objectively. His role is to be an object of change. His body will be the evidence, his end to be an object of injustice. He thereby will uncover the opportunity for others to do otherwise, to respond subjectively, to be agents of justice rather than mere objects of injustice, as well.

Though he would like to be convinced, as a man with a family, that escape is the right thing to do, he reconciles these competing points of view. Holding this objective perspective on par with his own subjective perspective, Socrates cannot escape. Working to ensure that Athens was a just city in which just men may live, happily, was the purpose of Socrates' life. It will be the purpose of his death, as well. To spurn that effort at his life's end would be to deny that his every action along the way was in fact the right thing to do, each a brick in the road less traveled, the road to the just world.

That the citizens of the jury, themselves, had been misled to a singular injustice is beside the point. His mission remains the same. If the people of Athens are to see that Her laws are unjust, they must see that these laws lead to injustice. This demonstration requires that a just man suffer injustice in terms of the law out of respect for the law. Socrates is the vehicle for this realization. He is the object by way of which Athens' perspective will change.³⁷⁸

In the Socratic example, we find the conscience at work. He sees the man ahead he must become and becomes that man, even in the face of death. He complains that, should he run, he would make himself "ridiculous by escaping out of the city" "wrapped in a goatskin or some other disguise, and metamorphosed as the fashion a runaway is."³⁷⁹ He is a just man; he is no scarecrow. There should be no need to disguise this fact.

His final defense of the laws proclaims that he should "think of justice first," so that he may be "justified before the princes of the world below."³⁸⁰ There will be no costume, no disguise before the judges, there. Even at the end, Socrates sees himself

in terms of a just world, and lives to its standards, not those corrupted by the selfish leadership of Athens.

For Socrates, it is this sense of integrity which denies his escape. He is a just man, living in terms of a just situation; anything else is not to be revered. Escape is simply not a path he is able to take. It is this sense which also denies a false confession of wrongdoing which would have persuaded the jury to spare his life. It is also this integrity which denies the use of his children as a tool to gain sympathy from the jurors for the same end. It is also this same sense of integrity which he then finds deficient in the City, and especially in its judges. They, not the laws, are the source of injustice. He does not beg for his life. He does not offer to quit philosophy, to quit his discovery into justice and the good. He will not be pressured into becoming a man he cannot stand to be. For Socrates, "a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong - acting the part of a good man or of a bad."³⁸¹ Socrates is, above all, a good man. He will not become otherwise, as such a life is simply not worth living.

Let the painter of your mind loose on the following scene. The situation is Athens, and it is 400 years B.C.E. Socrates is on trial for corrupting the youth and for worshiping false gods, charges brought against him by Anytus and Meletus and other vicious rising powers in Athenian leadership. Socrates represents the charges against him in the following terms:

Socrates is an evil-doer, and a curious person, who searches into things under the earth and in heaven, and he makes the worse appear the better

cause; and he teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others.³⁸²

He appears an “evil-doer” to those who benefit from injustice, profit by the way that things are, and resist change. Socrates is “curious,” the kind of man who turns over rocks, discovers new things and reevaluates old things thereby – according to those who prosper by the prior understanding – may appear to make “the worse the better cause.” Most importantly, he does this in public. Others are able to learn from his example, and – what is worse for his accusers – these others are also able to learn from theirs.

How does he teach “the aforesaid doctrines to others”? He finds a man who professes to wisdom, or to virtue, or to understanding the true value of a thing, and he “interrogate[s] and examine[s] and cross-examine[s] him.”³⁸³ To that professor to wisdom who is in fact not wise, Socrates confesses to reproaching “him with undervaluing the greater, and overvaluing the less.”³⁸⁴ This is the example that he sets, the doctrine that he teaches, and the great danger for the vicious men who gain power from injustice in the accelerating downfall of Athens.

Socrates understood this fact. He could not become a person who contributed to this downfall, even as he had worked his life – as a stonemason, and self-confessed descendant of sculptors – to build his City. So, he pursues the work of exposing injustice and vice actively, and especially fervently – as is illustrated in countless dialogues with everyone from Laches to Callicles to Alcibiades - when his subject is Athens's leadership. The charges which lead to his execution stem from the fact that, *especially*, Athenian leadership is not exempt from his discovery. If *any* man appears to

have no understanding of what he professes to understand, Socrates aims to show him that he has seen only part of the picture, and he does so publicly, where others can see the same. Socrates takes this to be the “philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men.”³⁸⁵ He does this not in order to corrupt men, but to lead them to become the best men they can be, to lead them to live lives worth living. He does this not to gain power for himself, but to empower others. Not to their own selfish advantage, but to that of all. And as few leaders, being persons who seek power, seek this sort of power, they end up looking very ridiculous leaders indeed.

For Socrates, this is simply philosophy at work to make the world a better place. This requires that persons be able to understand what “better” is, so that they can avoid the worse, as – especially in the case of leadership - many others depend on their judgment. To this end, Socrates is the kind of man who shows others that their understanding of the world is partial, prejudicial, or biased. This means searching out those who profess to practical wisdom, and testing that wisdom. This is the philosopher’s mission, on Socrates’ picture. It is not his mission to purposely cause others to fail, or to champion the worse over the better. It just so happens that so many men who pretended to be “better” were actually “worse.”

It is from this experience that the charges against him originate. Socrates describes the process as follows:

...young men of the richer classes, who have not much to do, come about me of their own accord; they like to hear the pretenders examined, and they often imitate me, and examine others themselves; there are plenty of persons, as they soon enough discover, who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing: and then those who are examined by them instead of being angry with themselves are angry with

me: This confounded Socrates, they say; this villainous misleader of youth!³⁸⁶

The charges against Socrates stem from the perspective of those who falsely benefit on the basis of their ignorance, whose power is threatened when others become wise, because, should others see through their facade, their power, their privilege, and most of all the illusion of their virtue would be lost. During his trial, against them, Socrates offers an explanation, more so than a defense, for why he has lived the way he has, and how others in Athens have come to misunderstand him. He does not try to persuade the jury with dramatic expressions. He addresses them honestly, anticipating that, if these men are also just, each shall consider his words on the basis of common experience, and he shall be acquitted.

For their consideration, Socrates describes what it is like to live as a just man in an unjust world. He confesses that he has remained open to the direction of an inner voice. He believes this to be a sign from god to do the right thing in any given situation. To this end, he preaches practical wisdom, and disdains politics because politicians do for themselves at the expense of others, while he does for others at the expense of himself:

This sign I have had ever since I was a child. The sign is a voice which comes to me and always forbids me to do something which I am going to do, but never commands me to do anything, and this is what stands in the way of my being a politician.³⁸⁷

In essence, Socrates gambles. He gambles that the whole of Athens is not a corrupt as are those who are aiming for his execution.³⁸⁸ If they are not just, well, then

they will not recognize the justice of his way of life, and they will do injustice, one way or another. If they are just, then they would have shared the experience of being a just man in an unjust world, in common, with him. They do not. The jury, representing the whole of the men of Athens, failed this final Socratic test.

Instead of seeking influence through persuasive rhetoric and politics, Socrates confronts “pretenders to wisdom” and compels others to speak consistently of virtue, wisdom and justice. He does not charge for his work, and greets everyone equally as if he were they. He takes this to be his role as dictated by the guiding inner voice which motivates him to seek his highest potential, wisdom. Even at his own defense, he does not stop in this habitual mode of being in the world.

His philosophy is not, as was that of the sophists, intended to empower persons to seek their own wealth and luxury over that of others. In fact, he rejects these things as no real wealth at all. For Socrates, health is the greatest value, and the health of the City is measured in the justice of its members. Tragically, for all his efforts, it is a city in denial of its injustice which puts him to death. His City is sick.

Socrates was known as the doctor of men’s souls, as a “head doctor” of sorts. In denial of their own injustices, it is the men of the jury fearing a Socratic interview which leads to his conviction by Socrates’ estimation. It has little to do with the substance of the charges, on their own. He is the mirror of justice, and they cannot face themselves in it. It is this fear of being brought before themselves which leads them to Socrates’ death penalty. It is their own guilt, not his, which moves them to endorse his execution,

as Socrates himself makes clear in his final reproach of these vicious men, these pretenders to wisdom:

Me you have killed because you wanted to escape the accuser, and not to give an account of your lives. But that will not be as you suppose: far otherwise. For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now; accusers whom hitherto I have restrained: and as they are younger they will be more severe with you, and you will be more offended at them. For if you think that by killing me you can avoid the accuser censuring your lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honorable; the easiest and noblest way is not to be crushing others, but to be improving yourselves.³⁸⁹

Tragically, self-improvement was the last thing these judges wished. They were happy with the way things were.³⁹⁰ So, they sought only to “crush” any reminder that things could be better otherwise. Their “accusers,” however, were twofold, and less prone to ignorance. The first of these were the youth – their own sons and daughters - who, in part due to the Socratic example, could see through the hypocrisy of the status quo, and would demand something better. Their other accusers were their own consciences. And, as Socrates was the self-described representative of conscience, he had to be crushed.

Tragically, Socrates was murdered for being a conscientious man, punished not for his own vices, but for the vices of other men, so that they could keep them hidden from themselves. His voice was quieted in order to quiet their own inner voices, so that they could sleep in their own worlds rather than care for the shared world awake to their responsibilities. And, they may have slept better, for a short time, but in the end, they failed. Socrates' influence was greater in death than in life. His immortality was assured, living as he does in the hearts of every champion of justice then and since.

Consider the following call to action from Martin Luther King Jr., a hero of conscience murdered for the same reasons:

Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create the tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analyses and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create a kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.³⁹¹

For these men, life and method are the same thing. Their work – justice - is done only when their hearts stop beating. So, unjust men have them killed rather than let their work continue. However, tragically for them, the work does continue. It is simply left to us – people of conscience - to see it through. This is the promise that lives on in the Socratic example, the promise on which this text, in the end, delivers.

In the next sections, we will pick up on Socrates' promise. We shall take up the philosopher's mission. But, rather than interrogating others, we shall interrogate ourselves. We shall take the stance of both accuser and defendant, and see whether a conscientious reconciliation of the two cannot result in our own self-improvement. Then, in the final chapter, we shall set out the process for our transcendence, past corruption, through reflection on a contemporary hero's tragic example, and so armed move out into the world, agents of change, our own heroes to believe in.

However, there is still one final aspect of the Socratic example which deserves mention. Socrates is famous for many things, as we have seen, but what we have not looked at directly is "Socratic irony." Often, Socratic irony is taken to be merely that the

wisest man in Athens confesses to knowing nothing at all. However, there is much more to Socratic irony than this.

Irony occurs at the intersection of the subjective and the objective. Consider the man who lives justly and for the right things. Subjectively, he does all he can to be recognized as a good man. He sacrifices and he suffers in order that others do not. Meanwhile, objectively, the world is ordered such that, from his perspective, for all of the subject's efforts, he will be led only to fail. From the subject's perspective, it is tragedy. For all his efforts, he is only tripped up. From the objective perspective, with enough distance, the turn of events is comedy. For all his efforts, he is only tripped up! Irony is these two together, two poles of the same moment, bound in the same person.

Socratic irony is irony of the greatest possible scope. Socratic irony captures the sense that *everything* about one's situation is out of place, not just a little something here or there to trip someone up. It is not simply that one's keys are not where they are supposed to be, for example. It is that nothing about the subjective and the objective perspectives match up. Socrates is not on trial for some mere aspect of his life. He is not confronted with the loss of his keys, or even the loss of his left arm. He is confronted with the loss of his life. Likewise, he is not confronted with one aspect of his life story, but with the significance of his life story as a whole.

Where does Socrates find room to understand the contradictions between the third-person and the first-person perspectives on himself? In himself. In his wisdom, he finds room in his understanding of the just world, in terms of which he looks forward to meeting just judges of character, and from which he looks back on the corrupt judges of

Athens' juries. It is this space which permits the reconciliation of the irony he suffers: the most just man executed for corruption.

Socrates and Plato provide clues that irony plays a very special role in the development of wisdom in other places and in other texts. Famously, as the Platonic dialogue the *Symposium* closes, Socrates is telling his half-sleeping friends that the artist who appreciates comedy must also appreciate tragedy, and vice versa.³⁹² He does not tell us why, but in irony it is obvious. It is comedy that a man comes to the moment of truth for an audience already asleep, as is the situation at the end of the *Symposium*. It is also tragedy that a man comes to the moment of truth for an audience already asleep. It is comedy, that *this* man wanders into the dawn, alone. It is tragedy that *this* man wanders into the dawn, alone. It is irony that the artist must appreciate, in order to understand comedy, or tragedy, at all.

It is in the reconciliation of the subjective and objective perspectives that either comedy or tragedy arise to consciousness. It is in the reconciliation of these two aspects of one's self that one comes to understand the situation, his own and others, as that space of life between his subjective feeling and his objective determinations of that space. It is in the reconciliation of the greatest scope of these two aspects of one's self that one comes to the greatest understanding of the differences between the way persons think of the world, and the way that the world objectively is. Irony, thus, is productive of wisdom. Socratic irony, as we now see, is most productive.

Socrates was known often to wonder whether virtue – meaning wisdom - could be taught. If irony can be taught then wisdom can be taught. But, irony is essentially

unteachable. It is something that happens when a subject does his best, yet what he does not know forces his failure. It is the difference between where one intends to go and where one ends up.

I suppose that such instances could be arranged by others, but at what expense?

³⁹³ It seems as senseless as a man asking the heavens why he must suffer so, while at once expecting another man, no matter how great, to give an adequate answer. It would be fine to have an answer, but it is man's condition that he must find out for himself. It is man's condition to discover. A man's condition to die. He does it for others, as even enlightenment does not enter all dark places. It is only tragic that he should be punished for being the light in the dark. Otherwise, we all may laugh at life's great joke, that a man does great things only because he hurts, because he cares, and he suffers that the world is not right to begin with. If the situation were a good one, there would be very little to do about it.

One last note. I have spoken from time to time about turbulence, chaos, disorder. Irony is descended from this family, its disorder existing in the fact that two irreconcilable poles are brought together in a single human being. The agent, in discovery, opens to the chaos of the unpatterned world, internalizes it, and is forced to come to terms with it, order it within himself. Irony stems from this process. It is the superposition of two contradictory states in a single human heart, one the subjective and one the objective points of view of one's self. It is a contradiction within one's sense of his place in the world. How is it possible to be in two situations at once? This is exactly the strain which irony imposes on one's self.

It is for the man who suffers irony to find the order in this torn embodiment. It is for the man who suffers irony to see a way past his own torn world. This man must find a way to render contradictory determinations, perhaps of his entire character, continuous. He must find a way of life where otherwise there was none. He must do it for the sake of himself, or he risks doing nothing at all.

Remember Oedipus. Irony calls into question his entire being. Irony is the vehicle for angst. Angst confronts Oedipus with the meaninglessness of his life. His life is nothing. Unable to reconcile reverence as risen King with the disgust at his own fell origins, there is no room for Oedipus in the space of his own world. He is cast out from himself. Oedipus cracks. He is crushed between his subjective and his objective self-realization. He finds no way to understand his situation, so he blinds himself to it, even as he did not understand his situation because he was blind to it before. His tragedy is this realization. He suffers for what he comes to know, the objective determinations of the situation for which he has struggled, suffered and sacrificed. For all his efforts, his life is null.

Not every irony is as crushing as is Oedipus'. This man must come to terms with his situation en toto, as if caught in the eyes of god, or he is lost completely. Not every irony reduces a man to nothing. There are lesser tragedies. However, every instance of irony brings one's place in the world into question. The question is, do I come to terms with my situation, or do I blind myself to it?

Blind, there is only the past. Closed off, there is only one's self. If we open to the world we can discover what is hidden in it. And we can be hurt. We can take the world

for our own. And we can be hurt. We can suffer change. We can live according to our own unique determinations in full view of the universality of the human situation. We will change. It will hurt. And we will have done so of our own initiative. This is our freedom, to deliberate over an end and to live by its determinations. This is our freedom, to change, and to suffer. A man is more than a rock. A man may become otherwise than his environment. A man may become himself.³⁹⁴

This is our freedom. It is a freedom that is shared with every embodied human being. This is our universal condition. Realizing the promise of human freedom begins by tying one's self to an end. Freedom is slavery to the right things. Choosing one's master is hard work. It is the work of conscience, work which we are doing now, and will continue into the final sections of this text. The freedom to live as if in a just world, to live as if amongst just persons, to live as if in a healthy world, even though we do not: this is a good life, or at least the best life a free man can live.

13 Conscience, and the Constitution.

While very few working people would say they haven't had their fair share of taxes (as can I), in my lifetime I can say with a great degree of certainty that there has never been a politician cast a vote on any matter with the likes of me or my interests in mind. Nor, for that matter, are they the least bit interested in me or anything I have to say.

– Joe Stack³⁹⁵

And, in regard to elections, it is not because there are corrupters that people are corruptible, but the reverse; and the proof consists in the fact that the latter pay all the costs of corruption. Is it not, then, their responsibility to bring it to an end?

– Frederic Bastiat³⁹⁶

The only dynamite that works in this country is the dynamite of a sound idea.

– Thomas Edison³⁹⁷

Protections for conscientious objectors and civil disobedients from state persecution was foremost in the minds of the framers of the United States Constitution. The freedom to act according to one's conscience was to be the *fundamental* natural right of U.S. citizens, the protection of which defined the American project, and limited the powers of government thereon derived.

The freedom that the founding fathers had in mind was for every citizen to do what he or she thought was right, up to and including armed revolution to reclaim a stolen government. This is what the 2nd Amendment was for, the “security of a free State.” It was a “restrictive clause,” to quell the threat of a governor grown too selfish and government officers grown too imperious, who may misconstrue or “abuse” the Constitution in order to derive powers beyond those explicitly granted therein. Instead, by this amendment, the people of the United States are empowered to resist bad government by directly deposing bad governors. About the Constitution, thus, Patrick

Henry is to have said “The Constitution is not an instrument for the government to restrain the people, it is an instrument for the people to restrain the government - lest it come to dominate our lives and interests.” This was said from the point of view of a person who had already helped to shrug off a government which sought to dominate the people's lives and interests. “Give me liberty or give me death!” is not merely a series of words, an empty slogan of convenience from an influence peddler, a slogan like “Change you can believe in” or “Yes, we can.” It is a call to arms in a fight against oppressive government from one who leads by example.

What is the source of motivation behind this call to arms? In this chapter, we shall find that it is conscience. But, this seems to pose a contradiction. As we have seen, persons of conscience tend not to use violence in deposing bad government or for any other purpose. To use violence is to violate the first rule of morality, to put others into situations that one would not seek for one's own. However, there may be times when the forceful deposition of governors who make themselves illegitimate through their misconstruction of Constitutionally derived powers is no longer an option, but a necessity for the security of a free State. It may be necessary in order that one generation not leave the next a world in which they would not seek to live, themselves, that being one ruled by persons unfit to rule. The problem before us now is one of guidance. When is the forceful deposition of bad government the right thing to do?

We can find an answer to this question in the minds behind the Constitution, itself. And, the first problem in getting clear on the role of conscience in the minds of the framers of the U.S. Constitution is that, in modern practice, freedoms typically

associated with conscience seem to be exclusively tied up with, if not derived from, freedoms also associated with religion. Are freedoms of conscience derived from freedoms of religion? And, if not on the authority of God, then on what authority does anyone restrain unjust government?

The short answer to the first question is “No.”

The fundamental freedom that the founding fathers had in mind was freedom to act according to one’s conscience whether that action is endorsed by current government or some other authority, Earthly, otherworldly, or otherwise.

And, the short answer to the second question is “Conscience.”

Conscience is its own authority. All legitimate authority derives from conscience, not the other way around. This includes religion. Acting according to the dictates of conscience was not considered by the founding fathers to be the same as acting according to institutionalized religion. After all, God does not depose tyrants. Free men do. Freedom of conscience is not, thus, identical with freedom of religion in the spirit of U.S. Law. At least not originally.

However clear this may seem at the outset, these two things, freedoms of religion and conscience, are irrevocably intertwined, and deeply confused. Furthermore, this confusion encroaches on freedom of conscience as it is recognized today, forcing free action to conform to some external sanction which, in short, renders it anything but free. Religion in fact – or at least acts undertaken under the guise of religion – is a useful tool in the encroachment on freedom of conscience for those who would seek to constrain it. Insofar as it is government officers who are responsible for

this encroachment, they are a threat to the security of a free State, and the object of the 2nd amendment. Thus, in order to clear the way for conscientious action in the maintenance of the free State, the relationship between religion and conscience must be understood. Only once this relationship is understood can there be any clarity on what stands for conscientious action under the Constitution, and so any guidance on what should be done about oppressive government, now.

How are religion and conscience related, and why is it that the protection of the one seems to follow from the protection of the other? Let's begin with the examination of a timely case in which conscience and religion are confused. We should begin by dissecting a living example, analyzing its movements until we have a clear view of the mechanisms underlying them. We have employed this method in previous chapters. As had been pointed out there, this approach is common in other sciences, as in the biological sciences. When there is some question as to the workings of some critter or other, it is standard procedure to find a suitable specimen and dissect it. So, in order to apply this method, now, all we must do is find suitable specimen, and start cutting.

Preferably, we should find a party whose actions are not prefigured by the U.S. Constitution, someone who is not a U.S. citizen, and someone whose actions have been public, openly reported and easily confirmed. Moreover, this candidate need not be popular. Indeed, perhaps it is best that he is not popular. After all, he must merely serve as substrate, a sort of practice case, close enough to the real thing so as to deliver pertinent results, but not so close as to be missed in case the old analytical knife slips.

Tony Blair should prove a suitable sacrifice. On March 4th, 2006, the *New York Times* headlines read “Blair Invokes God in Decision to Send British Troops to Iraq.” In this article, Blair cited conscience as the source of his authority to send soldiers off to kill and die in the invasion and occupation of the otherwise peaceful nation of Iraq. However, the headline read “God.” So, here we have it. A public specimen caught in an apparent conspiracy to conflate science and religion. Time to start cutting.

In the body of the story, Blair initially cites *conscience*, not the “God” of his particular religious affliction, as the final arbiter in his decision to send British troops to Iraq:

This is not just a matter of a policy here or a thing there, but of their lives and in some case their death... The only way you can make a decision like that is to try to do the right thing, according to your conscience, and for the rest of it you leave it to the judgment that history will make.³⁹⁸

Then - perhaps because either he doesn't know what conscience is, or isn't satisfied that Blair is sufficiently conscientious to act solely on the basis of conscience - the interviewer, Michael Parkinson, equates conscience with God, incurring “So will you pray to God when you make a decision like that?” To this, contrary to the headline allusion, Blair again defers to conscience:

Well, I don't want to get into something like that. Of course, you struggle with your own conscience about it because people's lives are affected and it's one of these situations that I suppose very few people ever find themselves in. In the end, you do what you think is the right thing.

Blair seems clear, enough. Conscience is conscience. It is enough to guide the way to the right thing to do. Religion, “God,” prayer, is something else.

So, according to Tony Blair, checking with one's conscience is necessary in order to send others off to kill and die in the invasion of a sovereign and to that point peaceful country. Checking with one's God, by the same token, is not. Contrast this with Blair's partner in the invasion, G.W. Bush. Bush claimed in 2005 that God spoke to him, and told him to invade Iraq.³⁹⁹ So, on Bush's testimony, it would seem that he derived the necessary authority from God, directly. Blair, on the other hand, speaks as if God may have had nothing to do with it, at all.

Frankly, I think Blair is right. As Descartes assured us, after all, God is no deceiver, and wouldn't lead the world to war based on lies. But, some men certainly are, and certainly would. The trouble is that Blair suggests that his own involvement in this deception passed the muster of his conscience. Bush is another case, entirely. But, we are left with a question. How can a man in good conscience do such a thing? Time to cut a little deeper.

Religion is a politically charged topic, especially in the context of the above cited interview. Many people have come to understand the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan as religiously motivated. Why? For one thing, Blair, like his fellow G.W. Bush, professes to be a deeply religious man, by profession a Christian. And, he had endorsed, or by his account his *conscience* had endorsed, and through the power of his office facilitated, the invasion of sovereign, primarily Muslim (non-Christian) nations which bore no immediate threat to any (American or) Britain. Moreover, he undertook these actions at the bidding of Bush, a self-proclaimed "evangelical" who introduced these invasions and subsequent occupations with the term "crusade." So, it is not

surprising that the interviewer would try to uncover some tie to religion at the root of Blair's actions. What is surprising is that Blair didn't bite. Surely, though, he must feel that his conscience is influenced by his religion? Surely, for a Christian on the cusp of World War 3, God has *something* to do with it?

Blair is a professed Christian; this is true. So, why didn't he find recourse in religion when confronted with the enormity of his actions? At least, why didn't he want to talk about it? Perhaps Blair felt that an appeal to conscience rather than to religion offered an opportunity to maintain a facade of religious neutrality, a facade to which his blunter counterpart paid no regard. Perhaps Blair described the situation in terms of conscience, rather than religion, in order avoid scandal, and to appeal to a broader audience? After all, conscience is universal, where religions are not. It is common sense that all persons, no matter their religious stripe, are conscientious to a greater or a lesser degree and may at least sympathize with a conscientiously motivated leader, while absurd that all are Christian evangelicals who would unquestioningly support a new "crusade." Perhaps this is why Blair hid behind conscience rather than religion when pressed on his decision to oversee the deaths of so many people.

While most persons have a different sense of what constitutes religion, or what form a god takes, everyone has a conscience. And, in the context of a contested military occupation, polarized along religious lines, one thing is clear: *Blair's appeal to conscience was politically safe*. He focused on his own responsibility for the murder of so many men, women and children who just happen, as if by coincidence, to be of a different religious stripe than he, and this, to a largely Christian audience, helps him

seem to be an honest man. In so doing, he gained some distance from the West's own brand of religious extremism incorporated by his erstwhile ally, G.W. Bush, who, as would later be reported, claims that the Christian God, Himself, directly, commanded that he have all of those people murdered. Not wanting to appear a lunatic is a perfectly reasonable motivation to publicly root one's convictions to the bedrock of conscience rather than some vision of deity.

That being said, perhaps we should accept Blair at his word. When it comes to murdering hundreds of thousands, God and religion are not necessarily part of the formula. On Blair's own testimony, there is nothing necessarily religious about it. It is all his fault. And, apparently, he is OK with that.

But, this result does raise another issue. If conscience is enough to predicate something so grand as the continued occupation of a sovereign nation, when, if ever, is religion necessary? What good does it do? Is it merely an activity undertaken before settling down to Sunday football? What is religion, if not the commanding voice of a war-god or the compulsion of conscience? Is religion just another one of those words, as we have found conscience to be, that people throw around as if they know what they are talking about but, when it comes down to it, they really don't know what they are talking about, at all?

Typically, when people talk about religion, they are talking about organized religion. Religion in this sense is the propriety of religious institutions. It is more than a practice. It is a profession. People get paid for it. The contemporary common sense of the term "religion" applies mainly to supernatural prejudices which are often inherited

from family and friends, which are systematically inculcated through educational programs beginning very early in life, and which are almost exclusively expressed simultaneously with a mass of similarly indoctrinated persons through the medium of a shared religious experience often led by another, usually a man, who is specially trained in the art of leading persons in mass through ritual religious experience and who makes his living for his services. The organization of religion, thus, is more than an ordered set of beliefs held religiously, perhaps on nothing but faith. It is the organization of society, altogether. As such, this sense of religion can apply to everything from shamanism to corporate evangelism, and is most recognized today in the one of the many forms of the incorporated Christian church.

The sense of religion incorporated in the modern church is represented in the common word, “religion,” which by definition means “recognition of, obedience to, and worship of a higher, unseen power.”⁴⁰⁰ The role for the Earthly guide in the form of church leader – priest, rabbi, reverend, or others all fulfilling similar functions – is to lead worshipers to recognize the value in obeying a “power” that is both “higher” and “unseen.” Persons who live as directed are more or less “religious.” Likewise, “religious” means “relating to or manifesting faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or deity.”⁴⁰¹ Religion, thus, no matter how “unseen” the manifest power is supposed to be, is at bottom a way of life committed to some “reality,” whether that of a god, gods, or some other reality, even if one is only guided to it by some Earthly representative.

However, if we look behind the unseen that passes for religious reality, we find a deeper, Earthly meaning. “Religion” is related to a few older Latin roots. All of these add something to the contemporary understanding of religion, but only taken together do they give a direct sense of the function of religion in the everyday actions of everyday people outside of organized religion. And, interestingly enough, together they translate easily into the scheme of conscientious action that we have been developing since the first pages of this text, something that the common use of the word religion as organized religion does not do.

The Latin terms at the root of the word “religion” are “religio,” “respect for what is sacred, reverence for the gods;” “relegare,” “go through again, read again;” and, most universally, “religare,” “to bind fast.” Religion, according to all of this taken together, is a way of life undertaken in terms held sacred, maintained through repetition, and toward an end to which one is bound as if by god. This description should seem familiar. It describes the mechanism of conscience as has been developed throughout this text.

The themes of reverence, repetition, and being bound to some end in action first appeared in the 7th, the 10th, and the 3rd chapters, respectively. Their relationships to one another have been developed throughout this text. Here, however, we see how they add up to an aspect of life that more or less informs the everyday actions of every person on the planet. Even if one is not bound by some end as represented by some institutionalized religion, and is not led in ritual worship to some divinely predicated ultimate end, he is still tied to some end or other. And, he takes this end to be more or less sacred - in the original sense of sacred, meaning worth sacrificing something for,

even his own blood – and practices in the development of whatever is necessary for its achievement – through repetition. Thus, altogether, we have a view of religion according to which every person, no matter their claim to faith, is more or less religious, as that to which one is bound more or less affects everything that every person does, every day. This is the case because every person is more or less conscientious.

Religion on this account is ubiquitous. It operates on every level of life and at every instant of action, as it – through conscience – sets out the ends toward which one is bound however epic or mundane. Typically, talk of religion tends to ignore the more mundane ends attained through its daily practice, and focuses on the ultimate end of one's entire life. But, functionally, these ends are alike. Any end to which one is bound, however ultimate, holds power over a person in both senses of the term “bound.” That is, in one sense, it is the reality to which one is “tied” or “yoked,” and in another, it is that to which he is “headed” or “traveling.” In everyday life, as in the religious life, one is always on his way to some end, and in a sense each of these ends is more or less ultimate. Every end is ultimate until it is achieved. Only when the situation in terms of this end is one's reality can one move on to some other end, if there is some other end toward which to move. Whether to a restroom or to the great rest area in the sky, either end is ultimate as it is the final situation resulting from a more or less complicated course of action.

However, as we have seen in prior chapters, some ends are bigger than others. Some are truly ultimate, as was the plane of justice described by Socrates to be that after-life situation in terms of which he executed everyday actions. Such an ultimate

reality contains all of the ends and actions undertaken along the way. And, it is in terms of the achievement of this reality that the success or failure of everyday actions is evaluated, regardless if this end is given by God, gods, some Earthly representative thereof or a lone philosopher who sets out to do the right thing by himself. In any case, the ends toward which one lives his life are more or less sacred, in the original sense of sacred. An end is more sacred if one risks or commits more of his life, the blood of his life, to its realization. Accordingly, one is more or less religious depending on the degree to which he practices, through repetition, toward the achievement of whatever ends he holds to be more or less sacred, those for which he sacrifices some part of his life. Truly, thus, any "ultimate" end must be that for which one sacrifices his whole life. On this account, we can see not only that every person is more or less religious, but that every end is achieved through greater or lesser sacrifice. Even the smallest of them is sacred, in the sense that one's life-blood ticks away in its achievement. But, only those worth sacrificing the whole of one's life, altogether and at once, can truly be called ultimate.

By this account of religion, we can see that Socrates was an extremely religious man. His ultimate end was a just world, and he sacrificed his life rather than fail to live in its terms. He lived in terms of this ultimate reality repeatedly, day in and day out, regardless of the company he was keeping and toward whatever end he, through the pursuit of truth, became with them together bound. The Socratic example, thus, clarifies the relationship between religion and freedom, as Socrates determined to live this religious way of life for himself. He could have lived for some other end. He could have

changed course, and lived a longer life rather than suffer the indignity of execution on charges concocted by a conspiracy of his lessors. Rather, he lived – and died - for a just world. And, he did so freely, as we have seen, through the exercise of his conscience.

But, what does this all mean for contemporary claimants to religiosity or to conscientiousness? In order to answer this question, let's consider two very basic religious positions, theism and atheism. On the recipe for religion just developed, the atheist, as well as his antithesis, the theist, are both faithfully devoted to some ultimate reality. Typically, these ends are understood to be polar opposites. In fact, however, this is wrong. In some sense, they live for the *same* ultimate reality. This sounds counter-intuitive, but it is not. Let me explain.

For the theist, the ultimate reality is god, or gods. The theist is firmly attached to this ultimate end, that he or she will someday meet his or her maker. *Literally* meet. For the atheist, as the term “a-theist” implies, the ultimate reality is merely the contrary, *not-god* or -gods. There is no god to meet. Ever. The atheist's ultimate reality, thus, is essentially that *there is no god*. And, so far as setting out some ultimate end toward which one should live one's entire life, that's as far as the atheist goes. The ultimate reality for the atheist - in so far as he is an *atheist* and not some other sort of mystic, besides - is that god's existence is denied. And, in this denial, the atheist remains as tightly bound to god as the ultimate end in life as does the theist.

Theists and atheist are merely two sides to the same ultimate coin. One side sees a face, the other does not. Still, as they go, they go together. Perhaps not hand-

in-hand, but fists-to-cuffs. The first party says “God exists,” the second party says “No.” The two trade advances, faithfully repeating themselves in terms of their contrary ultimatums. Like two sides of the same coin, they are inseparable, beginning and end. They are cut from the same mold, and deposit in the same slot. Ultimately, they end up together.

This discourse is ridiculous in the Socratic sense of ridiculous. It can only continue because neither party really understands themselves. They only understand that they are unlike their opposite, and so they fulfill the Socratic formula for ridicule. They “know not-themselves.” They know better what they are not than what they are. Both are equally committed to an unseen higher power. But neither know what this means beyond its affirmation or its denial. One lives in faith, the other in skepticism, but both atheist and theist are equally religious. Each equally sacrifice the blood of their lives. In fact, they are bound to conflict with one another even more than they are to god or godlessness separately. This fact is ironic in the true sense of irony. As described in previous chapters, it is both tragic and comedic. Subjectively, it is tragic that one should live one's entire life saying merely “yes” or “no,” as if a 1 or a 0. Objectively, it is comedic, as if two clowns are beating each other to death while tied at the ankle, one armed with a cross, the other with a rudimentary textbook in evolution. So bound, to such an end, the “debate” between theists and atheists is not the sign of religion done right. Not on either side. It is merely ridiculous.

Seeing both strict theism and strict atheism for what they are, a sham, we are brought to the doorstep of opportunity. It is finally time to see past the false dilemma,

god or not-god. But, where else to turn? Typically, in times like these, we look to conscience for direction. But, where does the conscience fit in between these two poles of conflicting dogma? So far as we found the great Western leader Tony Blair employ it, conscience appears only a convenient means of dodging more difficult questions. His example shows how to avoid a commitment to one's ultimate reality, not to embrace it. However, such a move is again ridiculous. It is merely a way of knowing what one is not. Conscience, however, especially in the form of the conscientious life, is anything but ridiculous. It seems that we are in desperate need of a more capable, and perhaps a more honest, guide.

As revealed in the 7th chapter, there is no brighter light on the way to a decidedly not-ridiculous life than that of Immanuel Kant. And, Kant was especially interested in the relationship between conscience and religion. In a section entitled "Conscience is the Representative of God" from a text entitled *On Education*, Kant affirms for our examination a critical relationship between religion and conscience. As noted in prior discussions, Kant was a religious man, and a Christian. He believed in God, though a decidedly different God than do, say, today's evangelicals, people like Blair and Bush. His was a God of nature, of peace and of justice, not a war god of redemption. But, this is beside the point. His life was a model of practiced repetition toward the perfection of an ultimate reality, a just world of 'perpetual peace,' on his account determined by God.

Kant did not invade, occupy, and murder in order to attain the ultimate end toward which he strove. He did not proceed as do other professed Christians, people like Bush and Blair. Instead of sacrificing the lives of others through violence, he

sacrificed the time of his own life espousing peace. Instead of cloaking the injustice of expanding empire under a cloud of war, deferring to conscience and calling upon God when it is convenient, he wrote about justice as a 'kingdom of ends' determined by God and discoverable only through a conscientious life. How is it that conscience can secure a peaceful world where weapons of mass destruction cannot? Because conscience bears the authority of God. And, why does conscience carry the authority of God? Because, in the end, we *think* that it does:

The reproaches of conscience would be without effect, if we did not regard it as the representative of God, who, while He has raised up a tribunal over us, has also established a judgment-seat within us.⁴⁰²

Kant points to conscience as a judgment seat of ultimate authority. It is in us, but has power only because we think that it does. Regardless of military “facts on the ground,” symbols of domination erected or decimated for all eyes to see, conscience retains the power to change things because we retain the freedom to *listen*. The eyes do not judge. Conscience does.

Conscience, a raised tribunal (recalling Socrates' description of the plane of justice in terms of which he also lived), is the higher power that guides to right action regardless of forces arrayed against it. From its seat of judgment, conscience reproaches humans for (ostensibly) bad actions, and it does so in terms of an ultimate reality. For Kant, this was God, as he understood God. But, it may take any form, and as we have seen the mechanism for the moral worth of actions is the same. Where they lead to the ultimate end, whatever that end may be, said actions are good. Where they lead astray, bad. With our recipe for religion married to Kant's insights into the

source of conscientious authority, regardless of religious peculiarity, whether one believes in a Christian God, any other, or none at all, conscience remains the ultimate seat of judgment for the evaluation of everyday action. Its evaluations proceed in terms of an ultimate reality, whatever one takes that to be. So long as one *listens*. And, it is understandably difficult to hear conscience over the pleas of lobbyists, bankers, and zealots.

Blair's testimony is consistent with these results. Blair should be able to cite conscience as conscience, without mentioning his own peculiar religious affliction. However he has been informed, whatever religious institution to which his allegiance is sworn, in the end it is conscience that opens or closes the way to war, to murder, or to anything else for that matter. And, Blair's testimony is politically viable in ways that Bush's claims cannot be. Everyone's conscience judges the same. Everyone's priest, lobbyist, banker or other zealot may not.

Yet, how can it be that conscience is the same while the ends that it allows or denies differ from person to person? Moreover, it appears that in the case of religion, persons are not only bound to some end or other, but are unable to alter the terms of this arrangement. For example, one thing that seems different between an atheist and a theist is that an atheist may change the end toward which he is headed, while a theist may not. Does the value of an action only depend on what sort of ultimate reality one is headed for? Or, is there something to the mode by way of which this ultimate reality is arrived at?

According to Immanuel Kant, conscience is the seat of judgment over *any* and all action. This includes religiously mandated action, such as those stemming from a conversation from God. Conscience evaluates all actions in terms of an ultimate reality, and thus effectively guides the religious way of life until it gets there. Rather than the religious life being one of mere repetition, conscience perpetually reforms religion. In other words, *conscience mediates religion, not the other way around!* This is, in fact, the most crucial relation between conscience and religion. Conscience is freedom, God-given or otherwise, to live the way one sees fit. If a god endowed persons with such a judgment seat in the first place, then he/she would not want it any other way. Someone's Bible, for instance, is merely a rough draft map to the promised land, and conscience is both treasure seeker and revisionist of this map. Where the map fails, it is to be regarded as interesting observation on a now-changed landscape. Perhaps the treasure *was* under a big tree in the center of an island, but now, that tree is overgrown, and the island is now a peninsula. It is up to the treasure seeker, himself, to redraw the old instructions in light of new evidence. Else, the treasure is lost, forever, and the map remains more than useless, but a moral hazard.⁴⁰³

Most people fail to understand that this relationship between conscience and religion is the true foundation for the truly religious life. They just keep doing as the old instruction manuals direct. But, this is not what it is to be religious, not in any genuine sense. Religion is not only to be tied to something, ultimately it is to be free to tie one's self to something. To act religiously, after all, is to work over and over again to achieve some end, and there is no work in achieving what is already a given. This portrait of

religion is consistent with the basic mechanism of conscience as it has been represented throughout this text. Freedom is the capacity for a person to attach himself to some end or other, and conscience is the source of this capacity. Conscience as such is the grounds of religion, and all true religion is practiced according to the dictates of a free conscience. Everything else is not religion, but something else. Servitude.

On this account, there is more to true religion that ties that bind. In fact, to be truly religious is to be bound to nothing more than doing the right thing, and ultimately this means creating a world through action in which good people can flourish and justice is the norm, rather than the exception. As strange as it may seem, this understanding is nothing new. Kant writes:

Religion without moral conscientiousness is a service of superstition. People will serve God by praising Him and reverencing His power and wisdom, without thinking how to fulfill the divine law; nay, even without knowing and searching out His power, wisdom, and so on. These hymnsings are an opiate for the conscience of such people, and a pillow upon which it may quietly slumber.⁴⁰⁴

And here is the critical point. Freedom of conscience is freedom to discover that ultimate reality in terms of which one will live out his life, and plot his life story. Contrary to the religious life of blind repetition, the conscientious life is not fixed to some ultimate reality uncritically, without question. Conscientious, one searches out the ultimate reality, feels out the space of it, and comes to terms with it. Conscientious, one does this over and over again, everyday along the way of his life. Discovery, inquiry, self-determination, meeting others with an open heart, this is the only repetition exercised in the truly religious life. This is a life that is actively religious, awake in its religion, not

asleep on a couch pillow of dogma fluffed by televangelists and pulpit pounding snake-charmers speaking in circles in tongues, undisciplined blind faith without end as it is without conscience.

Conscience disciplines true religion. Religion, disciplined by conscience, is dynamic, open, changing. It is not servitude to some unseen power any higher than a person's hopes for a better world, and it is not a static thing to be inherited and passed along without question, unchanging. After all, merely repeating the same old rituals is no way to change the world for the better. Religion, reformed by conscience, *is a process*, and not a rule or formula per se, and change is the object. Change for the better, to make a just world a reality, this is the only object worth being religiously tied to. It is the end that the religiously conscientious person determines freely, for himself and for every other. Without this confirmation of conscience in religious observation, no matter the flavor or face, there is no real religion, at all. There is only routine. Habit. Conscientiousness is all there is to religion, once the role of religion in changing the world for the better is understood. Anything else is a sham.

By this analysis, religion comes in two forms: good and bad. The basic distinction between theism and atheism is not important. The only basic religious distinction that is important is between the way of life lived conscientiously, and that not. The former is truly religious only because of the conscience, while the latter is not because of its lack. One is good; the other is merely servant to superstition. And, apparently thus, this is why Bush cited God rather than conscience as the source of his

authority in overseeing the murder of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. Bad religion.

Can a person be blamed for the practice of bad religion? Is it, as discussed early in the First Book, an action undertaken when one could do otherwise? Or, as alluded to above does one inherit it, become infected by family and friends, and pass it on to peers at school? Is bad religion, in other words, the source of something far more sinister and invasive than a bad action here or there? After all, whatever leads to the unnecessary murders of hundreds of thousands of innocent persons seems to be more than just servitude to superstition in the execution of one bad action, and there certainly seem to be options to do otherwise. On this account, such action would seem worthy of blame. But, can the person be blamed if the murders are the result of religion, any more than he could be blamed if he committed such atrocities because of any other infection, the only difference being that this is an infection of the mind?

Is bad religion a moral disease? If we trust in Immanuel Kant's diagnosis, religion pursued vacuously – unreformed by conscience - is bad religion. Yet, it is not the source of some moral disease. It is merely a symptom. Vacuous religion is an addictive substance, an opiate, used to cover over a source of pain or discomfort. These, pain and discomfort, are the characteristic mark of disease. In the case of the warmonger in the practice of bad religion, murdering children with bombs because 'God told him to do so,' the characteristic mark of disease just happens to be *another's* pain and discomfort. It is not his own. But this does not make him any less sick.

The problem with the warmonger is that he can do otherwise, but murders instead. Whether or not he claims that he murders by God's command, for the redemption of the lost tribe against God, or under the delusion that a flying spaghetti monster will stifle the economy, one still violates the first law of morality when he has the option not to do so. He is still in practice of bad religion, and this is only because he does not act conscientiously. Instead of conscience reforming his religion, perhaps characterizing that psychopathic voice in his head commanding him to burn babies alive in their beds as Satan rather than as his righteous "God," his conscience is a slave to the superstition that the murderous voice in his head is in fact God's voice in his head.

Yet, as we have seen throughout this text, the freedom of conscience does not originate in the head. It starts with an open heart. With compassion. It is from this position that the first law of morality arises, just as it one's heart that is broken when this law is violated. We can understand Bush's psychopathy. But, we cannot sympathize.

God, in the end, is in your heart, or god is not at all. God is not in some book, or some other man's heart. God is not even in this one. This is not to say that if god is not in your heart, then you are morally diseased. It is merely to say that *if you are not conscientious in you life, then you are morally diseased*. If you are religious in the Christian spirit, maintain that there is some ultimate reality determined by a god who made you free to do the right thing by the moral law, and that god is not in your heart, if your heart is not *free* but instead the servant of some prince behind a pulpit or some dark power behind the throne, *then you are morally diseased*. You have been infected. A parasite has taken root in your heart. And, there is only one way to get it out.

The problem with religion isn't one of 'my God is bigger than your God,' or 'my old religious (or new scientific story) is closer to this set of facts or that.' It is a problem of heartlessness. A lack of compassion. There are a lot of god-fearing scientific bigots out there. Better godless than without conscience, better with God than servant to scientific superstition. As we shall see in the next chapter, the logic of trues and falses, the binary language of 1's and 0's, are not the terms of a free man. The just life is lived in the middle, together with all people on a common plane. Narrow may be the gate, but its destiny is assured when conscience is the guide.

As we have seen, religion is essentially the tying of one's self to some ultimate end, some end the achievement of which one may sacrifice for, even sacrifice his or her life for. And, as we have seen, true religion is practiced when this end conscientiously self-determined, not given by some fable, myth, or other set of superstition. And, as we have seen, self-determination of that world toward which we ultimately live is our fundamental freedom. There is nothing unusual in this condition. All persons are more or less religious, practice some sort of religion on this account. Scientists no less than Zionists and Evangelists, all strive for some world and march toward it stepwise in action throughout their purposeful lives.

The last step we take in this march of our lives is out of the world we leave behind. And, to leave behind a world in terms of which we would not want to live, this, for the person of conscience, is the fundamental source of pain. For the person who lives otherwise, this is more or less not a concern. As we live open to the world, and to others within it, we learn, understand, and so our vision of of the life worth living and the

world worth living in is reformed. In this light, we we must remain free to change our plans, recast our projects, and reform our religions. Moral disease is the abdication of this freedom. The morally diseased is the coward of dogma before this truth, with God or without. Either way. The freedom is of conscience, and the religion of the free man the courageous exercise thereof. This is not supposed to be easy, for "...as we said, men are called courageous for enduring painful things."⁴⁰⁵

And, nothing is more painful than striving for a just world, only to see a bigot drop bombs on it, and destroy the peace and prosperity of generation in an afternoon.

So, we have seen something about G.W. Bush, and have learned something about religion, but what does all of this tell us about Tony Blair? First off, he is right to follow his conscience. He is right to cite conscience rather than religion as his motivation for murder. He is perhaps a practitioner of true religion, as conscience determines religion, and not the other way around. He is right to suggest that future historians will discover whether or not he has done the right thing in sending soldiers to occupy sovereign and otherwise peaceful nations in an ongoing war of aggression. After all, it will be those future persons who will live in terms of the war-torn world he will leave behind.

But, is he morally diseased? If he feels the pain of a compassionate man who has put countless persons in worse situations rather than better, then perhaps he is not. Even if he is suffering, however, that doesn't mean he is a good leader. Even a man with a healthy conscience will do the wrong thing on the basis of bad information. Doing the right thing is often not easy. But we expect our leaders to do the hard work

necessary to get the right things done, especially when it is difficult to do so. As we have seen in prior sections, even where doing the right thing demands doing the seemingly impossible, being a good leader means getting that done first of all. So, he may be a bad leader for failing this first task of leadership, but, if Blair suffers the effects of bad conscience for this failure, it is not for us to know.

What we do know is that he was party to the active deception of the the world in order to motivate an illegal invasion, occupation, and murder of thousands. And, we know that this was not the last time that his administration manipulated intelligence in order to foment unnecessary conflict.⁴⁰⁶ He seems not to have changed his ways. Meanwhile, any man suffering out of compassion for the pain he had already caused others by way of deception would reform his religion, and alter his course in life to avoid further misdeeds. Yet, it is apparent that Tony Blair has not. So, Blair is likely a very sick man. And, as a sick man, and a leader, his example is especially contagious. He is a source of moral infection, and should be quarantined. Studied, perhaps, but not emulated.

In the end his evaluation, as well as that of G.W. Bush and his other co-conspirators, may be left to those who must live in the destruction they leave in their wake. But, one good thing has certainly come from them, now. We have advanced our understanding of conscience, and religion, and especially of the relationship between the two. So, with the relationship between conscience and religion initially clear in the lives of contemporary leadership, let's return to the role of conscience as put forth by the leadership of old, the leaders to whom men like George Bush owe his extraordinary

privilege today. Let's examine the role of conscience under U.S. Constitutional law. Let's see if the founding fathers of the United States of America understood the relationship between conscience and religion in the same way we have come to understand it.

First things first: the persons who founded the American democracy were devoutly religious, there is can be no doubt about that. However, American democracy has no necessary connection with any particular religion, especially not that currently practiced under the moniker of Christianity. The proof of this begins with the fact that no practitioners of any *particular* religion were granted exceptional protections under the freedoms constitutionally guaranteed to all persons at home in the American Republic. Especially, the institutions which promulgate religious systems were not granted any Constitutional protections, at all. Particular religious institutions, largely Christian in stripe, *were* influential on the framers of our nation's founding documents, this much is true. The point I would like to emphasize, however, is that *this influence was largely negative*: And, rather than granted special recognition, the members of such institutions were afforded special suspicion. Consider the following from one of the leading figures in the American revolution and designers of the Constitution, James Madison:

Ecclesiastical establishments tend to great ignorance and all of which facilitates the execution of mischievous projects. Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded project.⁴⁰⁷

Granted that the establishment of the United States of America qualifies as an "expanded project," the positive role for any *particular* religion in the foundation of U.S.

law is clear. There is none. Individual dogmas, those of Christianity included, were to be individually negated. Here, Thomas Jefferson reports on the official debate around the design of the founding documents:

Where the preamble declares, that coercion is a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, an amendment was proposed by inserting 'Jesus Christ,' so that it would read 'A departure from the plan of Jesus Christ, the holy author of our religion;' the insertion was rejected by the great majority, in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mohammedan, the Hindu and Infidel of every denomination.⁴⁰⁸

Note that we are not merely concerned with a religious hold-out - someone who may in contemporary parlance be labeled an "extremist" for remaining open to religions of any sort beside that officially sanctioned by the State – here and there. We are talking about "the great majority" of those first composing the Declaration of Independence, and then ratifying The Constitution of the United States of America. We are talking about the great majority of all of those active in the foundational American government and law. The umbrella of freedom that these men were casting was so great as to encompass all the various faces of religiosity. This is why there could be no singular appeal to some particular religion in their designs. And, why any claims otherwise by religious leaders and other fanatics ring so hollow, today.

This fact, as surprising as it may seem, applies especially to contemporary Christianity. Many of the most prominent founders themselves were decidedly *not* Christian in the contemporary sense. This does not mean they were atheists. This also, *emphatically*, does not mean that they rejected Christ. Yet, they *emphatically* rejected certain Christian dogmas that lay at the heart of its current practice, and bore

no committed membership to any Christian churches of their day. George Washington is reputed to have barely tolerated the dogma, though remained civil if distant from most of its practitioners, and along with most of the other founders - Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, Ethan Allen and Thomas Paine most of all - was understood to be a Deist.⁴⁰⁹ These men were all committed, however, to the freedom for each person to practice religion in whatever form he or she saw fit. For example, Madison worked to secure the freedom of some Christians to publicly ply their faith after they were jailed for disturbing the peace of the community, for having affected the ire of the locals, but this had less to do with any faith in the object of their fanaticism than with his primary concern: *to preserve the freedom to express in speech as well as in action according to conscience*. After all, how else can anyone come to understand that *he has gone wrong along the way than with the initial freedom to do as he feels is right?* In other words, Madison was not defending these particular zealots as he was the conscientious capacity to reform one's religion, and indeed one's self, in light of evidence regardless of one's religious sentiments. It is only in this way that freedom of religion can be understood to be the most basic right of any free person in any free State. Religion is the practice that leads persons to the deepest truths in life. Madison and his compatriots were only trying to protect the freedoms necessary for a person to find it, whatever it turns out to be. Just as Luther sought to empower every person with the capacity to discover for him or her self, and interpret the truths portrayed in the Christian Bible, the founders of the United States sought to empower every person with the capacity to discover the truth for him or her self, and to live as he or she saw fit in light

thereof. This was the central concern motivating the expanding project that remains the United States of America. There is no freedom without freedom to err, no becoming right without having been wrong, first of all in one's conception of the ultimate reality toward which he strives his entire life, however it is represented and in whatever mode it is rejected. This is freedom of religion, and without it there is no freedom at all. If there is a single lesson to be learned from the great experiment that is the expanded American project, it must be this.⁴¹⁰

This is especially true in light of the condition in which we find this project, today: in dire need of reform. Servitude to superstition, be it politically or religiously predicated, essentially forbids experiment and reform. The founding fathers were well aware of the tendency of religious doctrine to discourage both free expression and discovery, and established a political system that encouraged this way of life, instead. However, this system has been gradually replaced with political and religious doctrines maintained contrary to evidence, as if to assert what is right and wrong for every man at every time and place regardless of circumstances. The attitude that has motivated this subversion was shared by those leaders of the failing Athens who forced Socrates to drink himself to death. This attitude stifles inquiry toward the truth, and thus stifles social advance, religious reform, and shackles otherwise free persons to the bureaucratic equivalent of religious dogma, or at least to the superstitions that shackle the bureaucrats in government and religious institutions who apply these chains to each person under their charge. Recall our discussion from the second chapter in this light. The clergymen of Alabama applauded Martin Luther King's imprisonment for challenging unjust law,

political dogma that they religiously maintained, and religiously defended, “law” to which men on either side of the issue were enslaved.

In particular, recall that clergy thought that any change in this systematic injustice was best put off. The tendency for religious doctrines to delay considerations of justice, often until the “afterlife,” was something about which the founding fathers were *especially* worried. Instead of living for the discovery of a just order in the here and now, some religions presume that justice is the purview of god(s), and so is essentially out of our hands. Or, at least out of the hands of the everyday person who is merely subject to bureaucrats and clergymen. In the following passage, John Adams forcefully rejects the metaphysical presumption underlying this attitude, that there is something like a heaven and a hell in which justice, not secured on Earth, is eventually served, rather than through the efforts and sacrifices of just and conscientious persons :

Now, my friend, can Prophecies, or miracles convince You, or Me, that infinite Benevolence, Wisdom and Power, created and preserves, for a time, innumerable millions to make them miserable, forever; for his own Glory? Wretch! What is the Glory? Is he ambitious? does he want promotion? Is he vain? Tickled with Adulation? Exulting and triumphing in his Power and Sweetness of his Vengeance? Pardon me, my Maker, for these awful questions. My answer to them is always ready: I believe no such Things.⁴¹¹

The founders of the American democracy refused to endorse a life lived in servitude to superstition. Where this stood in for a just life in a just world of our own making, it was vehemently rejected. Adams meant to ensure that the groundwork for our current society would provide for, on its own, justice in *this* world. Taking Adams’ perspective, we can see that some religious presumptions were contrary to his every

effort. Thus, there is no wonder why he was so hostile to contrary religious determinations. Adams felt that a just world is created only by men free to do what is right, here and now. After all, free men, like Adams and Jefferson and Washington, *make history*. Servants to dogma only enforce it, politically, religiously, and always, in the end, when the people let go their shackles and refuse to follow history as they would have it written, violently.

Let's recast Adams' sentiment. Left to dogma, people stop making history, instead being merely made by it, and there is *no freedom* in that. For anyone interested in living for justice in this natural world, as were these men, one thing stands out. *Any thought that all of the universe was established merely so that the unjust are perpetually punished and the just perpetually rewarded – ONLY AFTER THE FACT – is more than contrary to any conception of a just and free society of equals here on Earth. It is absurd.*⁴¹²

Metaphysical presumptions in an eternal prison and penance-keeper short-circuit the very mechanism that makes a free society work, if it can be made to work at all. These are, thus, simply not terms that are endorsed in the Constitution, whatever contemporary cheerleaders for a modern Western theocracy suggest otherwise.

To an extent, the United States is a democracy. At least, it was designed as a republic of sovereign states, with democracy operative at the local levels for the direct administration of everyday affairs. The promise of a democracy, as the people learn to manage such a system, is that it *should* become a nation of leaders, a nation of persons empowered to lead themselves. If we agree with the likes of Adams and Jefferson, and

choose to live in terms of a democracy as such, then injustice is nothing to be put aside and left to some higher power on the mere promise of an after-life. On this design, injustice is simply a call to action. Injustice is simply a call to leadership. In the presence of injustice, something must be done. Injustice must be corrected on one's own watch, not that of some infernal penance keeper and especially not that of His Earthly lackeys.

Encouraging free people to actively correct injustice, to be their own leaders, was the responsibility of civil governance on the scheme of the Constitution. Otherwise, there is no freedom, and no democracy. There is only the clockwork servitude to superstition on the march to tyranny.

History I believe furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government. This marks the lowest grade of ignorance, of which their political as well as religious leaders will always avail themselves for their own purpose.⁴¹³

It is this sentiment which grounded the push to keep the reigns of government - not necessarily out of the hands of people who believe in god(s) - but from the hands of anyone with an otherworldly or hands-off approach to justice. Injustice happens in the here and now, in terms of the natural world. Lives are stolen, lives are ruined, lives are lost, real lives in the here and now when the here and now is administered by leaders who only do for themselves at the expense of others. And, to the extent that persons wish to live democratically, freely, it is only because of their incapacity to lead themselves, to answer the call to action that is injustice, that such injustice continues.

Injustice signifies that anyone with the capacity to rectify an unjust situation has failed to do so. Look around. See injustice? See political as well as religious leaders availing themselves for their own purposes? The uncomfortable conclusion is simply this: someone is not doing his job.⁴¹⁴ Those for whom justice is a responsibility here on Earth are not doing what is necessary to ensure it. Leaving it to god, or to the governor, certainly isn't going to help matters. This is what has got us here in the first place.

Here is where conscience comes in. Conscience is what grounds the freedom to become a leader. And, to lead is the necessary role of every citizen in any healthy democratic society. This is especially true when the given leadership is especially bad! The democratic person does not serve some superstition before his fellows, any more than he serves some self-proclaimed "decider." It is the conscience that does the evaluating, one's own. Disputes between contrary ways of life require conscientious appraisals between conscientious equals for their resolution. These disputes cannot be resolved by some self-entitled central commander. Putting more people in jail than any other nation on the planet does not settle disputes, for instance; it exacerbates them by further polarizing the community, rather than drawing it together. Government, thus, does not make things better. It makes things worse.

Madison understood this. On his account, good democratic government must provide for the free exercise of conscience so that disputes between contrary ways of life can be settled civilly, without government interference:

The settled opinion here is that religion is essentially distinct from Civil Government and exempt from its cognizance; that a connection between them is injurious to both; that there are causes in the human breast, which insure the perpetuity of religion without the aid of law; that rival sects, with

equal rights, exercise mutual censorships in favor of good morals; that if new sects arise with absurd opinions or overheated imaginations, the proper remedies lie in time, forbearance and example....⁴¹⁵

This is an especially timely message. Why is it so timely? Because we may be running out of time. Forbearance and good example have been ignored as options, especially by current leadership. Our current civil government is occupied by despots and warmongers who champion the religion which suits them, the worship of an otherworldly justice so that they can enrich themselves through injustice in this world. Madison's separation of church and state is increasingly erased by a most absurd force, currently usurping public positions through disingenuousness and disputation. Even Christ met such absurdity with force. Even Christ got angry at the end; but, we will take up his example in a moment.

Consider the recent text by neuroscientist Sam Harris, *The End of Faith*. In this popular book from 2005, Harris argues that the promotion of religion imposes deep strains between different persons of different religious professions. Harris argues that religious doctrines are essentially exclusive. They are essentially intolerant of different ways of life, because each takes its own explanations to be those of the ultimate reality, and others' to be simply false. This makes conversation and compromise impossible, so conflict inevitable leads to deep social strain, and increasingly to violence. Harris, thus, argues that religion is responsible for most historical warfare, as it is responsible for most warfare on Earth, today. So, religion, on his estimation, must be discouraged.

⁴¹⁶ Harris puts forward a certain timely dilemma. Either there is conversation, or there is violence. Either there is time, forbearance, and example, or there is war. On his count,

the causes of violence are the rigidly held beliefs in some end, exclusive of others, and for which there is no determination open to common observation, only dogmatic “faith.” Because there are no common determinations, no tolerance for other ends, or “faiths,” there is nothing to talk about. There is only bias. This bias becomes prejudice, prejudice becomes scorn, scorn closes avenues to peaceful reconciliation. Contrary determinations of ends, especially those grounded in “faith,” bar access to the opportunity that is mutual censorships in favor of good morals.

It is a short step from scorn to corruption. And, from this footing, the promise that is the democratic separation of church and state is, instead, short-circuited by self-serving priest-ridden politicians. Needless to say, the resulting inequity, injustice, and elitist insularity gets in the way of conversation.⁴¹⁷ Thus, Harris’ solution is the “end of faith.”

But, as much as faith puts an end to discourse, faith may also be the place to begin it. After all, conversation must begin somewhere. If what one has is a religious tradition to begin with, conversation must, at least preliminarily, begin with this. The faithful have to be able to talk about their own faiths on their own terms before they can talk about others’ in theirs. Of course, this requires tolerance from all sides to discourse. The faithful must be willing to forbear and to show good example, and not resort to violence.⁴¹⁸ Government, on this picture, must provide the space for this discourse, and discourage the use of violence to shape its ends. Government must not determine its content. That would be un-Constitutional.⁴¹⁹

This picture gels with Jefferson's. The general question of religion for Jefferson, about the role of religion in civil life, is conveniently captured in a written reply to John Adams' worries about the mythical universe that puts justice off until after death, as represented, above. Adams had famously written "this would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it." Jefferson, however, saw a role for religion, if it is understood in a certain way. Jefferson's vision differs from religion as chains to an otherworldly representative, from religion as superstition, and from religion as essentially destructive per Sam Harris.

Jefferson's vision of a useful religion is one in which practitioners actively internalize examples of right action, and follow those examples to do the right things at the right times. It is not a vision of an institution, or some other structure, insulating one's self from the debt of responsibility that one owes to his fellows. In one form, Jefferson sees *religion done right* in the *Christian example*, not in the Christian "faith." Religion, as the *repetition of this example*, is the exercise of forbearance, tolerance, and adherence to the moral law rather than the conventional. In short, this form of religion is the conscientious life as given in this text. And this form of religion, far from a curse, is an *essential* ingredient in a world worth living in:

...if the moral precepts, innate in man, are made a part of his physical condition, as necessary for social being, if the sublime doctrines of philanthropism, and deism taught us by Jesus of Nazareth in which all agree, constitute true religion, then without it, this would be, as you again say, 'something not fit to be named, even indeed a Hell.'⁴²⁰

Note that Jefferson encourages the Christian example as that of a philosopher and a conscientious man. Jesus of Nazareth is open to others, philanthropic, and open

to the natural world, deistic. He is not an absent idol of corrupt warrior-priests. Jesus of Nazareth exemplifies a way of life worth living. Only by following his lead (and presumably that of others like him) will we end up in a world worth living in. This is the proper role of religion, properly understood and executed, as set forth by the leading figures amongst the founding fathers of the United States of America, and the framers of the U.S. Constitution. Freedom, itself.

With the globe afire in religiously fueled wars over oil, and Muslim men encamped in concentration without either charge or evidence besides a different way of life, a different "faith," we can guess what Jefferson and Adams would call the current situation. I will leave it to the reader to judge whether or not the current "hell" is consistent with their Constitution. There can be no mystery, however, regarding their opinion on how we got here. We have failed to lead.

This is where you and I come in. And Socrates comes in. And Jesus. And Buddha. And every other person wise enough to see past superstition and live free of the shackles of dogma, however they are enforced. According to Jefferson's sketch of 'true religion,' above, toleration of various religious dogmas does not mean we must give up every particular religious example, every preeminent conscience. Where these examples lay largely hidden beneath religious rubric reinforcing private wealth and power, it is our job, as citizens in a democracy, to uncover these barriers, and to live them out. Freely tied to a just world, through right action toward just ends, religiously.

It is not our job to bow to tyrants in priests' clothing. In fact, quite to the contrary. It is our job to expose them for what they are: tyrants in priests' clothing. And, we are to

do this first of all by providing a proper example. A point of contrast. That of a gentle king, or queen, in everyday clothing. Conscientious exemplars demonstrate the sort of active tolerance and demonstrated forbearance healthy democracy demands of each of us. Jefferson, himself, saw Jesus Christ through this lens, not as an artifact of religious dogma, but as a hero of conscience, and as a leader to be followed. A simple man, natural philosopher. Constitutionally speaking, living like Christ is what we are supposed to do, as freedoms to live as such – as a revolutionary, contrary to convention, challenging unjust laws, overturning the tables of power – are central to the expanded project that is the Constitution of the United States.

In this light, Christ provides everyone, non-Christians or atheists included, with an example of the life worth living. In fact, Jefferson was so impressed with Christ's example that, on multiple occasions, he took to cutting out the sections of various bibles which he thought reported Christ's actions in his lifetime, as a moral exemplar, as philosopher and as a conscientious man. He dissected these bibles, and separated Christ, the example and leader, from Christianity, the corrupt institution bearing his name in vain, which rose from the world he left behind. The resulting collection is known as the "Jefferson Bible."

Jefferson saw the Christian world-view just as his Christian contemporaries saw the Greek myths. These were understood to be fables and fairy tales, and the stories about Socrates simply reports on a good philosopher. Jefferson viewed the stories about Christ, himself, also simply as reports on the activities of a good philosopher. The rest of the Christian view was only fable and myth, in his mind. For our part, we have

seen how myths and fables serve to orient persons to the good and away from the bad. Book Two of this text culminated in an examination of this process. In this Third Book, we have so far seen how a person can be turned around inside of the stories in terms of which he lives his life. We have seen how a person can change, taking what had been understood as the good for the bad, and vice versa. And, we have discussed the power native to each person, to change the stories, themselves, thereby freely determining what is the good. In this way, we have given cash value to the freedom that Socrates promised through the practice of philosophy. We have seen how to make it real, now. And, we have seen how this power is, essentially, the work of conscience.

In an important way, the Constitution of the United States is a myth in terms of which a great many persons live their lives, and have noted how this myth has been corrupted. We have seen many examples of how conventional law operates as religious dogma, and have discussed the difficulties in challenging this dogma when its application leads to injustice. Now, in the final movement of this chapter, we will continue this examination. Specifically, we will aim to set up the closing movement of this text. We will determine what we must do in order to live lives worth living toward a world worth living in through the exercise of conscience. We must free ourselves from the myths in terms of which we have lived before we can rewrite them. First, however, we must get our bearings, and see which end is up in this great space of value co-determined by the political and religious myths in terms of which we remain embedded.

In fact, Jefferson was confronted with a similar task. He openly adored Christ's example. However, wrestling the truth of Christ's example from the institutionalized

mythology in which it was embedded was not an easy task. Jefferson saw Christianity for what it was (and is): an institution filled with manipulative men leveraging power on the basis of self-serving fairy tales. For Jefferson, theirs was only the priest-ridden politics of self-aggrandizement, and would soon enough be seen for what it is by everyone else with an eye for the truth:

The truth is that the greatest enemies to the doctrines of Jesus are those calling themselves the expositors of them, who have perverted them for the structure of a system of fancy absolutely incomprehensible, and without any foundation in his genuine words. And the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a Virgin Mary, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter.⁴²¹

Jefferson is especially critical of the absurdities religious authorities saddle the Christian example, as there remains in it no longer a comprehensible way of life for moral avocation. This is important, now, for the same reason it was important to Jefferson, then. The examples of conscientious men provide determinations of lives worth living. Without these examples, there is no model of life worth living, no lead to follow, and this short-circuits the proper role of religion in the first place.

The Christian religion goes wrong once selfish men turn another man's sacrifice, 2000 years ago, into an institution designed to deny their own worldly responsibility or their own corruption, now.⁴²² These are the same men who will sell "pardons" to wealthy friends, in the name of Christ's example, for nothing but their own enrichment. This has nothing to do with Christ's injunctions and demonstrations. In fact, it is contrary to them, and were he alive today, the men responsible would be recognized as Jefferson describes them: Christ's greatest enemies.

Let's follow Jefferson's lead and strip away the varnish of religious absurdity, beginning with his reference to Greco-Roman mythology. Minerva is the goddess of justice and wisdom. Jupiter is the law-giver. One way to de-mythologize this fable, in contemporary parlance, is to read it as asserting that the law-giver is consciousness of justice. To be aware of what is just and what is unjust, what is right or wrong in any given context, is to be able to determine to live accordingly. This awareness grounds the ability to give a law, to one's self or to others, and to follow it. We saw this movement unfold in the first and seventh chapters of this very text.

To live according to a self-given law, with the courage to discover where it succeeds and where it fails, results in wisdom. We have seen this movement unfold in various places, throughout this text. Thus, the myth of Jupiter birthing Minerva from his own broken brain-case is de-mythologized. We can deliver cash value for all this colorful, fairy tale language. From the head, consciousness, of Jupiter the law-giver, springs Minerva, goddess of wisdom and, most emphatically, justice.

Is consciousness of justice, the ability to think up laws for one's self, all there is to wisdom and justice? No. After all, one can make laws and not act on them. One can consciously break a law, or at least think about it. Wisdom is not the servant to law, but the product of its failure. Justice only seems impossible until bad law is broken. The split skull of the giver of bad law is first wisdom, then justice. This is the bare meaning of the fable, above, literally and figuratively understood.

No one is free in thought alone. No one becomes wise without breaking some laws, just as justice is not a superstition. These are products of freedom, broken chains

to bad law. Even the common sense notion of freedom is not exhausted by a freedom to make laws and think about justice. We can do better than that. We must do better than that. No one ever freed himself, or anyone else, let alone save the world as a whole, just sitting around thinking about it. Jefferson was a thinker, this is true; but he didn't merely declare independence. *He made it happen.*

Jefferson's is an example of a life worth living, and an example of conscientious leadership worth following, today. At no time is his message, and his own regard for the Christian example, more poignant than at present.

Consider that prophesied end-times fixed like the north star by the Judeo-Christian fable in terms of which so many are embedded, the "Apocalypse." According to the Christian myth, apocalypse is the end of the world. It is that Moment when Christ is supposed to return, marked by 7 years of war, fiery death, a rift in the Mount of Olives, the "rapture," ad nauseum.

Yet, there is nothing about the word "apocalypse," itself, which signifies these things. "Apocalypse," as we have seen, comes from 16th century Latin meaning "revelation, disclosure." And, even this late usage has a past; "apocalypse" is from the Greek, "apo-" meaning "from" and "kalyptein" meaning "to cover, conceal." "Apocalypse," according to its original significance, merely means to remove from cover or concealment, to reveal. Not every revelation is of end-timers and global tragedy! There is no reason why it must be the case with this one, either. That is, unless one promises to profit from the resulting destruction... As does a priest-ridden government of war-mongers and weapons salesmen fat on someone else's natural resources,

manipulating religious myth in order to guarantee their own injustices go unpunished on this world in their own lifetimes.

Perhaps what we have been waiting for is not the end of the world in fiery warring death, but the end of the cover-up which has been the corruption of mythology, so that powerful men can secure for themselves wealth and fame at the expense of everyone else? Perhaps what we have been waiting for all this time is not the end of the natural world in nuclear holocaust on the fields of Armageddon, but merely the end of *their* world, the end of tyranny in the light of the truth of discovery?

After all, discovery is the purpose of all serious science. Discovery is the characteristic mark of all traditional philosophy. Discovery, as in revelation, is the final object of the Christian religion, so given. Perhaps what we have been waiting for, all this time, is an update in these old stories of religion, and of the ways of life undertaken in their terms? We have seen throughout this text how conscience enters into this picture, by empowering each of us to freely self-determine our own ends regardless of the stories into which we have been born. Perhaps what we are waiting for, now, is a specific example? I think all we are waiting for is us.

The situation to which terms we all must now come, the terms of the judgment that history will certainly make, is that the world has not been destroyed. Not all of it. Not yet. Though, it will be should the ends of these religious stories be lived out. It will be if people continue in their cruelty to one another, and in their abject disregard for the shared natural world in lieu of private, personal enrichment. Sam Harris is right; we must call for an end of faith, at least for an end in that faith which compels men to act,

cruelly, heartlessly, toward our mutually destructive end, in terms of a world which never, really, was.

Destruction, to my mind, in my heart, is not an option. The only apocalypse necessary is that which reveals ways of life suitable to the wisdom of our times, and that means coming to terms with some very big mistakes. The only end-times we should be facing are those which signal the end of old, destructive, habitually maintained ways of being towards the end of the world. We have reached the limit of that desperate vision, and we must come to terms with the changing environment that is our own understanding.⁴²³ Constitutionally speaking, as constituents of a democracy, this is what we are supposed to do. Here is Jefferson's proscription:

We should all then, like the Quakers, live without an order of priests, moralize for ourselves, follow the oracle of conscience, and say nothing about what no man can understand, nor therefore believe; for I suppose belief to be the assent of the mind to an intelligible proposition.⁴²⁴

And, I take it we all can agree, that any proposition to the effect that we act in concert toward our mutual destruction is not "intelligible." It is as senseless as is the phrase "war on terror."⁴²⁵

Jefferson sounds a lot like Socrates in the second book of *The Republic*, here. Socrates also maintained in this academically neglected early part of Plato's classic that the only just and healthy society is that in which all of its members are free to become natural philosophers. Or, in the terms of Jefferson's times, Quakers. More radical French sects were called Jacobins. All object to war, all oppose tyranny, all stand for egalitarian democracy, and all worked to free slaves, to aid the poor and sick, and to

correct injustice, on this world, in their own lifetimes, and at their own expense! Otherwise, there is no justice: the point of the rest of *The Republic*.

With the institutionalized religious presumption that wisdom comes to naught in the natural world as mutual ends are predetermined from on high in some other, there is no justice here on Earth. And, this is *emphatically* where the practically wise man loses sight of religion, and *emphatically* where the free man loses sight of any religiously given way of life. This is where philosophy and religion split. This is where science and religion split. This is where democracy and tyranny split. In fact, this is where the American Constitution and the American government split. For there to be justice, this is where the skull of the giver of bad laws splits.

According to the U.S. heritage, the U.S. government is established in no small measure to ensure freedom of religion. Adequately understood, freedom of religion adds up to freedom to bind one's self, freedom to determine for one's self that to which one is bound, and freedom to live toward that end as he sees fit. Anything less is slavery, by degrees. In essence, then, the U.S. government exists as an agent against slavery. But, what does freedom of religion add up to, today? Or, in more general terms, what is the condition of the U.S. citizen? Is he free to follow his conscience, or not?

To fully review the situation binding the U.S. citizenry today would require another book, and may have little to do with conscience. However, a few current events do stand out as characteristic marks of the current situation in the U.S. One, as has been reviewed in chapter 2 of this text, is the treatment of conscientious objectors to any of

the U.S.'s, often unlawful, aggressions throughout the world. Another startling turn of events is recent government action to divert countless billions of public U.S. tax dollars to “rescue” ailing financial institutions, in effect consigning generations of U.S. citizenry to some degree of indentured servitude. Three facts are worth bearing in mind regarding this example. One is that these actions came shortly after these same institutions pressured the U.S government to rewrite personal bankruptcy laws, thereby making similar relief for individual persons, private citizens rather than huge, for profit, professional investment institutions, much more difficult. Two is that is that this public money was diverted for eventual disbursement to a private company, the Federal Reserve, and that once the leaders of this institution had the money, they promptly did differently with it than had been promised to the U.S. citizens and their representatives. In fact, the institutions who received the public money, rather than help families to keep their homes and ensure adequate employment, raised service fees and interest rates to further pressure already bankrupt families into desperate situations. We have seen, in this text, the cost of desperation: it is the loss of freedom. So, how should we conclude, from this cursory review? No need for an answer. Let's, instead, seek an example.

What would heroes of conscience past have done were they here with us, today? One popular way of asking this question has been: “What Would Jesus Do?” If we asked Jefferson, today, what Jesus would do in the face of global environmental destruction and an expansive and unjust American empire, he would undoubtedly cite Christ's own historic example. He would cite a section from the documentation of this example, documentation he understood intimately. And he would show that this

example was protected by the foundations of this Constitutional democracy, the foundations of this world, *emphatically* today's world, our world, because he made sure of it. He put it there, himself. He would point to the pillars of his own creation, and to the structure of law which was to protect the very example we recall when we ask such a thing as "What would Jesus do?"

Christ was a conscientious objector against expanding empire and the cold injustice that is the callous imposition of foreign terms on powerless people. What would Jesus do? He would tell us to act according to conscience, and he would show us how.⁴²⁶

If there is any part of Christ left in the Christian religion, and if this religion involves the repetition of Christ's way of life held sacred, and if ours is a nation of persons bound to its principles, led by his example, then this is, first, a nation of conscience, a nation of leaders, and only then a nation of justice. Jefferson would likely answer that this is a fact of law: personal, corporate⁴²⁷, and universal. By design. After all, he made it that way.

Sadly, this fact is hardly recognizable today. Since Jefferson, the freedom of conscience, especially to speak and act against the injustices of empire, oligarchs and tyrants, usury and inequality, has degraded. Today, the picture of freedom of religion under the common law is much different. Ties between recent administrations of the U.S. government to the military industries and other interests who profit on violence, disorder, and injustice has been a constant, albeit covered up, scandal.⁴²⁸ Increasing ties between the administration of government and the mass media industries have

allowed the torture and execution of contrary voices, the suppression of open inquiry and distortion of truth, so that public opinion can be manipulated, and consent, if not active support, manufactured.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy is that recent regimes have increasingly stolen power above that necessary for the execution of their elected offices, thereby nullifying the power of individuals to exercise their own consciences, and so power to pursue what each feels is right. As is well known, personal discretion in the enforcement of law has been curtailed, at first from the Reagan administration and increasingly since. Individuals of conventional law enforcement and the judiciary, police officers and judges, have increasingly been forced to subdue their own conscientious judgments in lieu of a storm of policies levied by federal government. Herby, the founding vision of a republic whose governing powers arose first from the free consciences of the citizenry, then by representation of the localities, to the States, and finally to the Congress and Senate, with a final check in the form of a freely elected individual representative, the President, has been overwritten. Presently, after the 43rd administration, the executive enjoys almost absolute authority, checked only by the desires of his financiers and co-conspirators in world domination. As a nation, the U.S. has become the scarecrow, the inversion of itself, rather than the revered exemplar of justice. It has failed Socrates' most fundamental question, and has become a form worthy of far less than the respect its leadership increasingly demands with bomb, brutality, and the barrel of a gun.

This greatest tragedy is evidenced no more clearly than in the most recent engineered crisis and consequent coup against the citizenry of the U.S. In the rising

dust-cloud of the so-called 'credit crisis,' the Bush administration has effectively stolen the powers of subsequent generations to shape the economy, to fund the schools, and discover a way of life suiting future situations, situations that only the young will ever have to endure. Thus, bad leadership has denied U.S. youth their most fundamental freedom, and has violated the first tenet of any just state, that its children are born free to seek the good and strive to attain it. Rather, current leaders have given themselves the sole authority to set out which terms are worthy of pursuit, and which are not. They have given themselves the power to determine, now and for the future, what stands for the good, and what does not. They have determined, already, that situation toward which the children of the world will move, born as they are and will be into war and rising debt. The U.S. is no longer a free country, for no one is free whose ends are forced by another. Yet, these leaders call themselves champions of freedom, even as they claim to enslave out of necessity, as if they themselves are not free to do otherwise. In fact, by their own designs, they soon will be the only free people left, free to make the laws and choose to follow them. The cost of these free leaders is the loss of it for their followers. Such is the tragic irony of our age.

Yet, to listen to the mainstream media, the march to a just world is continuing apace. Everywhere is "progress," in the so-called 'war on terror,' in the so-called 'war on drugs,' and especially in the so-called 'war on radical fundamentalism.' Meanwhile, nothing is more radical than the fundamentalism that makes war on everything, tearing the world into opposing poles for its own profit and power. Only by this radical fundamentalism can perpetual war promise "progress." Only by this radical

fundamentalism is the refusal to communicate, to convene, to compromise and reconcile the right thing to do. Only this radical fundamentalism can find the value in war on every front. Yet, current leadership has given itself the power, through industries of manufactured consent, to spin the space of value on its head. We are left in an inverted world:

What had been liberty is now imprisonment. What had been democracy is now tyranny. What had been civility is now criminality.
Somehow faking character, virtue and strength is tolerated.
Somehow profiting from tragedy and horror is tolerated.
Somehow the death of tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of people is tolerated.
Somehow subversion of the Bill of Rights and The Constitution is tolerated.
Somehow suspension of Habeas Corpus is supposed to keep this country safe.
Somehow torture is tolerated.
Somehow lying is tolerated.
Somehow reason is being discarded for faith, dogma, and nonsense.
Somehow American leadership managed to create a more dangerous world.
Somehow a narrative is more important than reality.⁴²⁹

And, somehow we have put our faith in the story we have been sold. We have suffered an inversion, not unlike that brought on by Saul's magnetic field. This difference is that this one has been contrived by powerful manipulators of the myths within which we orient, rather than by powerful forces of nature on the magnetic fields that orient us. Where Saul's magnetic field was physical, the field that upends us now is metaphysical. However, the effects have been the same: there has been an inversion in what we take to be the good. All the terms we thought were worth living for have

been turned upside down. They are opposite to their original intension, and we, caught between them, have been torn in two.

We have been turned against ourselves. We have plotted life stories to inverted ends. However, as with Saul, it is only the force of electromagnetic fields which prop up this inverted world. Now, what turns us against ourselves is propaganda, paid performers multiplying a manufactured message, “message multipliers” in the full light of prime-time and head-line, rather than ferrous terrain focusing an electromagnetic beam as it shifts underground. Now, powerful televised media stand in for the voice of god, an earthquake traded for a satellite dish. Now, unlike Saul, we have an opportunity to change the world before it forever changes us.

Unlike Saul, we are free to correct this inverted space of value, and ourselves within it. We need not wait for electromagnetic waves to bring us the good news. We have all seen, throughout this text, how our lives’ narratives can be rewritten. We are free to determine, for ourselves, our own worthy ends. We are our own magnetic north. We can set the world right, and we have the Law on our side. Conscience.

Ecclesiastical establishments, economic interests, and scientific inquiry are forces increasingly indistinguishable from each other or from our contemporary civil government.⁴³⁰ This is directly contrary to the founding vision of this nation. Few have acted in good conscience against this agenda. Many of those who have are since murdered, maimed, tortured, forced from office, discredited or otherwise destroyed.⁴³¹ Meanwhile, many men, mostly Muslim men from the besieged Middle-East, sit in prison. They are tortured, disgraced, their families forced to suffer not knowing whether they

live or die, whether they are sane or broken, and when will they return? When will they heal? If ever... This is the truest legacy of the radical fundamentalism that motivates current Western, and especially U.S., leadership. And, the long-healing scars of brutality promise to be its only lasting gift.

Where is the heroic example of the conscientious objector in this so-called “Christian nation” now? The conscientious objector, the civil disobedient, though embodying the freedom of conscientious action protected by our founding fathers, is himself under preemptive attack from these same corrupted powers, industrious priest-ridden civil government.⁴³² We are witnessing the subversion of every aspect of social order to the terms of the most brutal, bigoted of religious narratives, incorporated nationalism, fascism where the only “profitable” industries are banking and war. This is the homogenization of empire, the very force of leveling injustice against which Christ himself stood.

What would Jesus do? What he did. Any follower of Christ must simply ask himself: is his example worth repeating? If not, then his example is not sacred, his sacrifice in vain, and his religion not what it pretends to be. If yes, then there are some tables in need of being overturned. And, persons of conscience to turn them over.

14 Conscience, and the end of the world.

I've thought long and hard about Katrina -- you know, could I have done something differently, like land Air Force One either in New Orleans or Baton Rouge.

– G.W. Bush⁴³³

Did the Captain of the *Titanic* cry?

– The New Radicals⁴³⁴

We live in an increasingly unified world. The human globe is increasingly unified by a single human language, the binary language, machine language. Machine language is a bunch of 1's and 0's, ons and offs, trues and falses. Machine language is the code directly processed in the circuitry of computers; gates open and close, lights brighten and dim, and electricity goes in and out. This language expresses a logic that virtually brings persons together. However, this same logic also tears the world apart.

Persons do not type 1's and 0's into computers to get them to do these things, however. There is a sort of language barrier in the way. The fact is that each individual 1 or 0 isn't very significant to a human being, even if he is a logician or a computer programmer. Every individual 1 or 0 captures only one minimal aspect of the logic at work in the machine. A computer uses so many of them that, even when the language of machines is understood, it takes too much work and much too much time to produce anything of human significance. The language barrier is at root, thus, energetic. But, it can be overcome.

The 1's and 0's, themselves, are energetic. They are electrical pulses, 1's, and the lack thereof, 0's. Where the natural languages of humans consist of waves of sound and gestures and postures of body in complex contexts, a computer's natural

language consists of switches opening and closing, thereby permitting or denying the movement of electricity through a circuit, 1's and 0's.

A computer's circuitry is a set of switches arranged in ways which turn input electrical pulses into output electrical pulses. It shuttles 1's and 0's, from beginning to end, input to output, circuitously. It is a cycle. The input is given in complex expressions, human terms. These are converted to electrical pulses, binary computer terms. These are operated on. Then, they are converted to output, again in human terms. Thus, the cycle is complete. The circuit begins and ends with a person, with the computer merely the translating calculator in the middle. What happens hidden away inside the cold metal box is only a means to very human ends.

A person does not see the logic at work in the computer system any more than he feels the switches open to the flow of electrons or shut them out. It all moves way too fast! Besides that, one little gate opening and closing just like one little pulse of electrons speeding along does very little work on its own. It takes millions and billions of openings and closings, millions and billions of little electrons, millions and billions of 1's and 0's, to do anything significant. Thus, not only does it take a lot of work to program a machine to do significant things, it takes a lot of work to make a set of electric switches that can reliably run these programs. This is why computer hardware is so important. With the right physical structure, the energetic barrier between man and machine, and back again, can be overcome.

The barrier that makes communication between persons and computers difficult can be overcome when the switches inside a computer can be made to represent the

world in terms of which everyday persons live their everyday lives. Of course, building a world like ours out of so many switches is not a possibility. This is why computer programming is so important. And, this is also why logic, classical binary logic, is so important to computer programmers. Programmers make the computer meet the terms of the person by using the language of logic to bridge the gap. They use logic to order pulses of electrons within the machine in ways that do work for people. Logic bridges the energetic barrier, its language reconciling the situation behind the screen with that of the person in front of it.

Behind the screen, the computer processes a series of 1's and 0's as a series of open and closed switches. One at a time, two at a time, four at a time, even eight or sixteen or thirty-two, 64 or 128 at a time, this is what happens inside the box. And, thirty-two at a time is not all that significant, any more than would be thirty-two little blips on a computer screen, as they would not grab anyone's attention, at least not for long, especially if they didn't go anywhere. At most, they would simply stand for thirty-two blipping 1's. Computer programmers, however, pattern these blips, lots of these blips, with the language of logic to make insignificant 1's and 0's get significant things done.

Significant things happen when millions of blips show up and disappear and move around in fine-grained coordination. Significant things happen outside the box when millions of switches open and close together inside the box. With enough circuits arranged in the right ways, opening and closing together inside the box, computers produce full-blown virtual environments for human beings outside the box. They look like the real thing. And, people act as if they are. Now, this is significant!

When logically arrayed on a massive scale, 1's and 0's can mirror of the outside world. Patterns of electrical pulses stand in for all the people, places, and things that make the real world appear real. These patterns of pulses, either on or off, indicate that there is some thing in the virtual environment, or there is not. When a pulse is on, a thing is there. When off, a thing is not there. These things can be engaged with when present, and missed when they are absent, as if they were objects of the real world.

For example, when a virtual basketball floats to the virtual basket in the virtual world, the trajectory which the virtual basketball takes is an approximation of that trajectory which a real basketball follows in the natural world. This realism is evident to everyone in the virtual world, whether Chinese or Spanish, because these people live in the same natural world, already. Real basketballs behave the same way for every person in every culture at every place on Earth because everyone on Earth lives in the same natural world, bound in terms of the same natural laws. Virtual objects reflect this fact; their programmers approximate natural laws in the logic of machines. Thus, appearance takes the form of reality.

Behind the screen, there is only patterned energy. In front of the screen, there is a person acting as if he were situated within that energetic pattern. In this way, the space inside of an electrified box becomes more than a pattern of electrical pulses. It becomes the space of life. And, as the rising popularity of products which simulate the space of life suggests, many people are finding the situation behind a computer screen to be a good one, if not a better one than that in which they actually live. Rather than in the actual world, many are finding the virtual world a more comfortable situation, and

are acting accordingly, engaging with virtual rather than real objects whenever they have the leisure to do so.

Persons increasingly live in terms of the virtual world, dealing with objects of the virtual environment. And, these virtual worlds tend to look a lot like the one in which the dreamer already lives. This is no accident, but a product of the intelligence behind their design. Virtual environments are designed by computer programmers to envelope the 'end-user' in this way. They are designed to be significant for everyday people by reflecting the logic of the natural world in which people already live. It is in this way that a situation inside a box on one corner of the Earth can be so readily shared by end-users on every other corner of the Earth. It seems real.

Virtual environments are realistic when what the player experiences in the virtual world mirrors what the player has come to expect of the actual world. Ideally, the logic of nature is flawlessly represented by the space within the box. What changes in these situations are the expectations the person has of himself. One might kill ogres, save princesses, raise civilizations and topple governments, literally with a flick of a finger in a virtual world, when in real life they are not so capable.

Virtual environments provide opportunities to do things that a person naturally wants to do, but has no practical capacity to ever actually get done. For many persons, thus, the virtual dream-world is more than a game in a box, and more than the space in terms of which one spends his leisure time. It is even more than the space in which one spends the time of his life. It is the space of a life worth living, replete with good, bad, and beautiful.

As persons strive to attain the virtual good, they plan their lives accordingly. The terms of the virtual space become the space of narrative, within which a person orients and plots the ends of his actions. It becomes the space in which a person may be recognized and revered. This is possible, because after, he does not occupy the virtual world alone. Persons from around the world do so together, simultaneously, living as if in the same situation. This virtual being with one another marks the most important way in which the virtual world practically exceeds any expectations of the actual natural world. This is that relationships between persons, which are impossible in the natural world, are possible in the virtual one. For example, a Chinese man in Hong Kong can play basketball with a Spanish man in New York, struggling over the same ball at the same time as if in the same room together. There is no potential for this to happen in the natural world. The energetic barrier for this to become a physical reality is simply too great. Virtual worlds have a leg up on the real world this way. Things that are impossible, *out here*, happen *in there* all the time. Sharing a game of basketball with a man 20,000 kilometers away is only one of them.

Virtual though they may be, these sorts of artificial bridges between people increasingly unify the globe in a network of human relationships. And, even though they arise from within a dream world, these relationships are very natural, and very real. Persons spend an increasing amount of their lives engaged in virtual activities with other people in the virtual world, even finding true love there, caring for friends and family there, or securing their daily needs there. Virtual environments have become the spaces in terms of which persons live their lives, plot their life stories, and prefigure their

happy endings. Computer programmers are the intelligent designers of this virtual world. With 1's and 0's, they make the impossible possible, the insignificant significant. They are the bricklayers of the virtual world whose works bridge the four corners of the Earth. It is their logic which binds us together. It is their information superhighway from which we see everything there is to see, know all there is to know, and travel everywhere, all at once, in an electronic instant.

We have seen how they do it. Computer programs are translators. They order electrons in terms significant to human beings, and vice versa. No matter the human term, whether Chinese or Spanish, it can be translated from and into machine language. No matter the objects we name, there can be a representation in terms of 1's and 0's. All human languages, thus, find common ground in the language of machines. Computer programmers are responsible for the virtual order that emerges when this work is done.

It is no surprise that their constructions should rise so rapidly, or that persons take to virtual environments so easily. It is not simply that virtual environments are made for human purposes, as approximations of the natural world. There is something deeper going on here.

A computer works by shuttling patterned sets of pulses around to its various parts, like the graphics processors, and the audio processors, and other specialized sets of switches designed to recognize and operate on certain patterns of electrical pulses. The human brain works in much the same way, with the essential difference being merely that the pulses in question are produced electrochemically, and not

electronically. Thus, what goes on inside the computer's box, and inside the human skull, is a lot alike, if not yet mirror images.⁴³⁵

A computer is a network of processors which works to translate certain routine input into certain routine output. The human brain is also a network of switches arranged in ways to process routine input into effective output. The computer has special cards and chipsets which are switches arranged to operate on different aspects of the sensed world. The human brain is also modular in this way. There are audio and video processing areas, input and output apparatuses, power supplies and even heat dissipation units, just as in the computer.

The parts of either computer or human being coordinate with one another to produce a particular output given particular input. The coordination of all these parts is taken for granted. If they are not coordinated, the result is dysfunction. Consider what it is like to have the sound mismatched with the video on a movie or a video game. There is something wrong, here. Persons expect these operations to come together in the output, in ways which meet the terms of their own everyday input. Without this coordination, the entire system is broken.

Coordination is taken for granted in systems of relations between whole persons and computers, as well as within them. Persons coordinate with other persons with computer mediation, computers coordinate with other computers through human mediation, and persons coordinate with computers through human and computer mediation. With the pulses coordinated between human being and computational machine, and the input/output processed rapidly enough in just the right ways, these

sets of switches produce virtual environments like the Internet. Thus, persons around the world work together to network between human brains and computer processors, and back again. Were they to fail, not only would the network of machines fail, but so would the lives increasingly taken up, together, within it.

It is this networking which is responsible for the increasing unification of the human globe under one language, machine language. It is under the umbrella of this language and its logic, the Internet, that people have increasingly taken for granted the lives they live, the stories they write, and the happy endings they project in concert. "Globalization" is essentially a virtual enterprise.

It is this coordination of persons which is the great promise of the virtual world. In the real world, persons are positional. Sometimes, one person's position is distant from another's, when they would rather be close. Networked together, virtual environments seem to close this distance. Persons identify themselves as "citizens of the world," even as they work and play with objects of the virtual environment rather than the real one.

Computers, accordingly, are also positional. Just as every person in a network of persons has a uniquely identifying position relative to the other persons in the network, a computer in a network of computers has a uniquely identifying position within that system of relations, too. A person is identified by his place in his family, society, and civilization. A computer is identified by its place relative its router, its server, and its Internet service provider. Each takes up a unique position within a system of relations as whole, and each identifies itself in terms of the relationships in which it is embedded.

Some positions are critical for the continued integrity of the system in which it is embedded. Consider the preacher in the church, the leader of the cult, the professor in the classroom, or the tyrant in the tyranny. The systems of relation, as wholes, fail if one of these is missing from its place within them. If the system of relations as a whole fails, the position of everything and everyone within the system, one's very identity in terms of that system, is brought into question.

So critical are some positions for the continued integrity of the networks in which their positions arise, that, if they are left empty, rather than recasting the order as a whole, rather than rethinking their own identities, the members of the system will simply search for a replacement. The churchgoers will seek a new preacher, the cultists will seek a new leader, the students will seek a new teacher, and the slaves will seek a new tyrant. Thus, as more and more people depend on a given network of relationships for their own identities, that system becomes increasingly resistant to change.

As the world is unified under the language of machines, any one person's position relative to another's position is increasingly dependent on their positions relative to their respective computers' positions. One IP address is as good as is any other for a computer, but what makes that position significant is the person who calls it "home." What makes any given place in the virtual world unique is the person at either end of a computer. It is because there is a person there that we call the machine's location an "address," why we call the machine's opening screen a "homepage," and why e-mail is called "mail." Otherwise, it is all merely data, 1's and 0's.

For all we make of “opening” the e-mail, it is the computer which actually does the opening. We simply point and click, the computer mediates, and here is a message from a friend. The information is kept in a bigger computer, likely very far away, but that doesn’t matter to your own computer. It reaches out, through the virtual world, and asks for your mail. It addresses another computer, from its place in the real world, so that your friend may address you from his. Your computer has to be there, with you, wherever you are in order for you to be at “home” to receive your mail. Thus, computers are like cups on a string tying us together, as if with a silver cord through the virtual world. If they are connected, we are connected.

Persons are increasingly enculturated in terms of this unified society of the virtual world. The Internet seems to bring people together, to give them a home to share, to provide a sense of belonging, adventure when the real world is too repetitive and stable when the real world is too chaotic. Picture the rows of children staring at screens as they look for clues for how the world works, from sex to all the other sciences, each with a different view into a common space of information. They are wearing headsets, punching keyboards, all alike and meters apart. They appear to be in the same place, coming to terms with a situation in common, but are at virtually different corners of the globe. They are in the same room, but they are not together. Picture the lonely fat banker intent in the *World of Warcraft*. He engages with objects in common with others, but he does not share them. Picture the fattening divorcee browsing the personals and typing in chat rooms. She meets so many people, but remains alone. This is life in the

virtual world. Picture this, and the increasingly unified world appears more than ever dis-unified. Lonely: this is what it feels like to be “globalized.”

Computer mediated networks of personal relations have become increasingly important to increasing numbers of people. But, far from unifying the globe, these networks pull people apart. Globalization via the virtual world motivates increasing isolation from friends and family in the real world. Virtual world societies arise, thus, at the expense of real world societies.

For instance, MySpace is a global phenomenon which facilitates human relationships without regard for geographical constraints.⁴³⁶ These are networks of unique persons fulfilling unique roles in unique human lives over the Internet. This virtual society is a network of persons built on the silicon bedrock of networked machines. Should this bedrock dissolve, so shall the society.

Insofar as the virtual society depends on the industries which keep computers going, its integrity is difficult to ensure. People work day and night, the world over, in concert, to keep the bedrock of the virtual world in place. They bridge barriers of language, tie the world together in one big circuit, but this building project, perhaps the greatest mankind has ever achieved, does not come cheap. Every brick in this tower of human achievement is a constant drain on natural resources. Virtual bedrock, alight with electricity, is energetically very expensive. People work around the clock, day in and day out, to bridge this energetic barrier. Thus, the virtual environment is renewed, the virtual world remade, every passing instant. This is a fragile arrangement, indeed.

The problem is, this fact does not keep people from developing ways of life which are increasingly dependent on this arrangement. From local wanna-be rockstar, or pornstar, or web designer, to the economic policy makers who encourage them, there is increasing dependence on a virtual environment for everyday human opportunity. Meanwhile, the natural environment on which all of this eventually rests is taken for granted, and in fact destroyed, in lieu of virtual construction. The capstone of humanity's greatest building project, thus, is becoming the cornerstone of its very foundation.

But, as any engineer, or architect, or sculptor can tell you, any such structure *is not sound*. A capstone cannot be the cornerstone. And, in fact, even in this case, it is not; it only appears so. Computers are not the bedrock of the virtual world. Computer networks are fragile, complicated, and expensive to maintain. These networks, themselves, depend on other, hidden, networks. These networks depend on networks of people, and people depend on networks of industry, and these industries depend on a fragile network of natural systems. This is the bedrock in which the virtual world is actually grounded. The world as it has always been.

The natural world is that from which the virtual world arises. Computer networks require systems of industry which refine silicon – the stuff of beaches – into programmable computer chips. These industries are networked with others which provide heavy equipment, high temperature furnaces, lasers and, perhaps most importantly, highly specialized human labor. Computer networks also require other networks which reliably provide for electrical power, fiberoptic cables, replacement

hardware, not to mention technical support, which itself requires telephone systems, educational systems, training systems, monetary systems, and all of these, of course, require further networks of human beings delivering highly specialized labor.

Just as there is a person at either end of a computer, there are networks of persons at either end of computer networks. These networks of persons turn the objects of the natural world into objects of the virtual world. The production of the virtual environment, thus, depletes the resources of the natural environment. And, where the virtual world must be remade every day, day in and day out, the natural world cannot be remade. Not by us. Ever.

Should the resources of the natural world fail and their delivery fail, or any other link in the networks which support the production of the virtual world fail, then the virtual reality in terms of which so many live their daily lives, all of the social networks which depend on it, all the human lives which depend on it, and all the personal identities which depend on it, will fail. In the end, the virtual world is a fantasy projected through an electrified prism of silicon processors. Without the natural world, and the intricate systems which refine and extract all that is necessary to maintain their operations, all of the computers in the world are simply rocks, essentially unconnected, at rest in different places. Scattered, and the people with them. Thus, that virtual world in terms of which persons increasingly order their very real human lives is, truly, a castle made of sand, and a fragile one at that.⁴³⁷

For the moment, instead of looking directly at the impact of computer mediated networks on the lives of persons around the natural world, let's look for a moment at the

logic in terms of which these networks are arranged in the first place. Consider the Law of the Excluded Middle (L.E.M). This is a fundamental notion in binary logic. Binary logic consists of 1's and 0's. Trues and falses. As we have seen, this is the language of machines. It is the logic by way of they operate, and in terms of which they are programmed to do the things that they do when they do them. It is also the sort of logic taught exclusively at most schools and universities.⁴³⁸ However, here it is most often taught as a human language, as a means of ideally ordering one's own operations, and not as a machine language at all. The L.E.M. Is a basic law of human thought, according to this popular paradigm. And, it carries dramatic consequences for anyone who allows it to govern his actions and affairs, as we shall see momentarily.

The Law states that a thing either is, or is not, in the way ascribed at any given moment. So, whatever we take to be p at any given time, it is either p or *not* p . It cannot be both; this is the middle that gets excluded in the Law of the Excluded Middle. The L.E.M., in other words, reduces the world to 1's and 0's. The rest is nonsense.

Everything is a dilemma according to the L.E.M. Everything either is, or is not, and it is up to us to figure it out. In everyday terms, this seems to make sense. A car is either blue, or it is not. A computer switch is either open, or it is not. A carrot is either rotten, or it is not. A person is either evil, or he is not. This seems to be more than a law of logic, or a law of thought. It seems to be a law of nature.

But, is it a law of nature? What is a law, anyways? What does a law do? Laws, themselves, are supposed to hold things together. They tie things together in terms these things have in common. Articulations of laws specify relationships common to the

objects which are bound by them, but the relationships themselves are supposed to be there first. The laws simply make them explicit.

Consider the Law of Gravity. It is not as if some cannonball follows the letter of some specified law. The Law does not tell *cannonballs* how to relate with one another and with the natural world around them. This Law tells *people* about cannonballs and the natural world around *them*. The Law of Gravity is a law because it applies to all objects in the natural world together, bound in common by the field of gravity, cannonballs and people included. That the relationships can be found everywhere one looks every time one looks for them is what makes it a law. Its articulation comes later.

This goes for any given law of nature. A law of nature is a law because all natural things are bound by its terms. A natural law represents the order of the natural world, and puts in human terms how the apparent objects of the natural world appear to be related. If the natural world is an ordered whole of such relationships, and people who try to figure out how the world works, like scientists, already presume that it is, everything natural operates according to laws of nature. The science lies in their observation, articulation, and increasingly adequate determination. But in every case, the natural world comes first.

Laws are supposed to explain things. They are supposed to answer questions, not raise them. That is, a law is supposed to put all things under its scope in terms of their common, *necessary* relations, like gravity. Whatever does not follow these necessary terms is not bound by a relationship which is supposed to arise within the

scope determined by the law. This goes for anything called a “law,” natural or not. All things in its scope necessarily fall under it, or it is not a “law.”

For a law to be a “law,” it must to tie together all the possible objects under its scope. Laws of logic tie together all logically possible things. The same goes for laws of nature. All natural objects are either bound by the laws of nature, or they are excluded as impossibilities according to these laws. Where they arise, anyways, contrary to the statement of the “law,” either we must admit of unnatural things, or the laws of nature as given are in need of revision. In any case, what makes a law a “law” is that it binds things together. Where it fails in this task, it fails as a law.

What makes logicians think the L.E.M. is a law is that, classically, logicians presume that all things are bound by its terms. So, as the L.E.M. stipulates that a thing either is or is not, at any given time, logicians take this to mean that any thing operative within the laws of logic either is or is not at any given time. However, there is a problem. Logicians presume that this goes for everything, in every context, logical, natural, or otherwise. They presume that laws of logic, like the L.E.M., have the *greatest possible scope*. Everything is bound by the laws of logic. Everything rests in a single field of logic. Thus, the L.E.M. is taken to be universally binding. For the logician, everything else, including every other sort of law, is bound to its terms.⁴³⁹ That is to say that what the Law says will, in every case, at every place, explain what is at hand: 1 or 0, a thing is *p* or is *not p*, and any other determination of the relationships at hand is *necessarily* not a possibility.

One way to picture what is going on here is to imagine the space of the whole of everything. Call it the cosmos, meaning “the order of the universe,” and the universe, literally meaning the “one story,” “uni” “-verse.” Or, if you wish, call it the “Creation,” Midgard, whatever. Just imagine that whatever *is*, is *in* this space.⁴⁴⁰ Now, the logician imagines that this space with everything in it is “logical space.” For the logician, the laws of logic are the foundation stones for the rest of the universe. They hold everything in their bounds, and are the final arbiters of what is possible, and what is not. That is, the logician imagines that the mother of all space and time is logic, and everything that arises from this space is essentially bound by its laws. Consequently, sub-spaces within this great logical arena are bound by the laws of logic, too.

From this starting point, one of these other spaces is the space of the natural, “metaphysical space.” It is bound by natural laws on the inside, and these laws are, according to the logician’s picture of the universe, ultimately grounded in the greater laws of logic. So, outside of metaphysical space, there is logical space. In other words, the laws of logic determine a greater range of possible things than do the laws of nature, but they also determine the laws of nature. The logician sees this as meaning that the space of logic is bigger than the space of nature. And, because it is larger, metaphysical space is a sub-space of logical space.

Now, there are religious reasons that many are inclined to believe in such a schema. For instance, if one is convinced that the natural world was created by some super-natural ultra-rational creator God who is situated beyond the human realm and is unbound by the laws of nature as we understand them, then that person is inclined to

see the binary logician's presumptions about the structure of the universe as, if not likely, then necessary. But, this fact is beside the point.

There is another way to picture the universe and everything in it. I tend to see things in this second way. Picture again the space of everything, and call it what you will. I take this greatest of all spaces to be determined by the laws of nature, and understand the laws of logic to apply merely to a sub-set of this natural space. On my view, laws of logic come from people who apply them to the greater natural world in order to make it appear simpler than it is, so that they can plot an order in all the change, pretend to understand it. In the end, logic and all of its formulas and simplifications helps people to feel better about their place in the world, as if they have some control. But, on my view, these are mere appearances. There is nothing necessary about them.

That the laws of logic seem to allow for a greater range of possible things than do the laws of nature is no reason to presume that logical space thus precedes, and grounds, the space of nature. In fact, that the space of logic extends beyond the natural confirms the view that the logical is a subset of the natural, rather than deny it. People think up a lot of *logically possible*, but *naturally impossible*, stuff. Then, when they find out what they *thought* was possible really *isn't*, they have to get rid of it, until what they have left is what is possible in the natural world in the first place. On this view, the natural is the fundamental, and the logical is derived from this. Binary logic might be useful for thought, but it does not govern it. After all, when one discovers how something works in the world around him, he does not check with the laws of logic to

see if he got it right. He simply proceeds to think and act on the basis of the materially confirmed result. It is when thought takes him elsewhere than what is naturally necessary that he goes wrong. And error is no basis on which to build a universe.

However a person understands the order of the universe, logic first or nature first, I call his “metaphysical starting grounds.” I think that other logicians are wrong in presuming the space of logic as their metaphysical starting grounds. I think so because even they must actually begin their speculations from within the space of nature. There is simply no “space of logic” from which they can view our natural world, and themselves within it. I think other logicians, “philosophers,” take up their metaphysical starting grounds because it makes them feel special, and powerful, and not because it has anything to do with the way things really are. They merely presume the formulas given in the comparatively simple space of logic, and then feel entitled to say what necessarily is and is not the case, without ever having to understand chemistry, or physics, or biology, or anything else of the decidedly more complex natural world. I am among the minority on this point, amongst philosophers, and especially amongst logicians. Most people working in this field presume that life, the universe, and everything are bound fundamentally and primarily by the laws of logic, of which the L.E.M. is a prime example.

Let’s test this presumption. Does the L.E.M. hold in every context? This is a complex question. That the L.E.M. is taken to be a law in the world of classical logic is one thing. For it to hold everywhere and at all times in the natural world is another

thing. For the L.E.M. to qualify as universal, however, it must satisfy the latter, stronger, requirement. Let's see if this is the case.

Let's think of p or *not p* as either *good* or *not good*. In these terms, the L.E.M. says that a thing necessarily is either good or not good at any given time, and not both. Are all things either good or not good? Aren't many things some of both? Don't many things seem good, and turn out bad, or vice versa? Are some good things good because they are bad, and vice versa? Much of life is lived in these apparently contradictory terms, at least in the natural world. Meanwhile, the L.E.M. presumes this to be impossible. Could it be that we spend much of our lives doing the impossible? Or, have we just not figured it all out well enough, yet? Could it be that, in doing the impossible according to the L.E.M., we are also doing the unnatural? So far as the L.E.M. being universal, it must also be a law of nature. If the Law really is a "law," then are we merely criminals, breaking the Law, when we do the impossible?

Let's test the L.E.M. within the space of the natural world. If it fails, here, it fails to be the grandmother of all laws from the space of logic. If a law of nature is broken, it is not a law of nature, but merely proven a poor approximation. We will find that the L.E.M. is only a "law" in the imaginary space of binary logic. Then, we will see that the presumption otherwise is the cause of a lot of serious problems here in the real world.

All naturally occurring things are part of the natural order. Now, that said, there is no such thing as a naturally occurring thought criminal who breaks the laws of nature, at least not one who fails to get caught when he acts on his criminal thoughts. Therefore, a law of nature cannot be broken, at least not by any naturally occurring thing.

This does not mean that some thoughts to the contrary are unnatural. It only means that people can be wrong about what they think. This also does not mean that there are no unnatural things. I suspect there are not, but an unnatural thing is just the sort of thing one would expect to be breaking a law of nature. Neither does this mean that there are no such things as thought criminals. That there are thought criminals seems a safe assumption, and still narrows the above unconfirmed options to two. We can presume the Law is still a law, and that we do either the unnatural or the impossible if we break it. In either case, if the Law is broken, it fails to be a “law” so ascribed.

I will assume that, if the impossible is done, we don’t spend much of our lives doing it. This is not to say that the impossible cannot be done. In fact, I think that the only things worth doing are the impossible things.⁴⁴¹ It is just to say that if the impossible is done on a routine basis, then we aren’t really doing what “impossible” is usually taken to mean. We may be doing something unusual, but that is beside the point. Laws cover unusual cases; they do not cover impossible cases. They exclude them. If the Law is a law, then it should exclude all things which are not possible, and include all things which are merely unusual. In the case of an exception, the law has excluded a clear possibility. Thus, doing the impossible is an exception to a given law, requiring that the statement of law be revised at the very least. Needless to say, this has been known to happen.

To do the impossible is to break the law, thereby denying the status of the law as law. This goes for the L.E.M. as well as for any other law. Let’s see if the L.E.M really is a law, after all.

Here is a practical, and disturbing, case. Consider the conflict in the Middle East over the territories known as Palestine and Israel. If one were to ask a stalwart defender of either side, he may say that control over the situation on his side's terms is good, and control over the situation on the other side's terms is *not* good. This attitude, naturally, excludes any middle ground. It is *p* or *not p*.

Examples of this attitude are, sadly enough, easy to come by.⁴⁴² In conversation recently, I confessed that I am a pacifist, and unable to come to terms with the violence which either side exerts on the other in their mutually exclusive efforts to control the situation. The Israeli man with whom I was speaking confessed his solution to my problem. He claimed also to be a pacifist. He turned out to be a Zionist. He suggested that I might be able to come to terms with the violence if I subscribed to the following formula, representing his own understanding of the situation: "Even a pacifist can believe in pest control."⁴⁴³ What could he have meant by this?

Let's use the Law of the Excluded Middle to test his assertion. On its face, the expression is committed to two things, pacifists and the pests in need of control. These things are exclusive. A person might be one or the other, but not both; this is one excluded middle. There is another excluded middle. Pacifists can hold to two ways of thinking about pests. Consistent with the L.E.M., a person is either a pest to be controlled, *p*, or not a pest, *not-p*. Controlled pests are good, likely they are pacifists; uncontrolled pests are not good. Let's see where this leads.

As a pacifist is essentially different than a pest in need of control, then he may deal with them as if they were any other object in the world like tables and chairs. For

example, even a pacifist can control a chair by pulling it up to a table and resting on it. When the chair meets his needs, he uses the chair for his own resting state. He is passive. The chair, hereby, is no pest. It is under control, also passive. When the chair fails to meet the terms of his needs, things are different. It gets in the way of his search for a resting place. It gets in the way of his passivity. It is broken. The broken chair is an obstacle, and in need of control. A very pesky chair.

Pests are also obstacles to rest. Per the pacifist's formula, the solution to the violent unrest in Palestine is control of the pests. These pests are out of control; that is the problem. Here is where the pacifist's solution differs from the solution for, say, a broken chair. Broken chairs can be fixed. Pests, however, are essentially unfixable. The only good chair is a fixed chair; the only good pest, however, is a dead pest. That'll fix 'em, per the pacifist's formula.

Pests are a special kind of obstacle. They are essentially bad. They are not good. On the other hand, for a pacifist, pacifists are essentially good. They are not bad. If one is a pacifist, one is not bad, and if one is not bad, then one is not a pest. If one is a pest, one is not a pacifist. By this reasoning, a pacifist pest is either not a pacifist, or not a pest. Or, simply not. *Dead*. Simple as that. Per the L.E.M., "*not p*" is "*not pacifist*" or "*pest*." A person is either one or the other. Or, a person is not, at all. This is what it is like to be an *excluded* middle. Furthermore, according to the elementary logic behind the L.E.M., "*pests are not-good*" means that "*not pest is good*," or "*not p is good*" or, even more simply, "*not-bad is good*." And this means that it is not

bad, per this pacifist's formula, if those pests are simply *not*. Quid pro quo, "even a pacifist can believe in pest control."

This logical attitude is prefigured in his natural language. Pests are nagging little critters. Pests are parasites. They prey on you. It is either you, or them. There is no in between. There is no sense making things easy for a pest, especially seeing as how pests work at making things harder for one's self. Pests of every sort are typically treated according to the option most conducive to the comfort of the one seeking pest control. There is no fixing a pest. Too expensive. There is no bargaining with a pest. It would be like negotiating with a broken chair. But, worse, pests can't be fixed like chairs. A good broken chair is a fixed chair, but a good pest is a dead pest. Pests are destroyed. Thus, the expression "even pacifists can believe in pest control" is nonsense. There is nothing passive about it.

Considering that this "pacifist" is an Israeli, and his "pests" Palestinians, "even pacifists can believe in pest control" takes on an especially sinister tone. The tone of the Zionist. Pest control means removing obstacles to rest. Pest control means killing, torturing, and bulldozing homes. Pest control means barring access to hospitals, to schools, to food and water, tearing up olive trees, slashing car tires, and shooting children who throw rocks at tanks. In a way, this *is* a solution to violent unrest. This *is* a solution to the Zionist's pest control problem. Dead people tend not to cause a lot of trouble. Dead people are extremely passive. And, conveniently for Israeli expansionists who claim God-given right to all the lands of Palestine, dead people require nowhere to

live. Thus, clearing the way for the Jewish claim to the mythical lands of Zion, lands promised by God for a Jewish-only population according to religious fable. Zionism.⁴⁴⁴

Now, there may not be anything wrong with Jewish people wanting to live together with Jewish people, but there is something very wrong with the logic at work in reaching this “solution” to a Palestinian “problem.” According to the L.E.M., one is either a pacifist or he is not. Yet, again, there is nothing passive about the Israeli’s formula. The Israeli man isn’t merely making a mistake. He hasn’t mistaken himself for a pacifist. In some sense, he really is a pacifist. After all, he isn’t the one bulldozing homes, dropping white phosphorous on schools from U.S. paid for F-16’s, or shooting pregnant women with machine guns. However, he does advocate that others commit such violence. And, this makes him a very special sort of bigot. *What he says, and what he does, how he appears, and who he is, are tragically different things.* Pacifist and not-pacifist; this man is both. He has done something that, by the L.E.M., should be impossible. And, logically speaking, this is where he goes wrong.

The Zionist has broken a law of logic. This is clear enough. But, has he broken any natural laws? Clearly not. There is nothing stopping him from doing one thing and saying another. Lots of other people do the same thing, all too often. Why? Well, perhaps in this case, the Zionist wants to feel that he has the moral high-ground, while getting what he wants no matter what it takes. This is perfectly natural. But just because it is natural does not mean it is right. It just means that the laws of logic do not govern everyday life. Life happens in the middle ground that the L.E.M. excludes.

Living in this gray middle, while speaking from either end, this Israeli man merely hides from an honest analysis of the way he chooses to live. As a hypocrite.

This reveals another way to look at the problem. There is another option for the Israeli. There is another solution, hidden under the second of his formula's excluded middles. He may remain consistent with his claim to pacifism. He may continue to maintain that "even pacifists can believe in pest control." Consistent with his pacifism, and contrary to the L.E.M., he may hold that he is a *pacifist*, as well as a *pest*, a *not-pacifist*. He may maintain that he is both *p*, and *not p*. He is a hybrid. He bridges the two poles because, after all, he laid them out in the first place. They dreamed them up from the space of his all too natural brain.

When indicting the pest in his expression, because he is both pacifist and pest, he indicts himself. He cannot put all the violent unrest on some exclusive other, per his natural attitude and its non-sensical formulation, above. After all, in advocating the control the "pests," he in fact advocates, and so becomes partly responsible, for much of the violence. And, if violence is part of the problem with pests, then he is a pest, or at least partly pest-like, himself. If he could only see himself for who he is, then the situation would appear differently.

The pest as well as the pacifist are both himself. Through this lens, the expression "even pacifists can believe in pest control" starts to make sense. If the pacifist is the pest, both the same self, then this expression may be rewritten: "even pests can believe in pest control," or "even pacifists can believe in self control." To this, I will add a final revision: "*especially pacifists can believe in self control.*"

That is, especially pacifists do not believe in the L.E.M., at least whenever it applies to human beings. Why? Because, as demonstrated in this case, once the pacifist puts others into categories which lead to violence against them, the pacifist reveals that he is actually not in control of himself. Thus, he becomes his own pest. A hypocrite. As applied to the Israeli's expression, the L.E.M. presumes an essential difference between persons: one is a pest, the other not. This essentially means: one is a person, the other not. Or, in the Israeli man's case, one person is both person and not. The middle which is excluded is any bridge between the two. The excluded middle is reconciliation. The excluded middle is the space of rest, the space of life, the space of peace. The space of the pacifist. Until one puts himself in this middle, he is nothing but a bigot, an agent of death and destruction. Life and death; this is the only space afforded by the L.E.M. as demonstrated by the Israeli's formula. Dead people stay dead, and the living make them that way; there isn't any middle ground, here. There is only "us" and "them," and "they" are as far from "us" as possible.

The L.E.M. works if the object is to close off from one another. If the persons on either side are taken to be essentially the same, these implications of the Law no longer hold. There is no other side from which to close off. There is no middle to exclude, because one's self is in it. The only obstacle left to this realization is the L.E.M. itself. Needless to say, the L.E.M. is of limited utility when one's object is to share an increasingly overburdened natural world without violence. This is the ultimate object for the pacifist, after all. It is the only one we are left with when the violent extermination of everyone "else" is no longer an option.

Ethically speaking, the L.E.M. could be renamed the Law of the Included Extremes (L.I.E.). On this logic there is no middle, only an object, and its negation. The L.I.E. is that the world consists of a bunch of 1's and 0's, on's and off's, either/or's, one extreme and its polar opposite, a positive and its absolute negation. The L.I.E. is that a thing in the world either is, or it isn't.

Practically speaking, there is no way to share a situation on this way of thinking. What this logic does is split things up, not tie things together. This seems to disqualify it as a "law," altogether. The presumption is that ours is a world divided, or at least in principle divisible, between ourselves and others to be excluded from it. By the L.I.E., it is perfectly logical that there is, already in the world, an "us" and a "them" as if it were made that way by God. This is the logic beneath guns and tanks, prejudices and arbitrary distinctions. This is the logic of mutual exclusion, and these are the tools for the removal of other living things from the otherwise shared space of life. It is obvious, as we see it now however, that the L.I.E. comes after the fact of the natural world. The L.I.E. is no law of nature. It is an excuse for ignorance. It is an excuse to kill people.

Where, then, does the Zionist find grounds for his solution by "pest control?" It is not grounded ultimately in the natural world. On his logic of exclusion, there is simply not enough world to go around. Yet, its articulation *already presumes a unified world within which exclusionary distinctions are made!* His expression is one weapon in an arsenal of exclusion imported into a natural world that is *already* shared. It says there is one world, and it is "ours," not "theirs." Yet, there "they" are. So long as "they" do not (or cannot because they are dead, or are not permitted to because they are isolated

from access to the press, for example) object to being removed from this one world, the Zionist has no reason not to be a pacifist. Once they do, or can, he finds his reason for violence: *so that he can again pretend to be a pacifist!* His position may be arrived at logically, but not by any law of nature. It excludes possibilities that are clearly hidden beneath the natural middle his artificial logic excludes. He already lives in a shared world. The pests he has a problem only exist as “pests” because of his own bigotry. Where does he find grounds for his logic? At the bottom of his own cold heart, by way of his own closed conscience. It is his nature, and that is the end of that.

This presents us with a problem. Though even the Zionist presumes one world within which to force distinctions, can that world be reunited once the Zionist has used the L.I.E. to tear it apart? That is to say, is there a place for the L.I.E. in the natural world, at all? The answer to this is no, not unless that unified natural world is reduced to a universally bound field of mutual exclusion and global conflict. War. World War. This is what it feels like to be “globalized” under this logic. All at home on Armageddon.

But, this is neither a surprise, nor is it for all persons on Earth altogether unwelcome. Consider the endorsement of the L.I.E. in terms of the world’s old religious stories, including those that some construe promise Israel to the Zionists, even though where this land should be and how large is in doubt, as well as the fact that similar fables also show that the people who are supposed to inherit these God-given lands were at one time thrown out of these same lands for holding the value of wealth about that of God. We will touch on the implications of this misstep, repeated systematically,

in the following chapter. Here, we should discuss the implications of the religious L.I.E. in general.

Religions posit ultimate realities, and these are essentially exclusive of one another. After all, there can be only one ultimate reality. It is senseless to speak of an ultimate anything in plurality. Thus, the L.I.E. of religion leads to mutual exclusion on a global scale. The ultimate reality of these ultimate exclusions is ultimate conflict. There is nothing surprising, here. The greatest religious L.I.E.'s predict it. The end of the world in fiery warring death, the Apocalypse, and, for all its exclusion, this final conflict is ultimately shared. Though I, for one, wish these bigots would keep their cold-hearted conflicts to themselves, there is nowhere else for the rest of us to go. We are stuck in the space of life in the middle of the conflict. There is one world, shared, one planet Earth, and they are bent on tearing it apart. There is simply no getting past it.

Yet, we have already seen the limits inherent in this way of thinking. Forced to look more closely at the logic underlying the stories which have brought us to this end, their limits should be readily apparent.

The greatest L.I.E. religious myths is that the end of the world is a necessary end resulting from the "law of god." On these accounts, this god is the exclusive designer of natural law. It is in the space of god that natural law arises, and it is in terms of the law of god that these natural laws gain their validity, not the other way around. This picture should look familiar. These people take the logical before the natural, and we have seen how this reasoning fails.

But that does not keep people from thinking that way. So construed, the ultimate end of the world in fiery warring conflict is the natural result of an ongoing battle between good and evil, heaven and hell, light and dark. In other words, the ultimate end of the world is inescapable by way of the logic which divides the world into 1's and 0's. This should also look familiar. It is only possible on the basis of a world which is already and originally one, but which has been turned upside down on the basis of a lie. In this light, the L.I.E. might as well stand for "Leads to an Inverted Earth," because that is the result of generations of bigots who divide the world for their own benefit at the expense of so many others. It is for persons of conscience to undo this damage.

The first step is to avoid global war. We have seen how the narratives in terms of which persons live their lives point to the inevitability of such a thing. In terms of the myths specific to the West, the ultimate end of the world is revealed in the Christian New Testament book of Revelations. The inclusion of this portion into the final arrangement that is the New Testament is controversial. It likely was included on the basis of bad information, but that is beside the point. The end-time it describes has been called the "Apocalypse."

But, we have seen the holes in the logic by way of which this end-time is approached. Recall our analysis of the word "apocalypse." "Apocalypse" is a word ominous in Christian theology because of its association with the destruction which marks the end of the world as described in the New Testament. It can be traced to 16th century Latin meaning "revelation, disclosure." But the word appears in the history of thought much earlier than the controversial book of Revelations. "Apocalypse" is from

the Greek, “apo” meaning “from” and “kalyptein” meaning “to cover, conceal.” “Apocalypse,” according to its original significance, thus merely means to remove from cover or concealment, to reveal. Apocalypse is discovery, and was discovery long before any Christian claimed it stood for something else. Thus, apocalypse has nothing necessarily to do with the end of the world. All that is destroyed in an apocalypse, properly understood, is ignorance.

The destruction of ignorance shouldn't mark the end of anything. Especially, it should not mark the end of the world. Not for any thinking person. For any thinking person, the end of ignorance is the mark of a new beginning. And, it is to this new beginning that we now turn. After that, it is up to you.

15 Conscience, and the beginning of the world.

They may imprison or torture or take away our lives, but they can never take away our freedom to choose what is right and just.

-- Army 1st Lt. Ehren Watada⁴⁴⁵

Frankly, dear public, *you are being robbed*.

-- Frederic Bastiat⁴⁴⁶

And I think that probably the only remedy for that is to throw the rascals out.

-- The Court⁴⁴⁷

We have covered a lot of ground in this text. We have gone from the innermost core of the human mind to the heights of its creation. We have covered everything from primitive life to the life worth living, from religion to politics, from the natural order to the virtual world. Two themes have threaded through the center, from beginning to end: freedom and necessity. We began with questions about what one needs to be free, where freedom comes from and what one needs to do because of it. We end now with answers, to free one's self from need so that one can do what is necessary to maintain one's freedom.

This chapter is our last. It marks the completion of a long journey. An odyssey that began, and now returns to the most important topic of all. Our selves. In the first Book, we set out the universal logic of conscience. We pictured its mechanism, and discovered the wellspring of universal moral law. In the second Book, we traced the shape of a life lived according to this law. We found it in theory and in practice to be the life worth living, and explored the possibilities that living such a life entails. In this third Book, we have turned increasingly outward, from our role in the making of the world to

the world we are making. And that leaves us with one final task, to explore the world as it is, and our role in changing it.

We began with one self, alone in a pub, open to the world of sensation and constructing from these cues the space of a single life. We now end otherwise. Together in the limitless expanse of history with the power to shape not only one's own life, but all of them. We began with a view from the inside, out. Our travels since have allowed us to look down with a bird's eye view on the grand space that contains all of our lives, from the outside, in. From there, we saw heroes and monsters rise and fall, the origins of evil and good in everyday life, and found our fortunes foretold in the fables that bring petty gods to life and keep great men in death. Thus, we learned that we are the authors of our own past and future, that we compose our life stories even as we live them. Life is history in the making. The trick is to make the history we want, rather than merely repeating the history we are given.

As we explored the history that is being made, today, we ran into some deep problems. We found in the framework of the contemporary world a certain form of logic, a bipolar logic, binary logic. We found that this logic of 1's and 0's tears the world apart, acting as the absolute antithesis to conscience. Accordingly, we saw that living in light of such logic leads persons to do two things. First, it leads them to neglect the natural world, the womb of all past and future history. And second, it leads to the compulsory violation of the universal law of morality.

We examined two institutions which, together, demonstrate these results. Their proponents polarize the world, tearing it apart from the top down. These are science

and religion. Yet, for all of their proclaimed differences, we discovered that they converge on the single most important aspect of the historical narrative pointing us all collectively onward. They point to a common end. And, it is not a happy one.

Together, science and religion deliver an objective view on our collective future, on the world ahead, the “Promised Land.” It is a world in ruin. If we continue on our current path, science promises natural disaster, and religion promises the “Apocalypse.” In either case, tragedy. If we wish to avoid this outcome, then we must come to terms with the following fact. Our current world order – economic, social, political - is not sustainable. The ways of life which suit this order are not sustainable. Thus, the world that we are collectively making, the history that we are collectively composing, is drawn into question. We must change it.

This fact bears a budding irony. The irony is that the view on the crises which threaten our world comes from the high water mark of their cause. We have worked to get where we are for a very long time. The stories and standards to whose terms we have aspired and according to which we have “progressed” have held our tragic end as a carrot before our collective cart, and we have arrived on hot wheels. The irony is that what these stories told us was good, and what really *is* good, have turned out to be tragically different things. The irony is this. It is only now that we are here that we can see the situation we have struggled so long to secure for what it really is, bad

Our current situation is not a good one. How we can get out of it will come clear in the following pages. However, one thing is clear, now, and this one thing is enough to offer some hope. As our days and works become increasingly bound together, we are

increasingly bound to a common end, and this common end is the natural world to which all life eventually returns. This natural world is a single world. It is shared. It is ours. Thus, the crises that confront us are not problems with nature. They are problems with us. And, it is up to us to solve them.

We live in a world of our own making. As we determine for ourselves what sort of life to live, we determine the sort of world that we need in order to live it. As we determine the world, we determine each other, because every other must live in this world as well. What any one person does affects what another may do. Whatever sort of person one person becomes affects who another may become. In fact, it may be said that the situation that one makes for one's self *effects* – not merely affects – the sort of person that another becomes. This is due to the fact that the situation to which others must come to terms is the product of one's own everyday actions. And, that the terms to which one comes are those from which he must act. Life is history in the making, and making history is no more than doing something while one is alive. Everything else is idle chatter.

This effect extends far into the future. What one does now *effects* the situation into which future persons will be born. What one does now determines what others must do later, in effect predetermining who they must become in order to get it done. One must merely look around to catch a glimpse of what sort of person this will turn out to be. At the local level, if one person leaves garbage on the street, then others must become persons who find a way to live in garbage. On the global level, if one State generates citizens and harbors corporations who leave their garbage in the rivers,

oceans, atmosphere and orbits, then everyone everywhere must eventually find a way to live in a lot of garbage.⁴⁴⁸

It is ironic that this can be seen so clearly when what we are doing now and largely have been doing for decades, even the smallest and seemingly most innocent things, are mostly mistakes. They will require a correction, and demand that future persons become the sorts of persons and live the sorts of lives necessary to correct them, even if that means doing nothing at all. For instance, someone will have to wait 10,000 years until the molecules of the Styrofoam plate I just ate a frozen pizza from breaks down. Of course, the problem isn't so much that only I, one person, used one Styrofoam plate. The problem is that lots of other people use them, too. Thus, the crises that currently confront us are not problems with the natural world. They are problems with us, and it is up to us to solve them. We must change. Otherwise, should we simply keep doing as we have been doing, the Earth will quickly run afoul in 4 day old cole slaw and the rest all stuck to a toxic accretion of old plastic plates, and we will find ourselves confronted with a problem that nothing can solve. Tragedy. There is no escaping this fact.

Even by repeating little mistakes, minor mistakes at the local level now, we collectively condemn countless unborn children to an increasingly bad situation later. Confronted with ever deepening crises, they will be even less free to do otherwise than we are today. They will be desperate to act, to solve the problems with which they will be saddled, without the leisure to determine for themselves what is good. They will know no freedom, no luxury, no leisure, only necessity. What will they be forced to do?

Who will they be forced to become? What sort of person wants to live in someone else's garbage? Answer this question and you will see not only the sort of world we are working so hard to leave behind, but the sort of persons we are prefiguring will live well within it. Not good.

Good people, it must be said, do not do well in a bad world. And the picture of the world to come is not a good one. Subjectively speaking, the world is an increasingly bad place to be a good person, already.⁴⁴⁹ However, if we continue to do as we have done, the people of the future will be forced to do worse. They will be desperate. Desperate to be free. Desperate to escape the garbage. The pollution. The disease and the famine. They will be desperate people, in desperate situations, forced to do desperate things. And desperate is decidedly not good. It is bad.

Yet, if not to this divinely preordained Apocalyptic end of the world, if not to an economically fueled exhaustion of world resources, a greedy grab and dump at once depleting and poisoning the one global house we must keep well ordered in order to survive at all, to which end should we aim?

This text has, so far, developed the following answer. We must first picture a world worth living in, a world worth saving. Then, we can begin to live lives that suit it. Thus, we can change the world by changing ourselves. To save the world, we must make history.

We must begin by changing ourselves to suit the terms of a world saved, rather than a world at its end. We can re-order the world, but first we re-order our understanding of it. The new world order will be born, as was wisdom, from our heads.

Or, we can merely repeat the old ways, and continue on the path that brought us to this point. We can continue to train ourselves through social and religious ritual to meet the terms of situations two-thousand, two hundred, or even twenty years gone. We can make it our mission to satisfy the prophecy of some mad-hatched fable, to pledge allegiance to our mutually assured self-destruction, or to pursue the reckless stand-in for real freedom every Sunday morning, Monday morning or Friday night. We can, rather than make history, allow history to make us. And frankly, subjectively speaking, for my own self, such an end simply will not do.

Still, even with a mind to change ourselves, make history, and leave the world a good place for good people to live within it, we must prepare to overcome two obstacles. The first is that we must genuinely appropriate the history that has led to the need for change in the first place. The second is that we must plan for a place to go once this history has been understood and change it initiated, so that the same mistakes are not simply repeated. We must both understand what we are changing from and what we are changing to. So, let's begin at the beginning. Let's start with where we are, now.⁴⁵⁰

As discussed in previous chapters, our world is increasingly "globalized." This means more than that all human beings share one globe. It means that we all share one common end, the end of our globalized world, and are supposed to live with one purpose in common, that being the realization of this end. This one purpose in common is assigned by the system that provides the framework for this globalization. Globalization, as noted in the last chapter, is largely a virtual enterprise. The world is

tied together into a single globe through the medium of computers. Virtual reality. And, that chapter examined the logic by way of which this world of pure appearance is assembled. We found that the virtual world leads to the destruction of natural and social systems on which it ultimately relies. It exists as a logical realm exclusive of the natural world, and is therefore unsustainable. Thus, we found that this ultimate assembly of bivalent logic, the modern Tower of Babel built of the brick and mortar of a single language, 1's and 0's, is a tragedy waiting to happen.

In the last chapter, we also discovered binary logic at work in the banality of religious bigotry. There, we explored the implications of the application of bivalent logic to the lives of human beings. It is a system of exclusion that divides people against themselves. Its application forces others into categories into which one would not place himself, so violating the first law of morality. It leads to apartheid, dividing walls, check points, and burnt olive branches. It leads not to one world shared, but to a world torn apart. It leads to war. Domination and submission. Life and death. Thus, we discovered that constructs of bivalent logic carry the source of their own demise, how the logic that unifies the world tears it apart, how the bricks that make up the Tower of Babel also bring it down. In the end, we found that bivalent logic is a language only for those in whom conscience is closed, for whom history is closed. And gladly, also closed is our review of how a handful of bigots can turn our shared world into their concentration camp.

However, our analysis of the world in which we live requires one final chapter before we are ready to set out for a better one. Globalization involves more than a

sand-castle concentration-camp system of applied logic. It consists of more than a virtual world, a world at war, and the laws that govern them. Globalization represents a system of economics. It represents a material world, filled with material things, material persons, and the laws and conventions which govern it. Is the logic at work in this system any more sound? Can it bring the world together, while these others seem to tear it apart?

Economics is an old word. Originally, it stood for the science involved in properly ordering one's house. Currently, it most commonly stands for the multiple modes in terms of which the great house of humanity might be ordered all at once. Communism, socialism, capitalism, feudalism, all of these represent ways to order the material world of human affairs. By and large, however, globalization is driven by only one of these possible modes. Capitalism. Capitalism binds the global project in common, and all under its umbrella to a common end. This is individual liberty. Capitalism is supposed to begin with and lead to liberty, and liberty is in some sense another word for freedom. Capitalism, thus, is a system of free persons working towards the increased freedom of persons. At least, this is supposed to be the case. Let's see if it is in fact the case.

Individual liberty might be equated with the freedom to determine for one's self what is a life worth living, accompanied by the power to in deed live this way. It might be assumed that increasing liberty should lead to increasing equality, and that this increasing equality would lead to increasing justice. This is how we have defined freedom throughout this text, and these are the results of its maximization as foretold by this text. However, such presumptions would be mistaken. Allow me to explain.

Freedom in the capitalist system can be equated with monetary wealth. Monetary wealth represents the power to purchase the things that one needs. As we have seen, one is free when his needs are met. At such times, one is at leisure. One is at liberty to de-liberate, that is to tie one's self to some end of one's own free choice. At leisure to do what one wishes, one can pursue some end that is not otherwise necessary. In terms of capitalism, thus, freedom has an initial limit. One is only as free as capital is available. Freedom is proportional to wealth. One is at liberty to do all that his capital allows him to do. Freedom is access to necessary objects, and wealth is the key to a life free of unmet needs.

It stands to reason that everyone wants to be free. Everyone, in any case, wants their needs to be met. In these terms, it would seem that capitalism is a system that represents the interests of all persons equally well, and so is a system under which equality could be realized. With the interests of all persons equally represented, it would also seem to be a system which is essentially just, or that at least might lead to an increasingly just world on its basis. Appearance, however perpetuated, are deceiving.

Though it is presumed that everyone is equal under capitalism, it ends up that some persons are more equal than others. The idea is that one wins freedom, gains wealth and leisure, through hard work. And, all things being equal, every person has a more or less equivalent capacity to work hard. Motivation, dedication, relentless pursuit of one's dream, these are the clarion calls of the aspiring capitalist. The presumption is that purchasing power, and the access to objects (and opportunities) which mark

freedom on its basis, is a consequence of merit. "You get what you deserve; you end up where you belong," so the fable of capitalism goes.

However, as in any story, there are winners and losers. Not everyone gets to be free. How well and how fast one's needs are met does define one's success. Liberty is still the measure of a happy ending in the capitalist narrative. But, this measure applies regardless of effort. Some enjoy leisure without ever lifting a finger. Others work their entire lives and end up with nothing. Without power to purchase, without access to objects (and opportunity), without even their most basic needs met, many people end up decidedly un-free. They end up unhealthy, and unhappy, in a bad situation. Desperate. Powerless. Unable to change things. Meanwhile, those who have the capital have the power to change things. But, still in pursuit of the single end ascribed on the capitalist fairy tale, they simply go on as they always had. They accumulate more wealth. Enjoy increasing liberty. And the gap between haves and have-nots becomes the gap between success and servitude, master and slave.

This is the downside of capitalism that its champions are not so up front about. As the system is applied over generations, it leads to systematic inequality, not the other way around. The result is a state of affairs radically different than that put forward by its proponents. Rather than providing for increasing liberty and individual independence, capitalism has generated mostly rabid poverty and institutional dependence.

For instance, where once a person could eat healthy nutritious food from a home garden, trade with his neighbors and live in peace as a standing member of a community whose members all held their fates together as one in common, now that

person increasingly eats unhealthy non-nutritious food from a corporate restaurant out to profit on his hunger, is taxed for his transaction by a distant government out to profit from his consumption, and is harassed by mercenary police who prosecute laws which do not arise from the needs of the community, at all, but who profit from its destruction. Where garden food was nearly free, refined foods are expensive, more so for the fact that the person must now consume expensive nutritional supplements to replace lost nutrients, suffer expensive medical treatments from failing health due to poor nutrition, and work providing similar disservices to others in order to pay for it all. Where one might at one time have happily lived a simple life caring for his family and his friends by way of little else but the opportunity slowly growing outside his own kitchen window, he now needs a car, or two, telephones and computers and PDA's, government issued licenses and dry-cleaned suits and day-care centers, three jobs to pay for it all, and in the end he has no time left to care for any of it, including him self. This is not freedom. This is slavery. All the result of "progress" according to the fable of capitalism.

By setting out the ends toward which persons live their lives, and by providing the terms that persons must meet to reach these ends, global capitalism is more than an economic system. It is a narrative structure. And the story that it tells is not a good one. It is a story within which persons are bound to do bad things. It demands that they deny the liberty of others in order to secure their own. It is the story of slave and master. This is the meaning of life with a happy ending within the narrative frame of capitalism. The upshot of its globalization is that the slaver's sensibilities need not be offended by

the condition of the persons whose servitude he commands. This is why the poor slaves are so often kept on the other side of the globe.

Each subject to capitalism is born indentured to this system of economics even as he or she is born into the ongoing narrative that plots its expansion. His given object in life is to overcome the obstacles between himself and the freedom which had been stolen from him through the power of wealth. Wealth is secured either by producing an object which answers to the existing needs of others, or by identifying and creating a need that others never knew they had, and supplying the newly discovered “necessity” at the price the market will bear, a vicious cycle. This newly invented “need” is then purchased by others, thereby transferring to the creator some of the purchaser's purchasing power. This wealth the seller then uses to free himself from other perceived needs, overcoming other perceived obstacles to freedom.

Individual liberty, freedom according to the capitalist fable, is the product of chaining some one else to a need he otherwise didn't even know he had, and so likely doesn't need. Buying one's way out of this slavery is the only lasting value of any material wealth. One seeks wealth in order to buy his freedom back from the very system that originally promised individual liberty, but that sold him, instead, into servitude. Bait, and switch.

Accordingly, one's own happy ending comes only at the expense of someone else's. That is, one can secure a happy ending for himself if and only if he can liberate enough wealth from other people in order to finance the rising tide of need that perpetually threatens to drown him, indentured, in the salty sea of servitude out of which

he had originally, accordingly to the capitalist fable, crawled. One person's freedom comes only from another person's slavery. What one person does effects what another must do. What one person becomes determines who another must become.

Of course, all of this sounds bad enough should only one person live this way. One swindler can ruin a lot of lives, and one slaver can keep a lot of slaves. The real problems appear when people in general follow suit. Then, doing for one's self at another's expense becomes the norm, rather than the immoral exception. Each begins as a slave in a race to ensnare his fellows first, until soon all are chained by need to one another, with the "free" person simply he with the most others chained to him rather than the other way around. The result is an ever expanding "Ponzi" scheme, whereby one person is afforded freedom only on the backs of an ever deepening pool of people who will never know it.

This is the economic reality that confronts us all, every global citizen, every minute of our mundane lives. This is how our global house is increasingly ordered, and ourselves along with it. The fable of capitalism demands that increasing numbers of people constantly increase the number of needs in order to increase the wealth necessary for increasing numbers of people to increase their own individual liberty. This is why the economic house of capitalism keeps growing. it *must* keep growing! And it is why the life of leisure is increasingly distant for increasing numbers of persons rather than the other way around. The obstacles to its security are simply too great. The price of freedom too high. They work their entire lives without the liberty to do otherwise. And, it is all by design.

The portrait of the process that I am painting here is not original. The irony that leads to the tragic end of capitalism, the end at which we all now find ourselves, was captured by an earlier critic of this brand of economics, Frederic Bastiat. In his brilliant text *Economic Sophisms.*, he had the following to say about the logic that moves market economies:

All producers reason in the same manner. The shipowner derives his profits from the obstacle called distance; the farmer, from that called hunger; the textile manufacturer, from that called cold; the teacher lives on ignorance; the jeweler, on vanity; the lawyer, on greed; the notary, on possible bad faith, just as the physician lives on the illnesses of mankind. It is therefore quite true that each profession has an immediate interest in the continuation, even the extension, of the particular obstacle that is the object of its efforts. Seeing this, theorists attempt to found a system on the basis of these attitudes on the part of individuals and declare that need is wealth, that labor is wealth, and that the obstacle to well-being is well-being itself. To multiply obstacles is, in their eyes, to encourage industry.⁴⁵¹

Capitalism thrives in the creation of unnecessary needs, profitable obstacles, and the exploitation of the needy. All industries under the capitalist umbrella can be seen as members of a single industry, the manufacture of chains, physical and metaphysical, and the chaining of otherwise free persons. Moreover, for capitalism to continue to thrive, its system of unnecessary needs must expand. More people must be chained in more ways. It is in this light that we must view all of the unnecessary wars of aggression, the ongoing occupation of sovereign nations and the continued military expansion of the figurehead of capitalism, the American empire. This is the freedom that we are fighting for, that so many young people, innocent people, children and women are dying for. This is why the bullets are flying and the bombs dropping. This is the way of life that we are “defending.” In fact, it is only in this light that the occupation

of a sovereign country can ever be seen as a defense. To defend capitalism is to defend a way of life that cannot reach a comfortable balance. It knows only one logic – expand. This is its nature. It is predatory. It does not seek equilibrium. No. It must grow.

Growth is the north star of capitalism. Economic growth is the measure of its progress. Every nightly newscast, every political pundit and every cheerleader for material wealth trumpets the boon that is economic growth, and laments the bane that is economic shrinkage. Growth is the only forward movement that this story allows. That is why when an economy shrinks, it is not simply called a “shrinking economy.” It is called a “recession.” Recede means “to go back.” So, rather than see a slowdown in the transfer of capital from one party to another as a good thing, meaning that people by and large have what they need, or have the means to produce what they need for themselves, and so are independent, self-sustaining - free – the capitalist sees it as a bad thing. It would be better if people bought more stuff, whether they need it or not. This would keep the economy growing. The capital flowing. The story would continue on toward its happy ending, regardless of the condition of the persons living in these terms.

For a person who lives and dies in terms of the capitalist fable, economic recession is more than bad. It is death. Evil. And the moral duty of every person to avoid it.

For the economy to shrink, for wealth to remain in the hands of the people, for the people to be able to produce for themselves all that they need, and trade within their

community without the use of paper money, without paying taxes and without allowing the private banks to track their every transaction, capitalism fails. It is, altogether, an unnecessary system, motivated by unnecessary people in unnecessary roles. For capitalism to fail, these people fail. Their way of life fails. And this is why the fable of capitalism is maintained with all the power of government and conventional law. After all, it is only a system. For a system to fail means nothing, unless there are people who are unable to let it go. For it to end in this way is for them all to come to a less than happy ending. Thus, in this first decade of the 21st century, as capitalism has failed all but the very few who hold the most chains of all, we have been increasingly warned of perceived threats, “systemic risks” to financial institutions “too big to fail.” These institutions, it bears noting, are in every case only money-lenders. Corporations, labor unions, neighborhoods, families, all of these are not worth saving. The only way of life worth saving, if government actions provide any clue, are those that constitute the spine of capitalism. The system of money-lenders. The banking system. And, in order to prop this system up, an impossible sum of money has been diverted away from those who create it through the (illegal) taxation of their labor to an elite group of already wealthy people who never had to, and will never have to, work an honest day in their immoral lives. This is the irony of capitalism, never more obvious than it is today. The slaves make the chains, and the slavers call it freedom.

However, a shrinking economy might mean another thing. For the economy to recede, after all, is for the chains to come off, for the obstacles to be overcome, and for all of the unnecessary industry that composes the capitalist narrative to become what it

is, unnecessary. At least, it could be understood this way. And, if it were understood this way, then we would have taken a strong first step in changing the world for the better. So, let's look more closely at this thing, "economic growth," to see what it really is before we discard it as the guiding light toward a world worth living in.

On the capitalist's scheme, economic growth is more than simply one good thing amongst a whole set of others. Economic growth is *the* good. It is life and livelihood. It is every person's mortal duty to keep the economy growing. "Work harder to buy more." That is the way of life that the capitalist champions. And, considering the way that this way of life is represented, and the way that its supposed system of delivery is advertised, it is understandable that so many people continue to mistake it for a life worth living.

Economic growth is supposed to represent increasing opportunities. And increasing opportunities are supposed to reflect increasing freedoms. As the economy grows, proponents of capitalism promise that increasing numbers of persons will become increasingly free to meet their increasing needs. Because everyone wants to be free, and have their needs met, and economic growth is supposed to make this possible, most persons are easily convinced of this account. They take it that to multiply obstacles is to encourage industry, that to encourage industry is to encourage wealth, and to encourage wealth is to encourage freedom. In so doing, they come to trust that economic growth is not only *good*, but the single most important good. *The good.*

When economic growth is mistaken for *the good*, persons mistake the obstacles to their well-being as their well-being itself. Consequently, they end up in situations increasingly worse off than those in which they began. See, capitalism is a sort of generations long Ponzi scheme. The first persons to invest in the scheme often come out ahead. And, they can pass this fortune down to their descendants, who might also do well. They win. However, the vast majority on whom these people prey lose. They are the losers. And they are constantly barraged by misinformation from on high that it is not too late to win. They can accumulate wealth, and liberate themselves from their chains, all through the magic of capitalism. All they must do is create obstacles to the well-being of others. They must contribute to the good as given by capitalism. In so doing, they are compelled to violate the moral law. In fact, they are compelled to make a way of life out of violating the moral law. They are compelled to put others into situations not only which they would not seek for their own, but which they are desperately trying to escape. The moral world is turned upside down. And, here is how it happens.

On the global capitalist's scheme, economic growth is presented to be what philosopher's call an "intrinsic good." Intrinsically good, economic growth is good for its own sake. It makes all other good things possible. It is not merely that growth is a good amongst other goods. It is that *growth for the sake of growth is good*. And this ends up being a very bad thing. Let me explain.

Most good things come by way of other things. For example, exercise produces health and brushing teeth reduces cavities. These are called "extrinsic goods," because

what makes them good is something besides themselves, health and clean teeth. Health is the good to which exercise aims. But, economic growth is supposed to be different. Under the globalist capitalists' scheme, the fundamental good toward which all other things both aim *and* the basis on which they are good in the first place is economic growth. Economic growth makes other things good, and these other things are good because they make the economy grow.⁴⁵² However you slice it, economic growth is good, and everything else stems from this presumed fact. Economic growth, thus, is intrinsically good.

For example, exercise produces health, so fewer become ill and more work longer, faster, better and this reduces health care insurance costs, and this is good for the bottom line, and this is good for the economy. More efficient workers produce a greater array of objects to meet the increasing needs of those increasing numbers of other persons successful enough to gain access to those objects by also providing objects for still others to access.⁴⁵³ Thus, the bottom line provides the structure of the story within which we are to live: linear, continuing on in the same simple terms, from material to mouth, insemination to incineration. So the story goes, and so the economy grows. Nothing changes.

Economic growth is supposed to be the good which binds all of our individual liberties in common. If you can maximize this, you can maximize the good everywhere else, and if you maximize the good everywhere else, you maximize this. Globalization always and already comes down to economic growth. "Growth is good." Or, so it would seem.⁴⁵⁴

As this process continues, the increasing numbers of otherwise unnecessary “needs” require a commensurate expansion of the space of opportunity required to secure these needs. This, in turn, requires a proportional increase in the use of natural resources to supply them. And here is where the hard facts of the matter come to bear.

The fact is that natural resources, and opportunities to secure them, are limited. With increasingly limited resources from which to produce novel objects representative of novel opportunities for success, and with increasingly restricted access not only to the resources, the way to the good life is increasingly difficult to discover. This fact, however clear, doesn’t keep people from wanting to be free, from wanting their needs to be met, or from pursuing whatever options bad leadership puts before them. They just keep pushing, while leadership keeps telling them it is the right thing to do, the only way to succeed.⁴⁵⁵

However, there is only so much room at the top, and these seats are largely long since filled. The resulting pressure against these structural limitations is what might be called a “powder-keg.” Now, being a “powder-keg,” we already know how this story ends. Boom! But, that doesn’t keep some people from telling the story, that global capitalism is good, and still others from believing the story, that globalization might save them from poverty. That all actually do take this myth to be true does not change the fact that all, together, within this mythical structure, are living toward an inevitable end, an ultimate explosion.

This narrative structure is not original to human beings. Modern man isn’t the only critter on the planet to live for that intrinsic good, “growth for the sake of growth.”

There are other critters in the natural world for which growth is also intrinsically good. There are living things which share the structure of this failing human economy.⁴⁵⁶ Anything which maximizes growth regardless of the security of its future situation can be counted amongst those things which share in this economic orientation. Algae, fungi, and viruses can be counted amongst them.⁴⁵⁷ All, of course, are known to bloom and die as they unthinkingly exhaust the pool of resources on which they depend. And none are typically understood to be critters with conscience.

There is one reference which is especially fitting for our current situation, however. That is cancer. Cancer grows for the sake of its own growth to the detriment of the system which supports it, regardless of its own best interests. "Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell."⁴⁵⁸ The human economy, so far as it has been globalized, also grows for the sake of growth regardless to the detriment of the system that supports it, the planet Earth. Here is where you and I enter the picture. Here is where you and I are not only responsible, but to blame for the situation. Once we emplot ourselves within this economic narrative, each of us becomes a part of this organization which maximizes growth of the whole at the eventual expense of ourselves. Each of us, in other words, becomes like a cancerous cell.

Cancer consists of cells each of which consume and divide and add the pressure of their own needs to the powder-keg of their collectively selfish short-sighted virulence. The end that goes "Boom!" in any local cancer is called "metastasis." That is, the cancer spreads to other parts of the system. It colonizes. This picture should look familiar; we currently live inside of the economic equivalent. Metastatic globalization.

At every colonial locus, the object of cancerous cells – actual or metaphorical - is access to resources. They forcibly develop the infrastructure necessary to increase supplies of their own object, in the case of cancer, living blood, in the case of the economy, human labor. The cancer cells spread chemical information which causes the formation of new blood vessels which bring them the resources they need to keep growing.⁴⁵⁹ Thus, each cell plays its part in redirecting the resources which otherwise maintain a healthy system - as a healthy whole - to meet its own selfish needs for growth in particular, and for the moment.

Consider the everyday human parallel in the everyday space of value. Look around, and witness persons acting similarly to how one might expect a cancerous cell to act, uncaring of their own misuse of resources and of the sick world they leave behind, uncaring of the misuse of human workers, uncaring for the condition of the natural environment on which it all depends. There are HUMVEES speeding by without cargo and without a single passenger. There are obese men in t-shirts with air conditioners turned up and doors left open. There is garbage in the streets from snack foods and cigarettes. There are shiny-shoed weapons dealers fat and happy on the suffering of others, for now they can direct the resources of the world to deliver them HUMVEES, snack foods, shiny shoes and cigarettes. These lives suit a dying system. Or, more accurately, a system on its slow way to suicide.

Remember that Socrates' concern was the health (justice, the good) of the system as a whole and not how fat particular cells (wealthy men) can become on others' suffering. Socrates also felt that men are essentially good, or healthy, but are corrupted

to do the wrong things on the basis of bad information. Consider that cancerous cells are merely mutations, deviations, from healthy cells. They have bad information which moves them to behave like a fungus, or a virus. They are especially dangerous because they embody apparently successful all-or-nothing ways of life. The logic of this life is 'us or them,' 'with me or against me,' 1's or 0's, which, when taken up by other cells, more rapidly destroy the integrity of the system as a whole.⁴⁶⁰ Healthy cells resist, but when the system as a whole becomes unhealthy enough, their resistance is weakened, and the organism is eventually over-run.

Cancer kills. It doesn't have a heart that beats. It doesn't have a conscience. It doesn't care that it puts others into situations that it would not seek for its own. When it comes to cancer, the cells must be destroyed, or the situation as a whole becomes very bad. There are two options. They must be reclaimed with the help of the organism's immune system (that is, they are killed off by agents internal to the system, whose purposes are the maintenance of the integrity of the system as a whole) and their supportive infrastructures broken down, with resources redirected to globally healthy ends. Or, some agent from outside the system must intervene and remove the destructive bodies. When it comes to cancer, the latter case requires a surgeon, chemical and radioactive therapies. Of the two, from a clinical standpoint, this is not the preferred route.

Consider again the current human situation in light of these results. We may either wait for divine intervention (a surgeon) and continue on destructive paths, or we may actively take up the interests of the global community. We may determine ways of

life which do not invite an early end to the whole of the natural world order, merely so some elite few can become overly-fat, overly-wealthy, and overtly-consumptive for the time being. Ethically speaking, self-determination is the preferred route, reclaiming the immune system, the integrity of the system as a whole.

We are in the midst of conflict between proponents of either strategy. Proponents of the first option attack proponents of the second option for a lack of faith in the existence of a great extra-dimensional Surgeon in the Sky. They confirm economic imperialism in terms of their own religious “-isms,” for instance “dominionism” and “Zionism” and “nationalism” and “capitalism” and “neo-conservatism.” It is also no surprise that would-be proponents of the second option increasingly end up jailed, tortured, maimed, and murdered. They reject economic imperialism in terms of “pacifism” and “liberalism” and “naturalism” and “democratic socialism.” We are on the cusp.⁴⁶¹

Granted that there is no Surgeon in the Sky, however good a “rapture” removing the cancerous cells would be for the rest of planet Earth, it is up to us to deal with the problem. For those of us living in terms of this second option, the clinically and ethically preferred option, for those of us able to ask the question, the problem is: *What are we going to do about it?*

Let's start with a review. Without the sprawling infrastructure required by the currently metastasizing capitalist economics, and the logic that propels it, globalization cannot get off the ground. This economic structure is progressive. It is built from bricks of increasing needs joined to increasing numbers with a mortar of greed. These two

terms, need and number, wind around one another trading advances. This is where we enter the picture. It is a picture of mankind climbing spiral stair steps of progress from past to present and upwards like the floors of an ever rising tower. Its progress unifies the contemporary world under one ultimate objective. Growth is good. The order must expand. Where to next? The stars?⁴⁶² We are at the high-point of history.

Look around. Reflect on the view. From atop this structure, we can now see the true cost of our project. It is not sustainable. Without increasing from decreasing resources, it will crumble, crash, and take much of the world with it. It is increasingly difficult to maintain, and men around the world kill and maim and torture to secure the resources necessary to keep it standing.⁴⁶³ With or without our own planning, it must change, and it will change around us. We are confronted with a vicious irony: the view on this crisis is from the high water mark of its cause. And, that cause is us; this picture is a mirror. What we subjectively have called the good, and what, objectively, is the good, are two tragically different things.

Here is the point. There is one aspect of the healthy human constitution which differentiates us from cancer cells. We have a conscience. We have a limited capacity to change. We may have been blind, but now we can see. What had been all or nothing, 1 or 0, have or have not is now a world of grays and greens, blues meet reds and all the space between. Here, in the middle, between the extremes, we can open to turbulence, endure crisis, force change, and determine, for ourselves, for others, and for the world as a whole, an entirely different end to an entirely different story. A happy

ending of our own. Like it or not, we will make history together. Let's see what we can do about making it a good one.

Recall the potato game introduced in the 5th chapter of this text. We saw there what it was like to be a 1 or a 0, solely determined by past experience. We ended that chapter by noting the cycle that is the beating heart of conscience, the cycle that moves us from hunger to satisfaction. We saw that in seeking our ends in action, in exercising our conscientious hearts, we stitch ourselves into the world. We make ourselves who we are, and make the world what it is. That is our creative potential, and our current global situation is all that we have so far made of it. And things are not looking so good: "the world has a fever."⁴⁶⁴ Time to face facts. Time to say "no."

Hear the voice of conscience? We are between the last stitch, having come to terms with the situation we are in, and the next. Right now, confronted with the inevitable end of a powder-keg's story, our hearts have stopped. Our next stitch, that situation to which we must now open, and to which we will next tie ourselves, is critical. If we continue to stitch as we have, into the world as we have, in the terms that we have, this next stitch could be our last. It could all come apart at the seams. We may make the world into a place unworthy of life. We may make our situation unlivable. Somehow, you and I must reconcile our current Earth, our current ways of life on it, our current economy, with others in terms of which life is worth living. This is our situation. We are on the cusp of the greatest ethical problem in human history, to change the way we are living, or not to live at all.

Think of the whole planet as if it were one big potato, the world-potato. We are inside this potato. We are on this potato. This potato is our situation. It is where we begin and end our lives, and where future persons will begin and end their lives. It is what we eat when we are hungry, and it is where we all seek rest when we are tired. It is the story if the narrative structure within which all other narratives are emplotted. It is the universally shared environment. It is the planet Potato.

In this version of the potato game, there are billions of hungry people to consider, not simply one's self and the grinning fat man across the table. If we think about things in the right ways, there are countless unborn children at this table with us. And, there are countless dead persons, too, people who lived and died to get us where we are today. These are our friends, and family, those by whom we have been raised and in us whose interests have been entrusted. This fact changes the dynamic of the game little, however. All of these billions upon billions of lives have one simple thing in common. They begin and end with the planet Potato.

In the original version of the potato game, there were two players with two essentially different understandings of the value of a potato. These evaluations were compared to reveal how different experiential bases lead, through the four basic modes of conscience, to differences in how we treat each other, and how they used the scarce resources they had available. The two players were both hungry, and were presented with the same set of opportunities. They could share the potato or not. They treated each other better, or worse, whether, or not, they had ever gone hungry, before. He who had never gone without a potato, player 1, failed to share resources with the other.

0, who had gone hungry before, did share with 1, because he understood the value of scarcity, the value of the potato, and in fact the value of suffering. Hunger hurts.

In the discussion of the game, some interesting side issues were raised. During that discussion, the issue arose that 0 had an option to not share with 1 in order that 1 might learn a lesson, the true value of the potato, by learning the significance of hunger. With future trials in mind, 0 might think of withholding the potato so that 1 could feel what it is like to go hungry, and come to terms with hunger. If 1 were to understand the value of the potato, empowered by this experience, he might share the potato in future trials.

So long as 0 has both the potato, and has a future in mind which he must share with 1, this option seems prudent. It may be the case that in the future, 1 will have the potato, and 0 will not, and it would be good for 0, as well as for anyone else who may be hungry in the future, if 1 were to share the potato, then. In order for 1 to do so, later, 1 must be brought to terms with the value of the potato, now. And that confronts a very openhearted 0 with a very difficult moral problem. 1 must suffer now if he is to make the future a better place, given the opportunity, later.

Let's take advantage of what we have learned since we first saw the potato game. We have learned about lives worth living, about justice, death, disgust, and anxiety. We have learned that 1's and 0's are too simple for real life, but perhaps extreme enough to destroy life on Earth as we know it. We have learned that the natural world is fuzzy, and warm, and that artificial worlds are as sound as a pillar of salt. We have learned a lot. Now it is time to put it to use.

Think of one person on the planet Potato. Think of your self. Now, imagine that your unique situation is such that you control the planet Potato. Imagine that you are King of the world.

You have it all. You could burn and eat so much so quickly as to ensure that there is never such bounty on Earth, again. French fries and tater-tots and hash-browns and potato bread and potato biscuits and potatoes baked, smashed, mashed, and strung. You could easily use it up in fewer than ten generations, and nuke it in less than 10 minutes. Or, you could manage it, conserve it, care for it, and share it with a thousand generations to come. It all depends on how you determine your own needs, now, and how you determine to overcome the obstacles that stand in your way. Perhaps most importantly, as supreme leader, others will emulate you, mirror your actions, model your habits, and aspire to live your demonstrated way of life. After all, you are King! Those who follow your leadership, and live in the world of your making whether they emulate you or not, will be forced to take up the terms of the situation you leave behind. You are the world-maker. Their lot is what is left over. They are your subjects. Their ends are yours, as if secured by chains.

Meanwhile, you have leisure to consider your next move. You, first of all, are free. There is nothing forcing your hand. You are not driven by need to do anything you don't want to do. You have no unsatisfied hunger to drive you to desperate actions. Take this opportunity for self-reflection. Realize that this is your actual situation. Look in the mirror. What will be your mode of leadership? What sort of King will you be?

The last time we played the potato game, we briefly reviewed the types of leadership which followed from consistent exercise of the basic modes of the ACTWith model of conscience. Let's look at these again in light of the fate of the world Potato.

First, there is the c/c mode of the tyrant. This leader is closed to any determination other than his own, and is not open to any situation other than his own. His style of leadership is to impose his terms as if his own situation were all that matters. He is the sort of leader who will burn Rome, set fire to office buildings, and even kill and torture his own subjects for disagreeing with his vision of the future world order. This style of leadership resists change, and finds the prudence in violence: "I would rather split another's skull than change my own mind." This mode says "I am the decider," and "You are either with me or against me."

Next, there is the o/o mode of the just ruler. This leader is open to the reconciliation of determinations which differ from his own, and puts himself in the situation of any subject to his rule. He is the sort of leader who will finance diversity, live modestly, and live openly in the face of danger in order to protect even those subjects who do not share his vision of the world. This type of leadership encourages change, and abhors violence: "I would rather change my own mind than split another's skull." This mode says: "Healthy discontent is the prelude to progress," and "An unjust law is itself a species of violence. Arrest for its breach, more so."

The hybrid modes of leadership are a little more difficult to typify. One style suiting the o/c mode is what has been called "compassionate conservatism." This leader recognizes different situations, but imposes his own determinations on them

anyways. This is the mode of the missionary who confesses that he feels for the other, but that if the victim will not concede to the rigid terms set out for his salvation, then his just dessert is to burn in hell, the sooner the better. He says: "If you do not change your mind, your skull will be split." This may be the worst type of leader, as he is the most insidious. A tyrant is more easily identified for his wanton egoism, while this mode's paternalism shrouds an even more vicious agenda. Both, however, are feared, not revered.

The c/o mode is the sort of leader who responds to the terms of others as if these were his own situation. He is cognizant of his own position as leader, and works to integrate other determinations into his official actions. Here, I am thinking of an Abraham Lincoln, whose most famous "Emancipation Proclamation" is itself a restatement of efforts already put forward by members of congress. He is the sort of leader who confesses that, far from being the force which determines the situation, he has all along been a slave to the forces which have shaped his own. All things considered, one can do worse in a leader than this. This unifying and dutiful servant, as the just ruler, is to be revered.

This is far from an exhaustive review of the various modes of leadership. What we see here is merely a snapshot of leadership styles coincident with the habitual employment of the 4 basic modes of the ACTWith model of conscience. Most leaders, if they last as leaders, change modes to suit situations most effectively; though, however understood, a tyrant is as unlikely to compassion as is a just man to graft and corruption

and profit in war. For now, however, consider which of these you would adopt if you could adopt only one.

Put your self in this position. You have the world Potato at your disposal. There are billions of hungry persons in front of you. All of them expect a piece of this world. Furthermore, there are billions of hungry persons lined up behind these persons. These are the generations of unborn children to come, and they all expect a piece of that world. What will you do with it?

Imagine that you close off to them, */c. You put your needs first. You are, after all, King. You hoard and waste. You reward the wealthy who help to keep you in power. You hire gunmen to keep your hungry, desperate subjects at bay. You enslave them, or indenture their servitude in exchange for any access to the wealth of Potato at all. You reduce them to poverty, and remove their freedoms to dissent. You impose heavy taxes on the poor, lessen taxes on the wealthy, see health care as an industry whose main object is profit, and deny assistance for basic needs in order to make the situation even less secure simply in order to make the case that “they” need you. Under the consequent cloud of fear you strengthen policing, make punishments harsh, and encourage bigoted intolerance for any way of life not according with your own prescription. You reward bullies, discount wisdom, discourage conservation, encourage waste and overconsumption, and impose educational standards which discourage free thought and new ideas. You are ignorant of any other way of life than the one that suits your own selfish interests, hold difference in no esteem, see others as pests, squash

opposition, and enrich your self at the world's expense. You put yourself first, above all, number 1. You are a tyrant. Feared.

Is this the situation to which you aspire? It has its advantages. Closed to your subjects, you are spared their suffering. Unable (c/c) or unwilling (o/c) to understand their situations, you are likewise spared determinations contrary to your own. You simply do not listen. You remain comfortably able to announce that peace has been secured, even as you order the slaughter of millions in far away places. You are able to praise the vitality of the economy, and the justice of your court, even as increasing numbers starve, lose their homes, and are prosecuted, imprisoned, and assassinated for political ends. You are surrounded by yes men, hear only what you want to, and only read books that accord with what you already think is right. When you look in the mirror, it is only in your own terms that your life story is judged. Unaffected by the terms of the shared situation, by your own account you have done well, and that others badly off for your policies simply complain too much.

This is the portrait of a King, and a familiar one, but it is no portrait of a good King. It is the worst form of leadership, as Socrates had reminded us, that leaves its subject less civil, less orderly, and less well off than when it took up reigns. Let's assume that this is not your object, to be a bad leader, leading others to bad ends. What if you are open to your subjects, instead?

You love your subjects as yourself, the characteristic mark of a just ruler. You look in the mirror, and judge your self in their terms. Open to their situations (o/o), and taking their terms as definitive of your own (c/o), you accept criticism, suffer with the

most off, and remain sensitive to the needs of each subject from the center to the margins. You champion difference, encourage independence and self-sufficiency, see others as potential sources of wisdom rather than as pests, and struggle to ensure the security of their futures at the expense of your own passing popularity, all without infringing on their individual potentials to make the most of their lives. You are conscientious and kind, understanding that your power is only temporary, a gift of trust that must be handed down for the generations to follow. You are revered, and loved. Others model their behavior on your own, and the world is becoming a better place for it. You are not simply a King, you are a Great King.

Yet, all is not within your control. Free subjects are free to oppose you, and some who oppose you might not do so peacefully. Some people don't want to come to a shared understanding, rather closing off in polarized situations. This introduces irreconcilable tensions into the shared situation. This poses a crisis. How should you rule in a time of crisis? Should there be revolution, should you close off to the opposition, and hold onto power at any cost? Should you go to war, invade foreign lands, stage terrorism in order to strengthen the sense that your power is necessary for public security?

It has been said that Kings are made in war. Leaders have throughout history waged wars rather than lose power, and others have started them in order to gain it. If this is true of lesser Kings, then Great Kings must be made in just wars. Such fables are false, however. Great Kings are ready to die for a just cause, surely, as is any person whose object is a life worth living. But, there is no such a thing as a just war.

This is because there is no justice in war. War is terror. Terror is tragedy. There is no justice in tragedy. Tragedy is injustice. It is simply injustice that cannot be avoided. And, no Great King is a champion of injustice.⁴⁶⁵

This is why. For any King, as for any leader, the question, “How should I rule?” is just another way of asking “What is the meaning of life, my life?” For the Great King, however, the question is more complex. “How should I rule?” is another way of asking “What is the meaning of the lives of myself, of my subjects, and of everyone to follow?” Thus, every moment calling for action poses the question, “What situation should I put these others, my subjects, everyone, in?”

We came to the answer to this question, for the conscientious individual, in the very first chapter of this book: *Put no other person in any situation that you would not seek for your own*. Since then, we have seen, through countless examples and from the perspectives of many different philosophers and theorists, that this conscientious person is also a *great* person.⁴⁶⁶ This is the sort of person worth emulating, worth modeling, worth becoming, worth revering, and as a leader, worth following. This is the sort of person who exemplifies a life worth living. Thus, the Great King and the conscientious person are one and the same in all but title. Accordingly, the answers to their respective questions about the meaningful life must also be the same. And, in no way is war an option, any more so than is usury, servitude or enslavement.

How do I arrive at this conclusion? Let’s return to the bathtub experiment for some insights. The basic idea underlying the bathtub experiment is as follows. In the bath, all the tensions of the world slip away. This is a state of perfect comfort. This is

where the bathtub experiment begins. This state serves as a baseline for what it is to be one's own self at rest, without felt attachments to worldly objects pulling at one's self, without tensions imposed by unmet needs, without obligations and anticipations looming, without anything forcing one's hand in action. From this baseline, the bather may begin to reconstitute the tensions attached to one object at a time. In this way, he may begin to understand his situation in the world outside the bathtub, identify ties which cause tensions, isolate obligations and anticipations which force his hand in everyday action.

Once inventories are done, and various situations are felt out, with objects and their related tensions determined, these situations can be compared. One can compare the situation, at rest, with other more tense situations. Then, one may return to the baseline at rest in the tub, and consider another. This is leisurely self-reflection, confined only by the waves as they lap against the de-terminations of the space of the tub. In the bathtub experiment, one searches the space of his life for opportunities, and discovers situations he might pursue when he leaves the bathtub experiment.

This is the power of the bathtub experiment. It is a tool for self-determination. One may think of a thing, and feel the tensions rise, and note those things to which these tensions may themselves be tied. Then, one may sink again, into the tub, and let go of the tensions. From this bathtub baseline, one may pull up another and another object for inventory, and feel out what it is to be in any given situation. The power of the bathtub experiment is that it is one way to develop a conscience, and the best I can

think of to do so on purpose.⁴⁶⁷ Through its exercise, an exercise of leisure, there opens a window on what it is to be in other situations than that in which one finds himself.

Imagine that you are the King, in the King's bath. Imagine that there are others, each situated in his own tub. Imagine being open to the situations of these others. Imagine their respective bathtubs. Each have states of rest and tensions which pull at them. Their situations are tense, some without possibility for rest. Each have needs which are unmet. Some have needs which cannot be met. Imagine being in their situations, in their own terms. Open to these situations as if all of these tensions were yours, taking their determinations as those of your own situation however unpleasant it becomes. At first, you must do so one at a time, opening to the situations of persons as they pass through your life. Then, you must sum them all together. Hereby, you will come to understand what is common to all situations of all persons everywhere. And, these common terms will become the shape of your own bath. This is the space in which you will live and act. This is the shared space of life, the full scope of a Great King's kingdom. It is universal. Inclusive. Every tension is offset by another, a push and pull pendulum play like the bound waves across the warm bath of a still bather, deep in reflection.

To some degree, this is what it is for any person to be conscientious, genuinely authentic, and worthy of reverence, a moral hero. Their examples differ from the Great King only in the scope of integration. Where the conscientious person is bound to those whose situations are affected by his actions, so far as he can understand them, the Great King makes it his object in life to develop the understanding necessary to take up

the universal situation as his own. It is the object of this person to embody the space shared by all persons, indeed by all things, living and not. Power is not this person's object. And, of course, this raises the possibility that one may become a Great King, and never enjoy the title, never actually wear a crown. In fact, history is bereft of any actual King who might qualify as "Great" nearly so well as do some of the conscientious exemplars reviewed in this text. But, that should cause us no consternation. Imagine that you are both King, and a great person in the mold of these historical examples. Your object is to be a Great King, to work toward a just world. How would you rule? Confronted with crisis, what would you do?

Perhaps the question is better off rephrased. We should ask not what *would* you do, but what *can* you do. If justice is your object, then, however much power a King may have, your options are limited. Though the lesser King, as to some degree with any lesser person, enjoys the freedom to do for himself alone, to satisfy his own wants and needs even at the expense of others, the Great King enjoys no such luxury. In opening to the needs of his subjects, their needs become his own. He goes where he must, he does what he does, for the sake of others.

Rather than winning freedom by binding others to one's own fortunes, as does the capitalist or the tyrant, the Great King spends his freedom chaining himself to the fortunes of others. And, this presents us with a crucial irony: *the Great King is in fact a slave*. This irony is apparent in the case of any great person, as it was in the case of Socrates as he willingly bound his fate to that of his City's, freely a slave to the will of the people. It was also obvious in the case of Martin Luther King Jr., who led others to

freedom even as he sat in jail. But, it is most obvious when the case involves a person of such power that his every determination, right or wrong, good or bad, becomes law, as is the case with a King. The irony appears as follows. Though the actions of any King, however ignorant, are the law of his land, the Great King, as the great person, acts only in terms lawful in every land. This requires that he ignore convention, as the conventions of one land do not extend to every other. This also requires that he not seek to impose one set of conventions from one land onto others. It requires merely that he act in terms of the *universal law*. This law is, once again: *Put no other person in any situation that you would not seek for your own.*

As war merely puts everyone involved in a bad situation, this is not an end that any Great King is able pursue. He would rather be executed, assassinated, or abdicate his throne before he could compel another person to do to another what he would not want done to himself. The Great King, as a great person, amongst all the people of Earth is both the most powerful, and the least free. He can do only one thing no matter the moment of opportunity: exemplify the moral law.

A great person does what he does for the sake of something else, not for himself, not to stay out of jail, and not out of respect for another man's idea of a just convention. This is what it is to be a hero. And, in this portrait is the answer we have been seeking since we set out on the long road through this text. How shall we live, who should we follow, in order to realize the ideal end, in order to secure the universal good, in order to create a just world here and now, for one's self and for all others alike? Ourselves. We must follow ourselves, just as Socrates showed us how so long ago.

Still, where does one begin?

Begin in the bath. In fact, bathe daily, and routinely, make it habit until it is as if you never leave the tub. Carry it with you through every opportune moment. In this way, you will develop your conscience, expand the space of your own life, at first when you are at leisure to do so, until finally you find yourself always in such a situation. From conscience, the rest will follow. Conscience is the intrinsic good for the just man. It is his most sacred property, the key to happiness, and true happiness is not one's to enjoy alone.

Reflect in your bath over the terms that all share in common. All are bound by birth, and death: everyone in every situation is dying, and everyone wishes to live a meaningful life in the space of life between. Everyone wants to become someone to revere, and everyone wants to avoid becoming an object of disgust. Everyone must be loved. Everyone must have basic needs met in order for any of this to happen. Reflect on these universal terms, on how each feels when embodied: Angst, uncanniness, anxiety, fear, dread, reverence, disgust, wisdom, opportunity, justice, fairness, the laws of nature, the good, the right time, the right place, the right thing to do. If you cannot, if you do not understand the natural world, or have never felt angst, then put your self in a position where you must. Barring that, open your heart to others who do, or openly emulate another who can, until you have felt these situations for your own, and know what it is to live in them.

And, know this. You are not alone. Your situation is shared. We are all born into an ongoing story not originally of our own determination. We are all born into an

ongoing world history. We must discover this history, in some cases recover it, and determine for ourselves our places within it. We must carve a space of opportunity from these places, a space containing opportunities for all persons present and future. We must chain ourselves to these ends, and act toward them at every opportune moment. We must forge a better world, a just world, a world worth living in, by living a life worth living now, and we must do so together. For the wise, for the conscientious, for the Great leader and for the great person, the history of the world is indeed one world history shared. Let's make it a good one.

To all of this one might object, "*But I am no King!*" This is true. Likely, you are no King. At least, not now. This does not alter the fact, however, that the world is, in no small part, a consequence of your every action. And, you are the hero of your own life story, however you write it. This fact reveals that, though you may enjoy no such title as "King," whether you like it or not, you are no less a leader. You at the very least lead yourself to your own ends, and others watch, and may follow suit. Should you determine for yourself your own ends, then you must become the face of the future to which you will lead. Finally, if you are to lead on to a life worth living and a world worth living in, then you must become a new person, a free person, and King over the kingdom of your own life. Thus, you may not be a King, now, but you could be, should be, and, if you do the right things, will be.

To this, one might object, "*But how am I to do this?*" The preceding text has issued the recipe, self-determined self-change through exercise of conscience. In short,

conscientiousness. Whether becoming a great person, Great King or hero, this process is the same.

Let's review it. In prior sections, I laid out a process, the beating heart of conscience. The beating heart of conscience is the cycle undertaken by the conscientious person as he lives, moment to moment, in pursuit of wisdom, in order to become that person up ahead he wishes to become, the just man, the man worthy of reverence. It is also that process that you must undertake to become the leader that you in fact already are, and wish to be. The question now becomes, how does this process permit the kind of change necessary for any ordinary person to become a Great King, a leader amongst leaders who makes history, changes the world for the better, and takes us all along with him toward a just world? How can you, or I, or any other normal person, become a hero?

It may help to see how someone else has accomplished this very thing. Imagine that the following profile, in fact inspired by a contemporary American hero, is your own. You are a famous sportsman. You have a high profile. You value justice and fairness. You have succeeded so far in life by doing the right things at the right times. You are, and have increasingly become, an inspiration for others to do the same. You understand that. You are capable, and seek to become that man ahead worthy of reverence. You are a leader.

Then, apparently without provocation and by surprise, your fellows, friends, and countrymen are attacked. Murdered. You are told by the leaders of your own government that the agents responsible for the attack are well-known, identifiable, and

to be pursued “to ends of the Earth.” You are told that the blameworthy parties will be brought to “justice,” in the defense of “freedom,” and most of all in defense of the way of life that champions these values. In this situation, as this person, what would you do?

If you simply continue on in your career as a professional athlete, you will become very wealthy, very famous, and likely live very comfortably. You will have stitched your self into the world of your own making, and you will have deserved it. You are, at this point, *c/c*. And, you have the opportunity to remain this way, comfortably insulated from the problems plaguing the less fortunate. To this point, you live according to a set of determinations, and these have shaped the space of your life, thus far. You value these terms. These are justice, freedom, liberty, fairness, respect for human life, opportunity to seek one’s highest potentials. These are the de-terminations of your own situation, and so far life has been good. Others, who you feel shared this set of determinations, have been hurt, murdered by still others who, you have been told, do not value these terms. Here, you are *o/c*, feeling as-if others, understood in your own terms, terms you take to be common and good. Here, you are at the beginning of the cycle that is the beating heart of conscience. There has been injustice and by opening to the situation, looking for the opportunity, you set out to do something about it.

Instead of hiding away in relative comfort, you join the Army, and become a special operative in search of the bad actors who you are told were responsible for the injustice. You sign up for this mission, a “crusade” against what your leaders call “evil.” And, you are sent to aid in the occupation of sovereign lands in the Middle East.

You enter the field. You are deployed in a tragic environment. The situation is bad for everyone in common. You are sent on missions to seek out and discover perpetrators of injustice, but all you find are desperate people, poor people without opportunity. Their most basic needs -food, water, shelter - are not being met. You are confronted with suffering, for some of which you and your fellow soldiers are blameworthy, and for all of which you feel responsible. After all, it was U.S. bombs that destroyed the hospitals, water treatment facilities, and homes, destroyed families, women and children without discrimination. It was U.S. radiation that poisoned the ground, and U.S. guns, public and private, which kill and maim. They are of a different religion. You study their religious texts to better understand their situation. You are sent to kill these people, to maim these people, to further their suffering. This is not the man you set out to become. This is disgusting.

You wish to be a just man, do what you do in order to secure justice, and in this effort your heart remains open. You have a conscience, you have the courage to have a conscience, and you have the courage to look in the mirror. You had not set out to create injustice, to cause suffering, you had set out to correct it. But, this is not what is happening. Both you and your "enemy" share a tragic situation. You are now o/o.

But, you are confused. You had valued the terms by which you had lived your life. You still do, but it is these values that brought you to this situation. You have been misled. This is not the situation you were told to expect. Your terms are not being met. They have been inverted. How are you to reconcile the situation in which you discover your self, now, with that situation which you intended?

You seek the help of a wise man, a scholar. He is an expert in the fluctuating determinations of turbulent times. He is famous for understanding the use of language, as “propaganda,” to shape the intentions of the less powerful to do as the more powerful wish. He understands how you could have been misled to serve the powerful interests, and to do the wrong thing. You are now c/o, discovering and internalizing determinations of that situation which you now know is yours, and shared. Your object is still to become a man worthy of reverence, and you are on your way.

Coming to terms with this shared situation, you discover the truth. You had been misled, a victim of bad information and even worse leadership. They lied. There was no need to pursue those responsible for the injustice to the far ends of the Earth. They were right there at home.

You now understand that those responsible for the injustice were not those whom you had been sent to kill, and to maim, at all. They are the wealthy, the elite, the media moguls, industrialists, arms dealers, the politicians and pretenders to special information. They do not share your values. They stand against them. And they sent you to a desert to die. Now, you know the truth. You are ready to act. You are c/c. And the cycle will repeat itself, so long as the love of wisdom and justice beats in your heart.

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.NOTES

¹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 1892, page 467.

² Fragment 45.

³ *Tao Te Ching*.

⁴ *Emile*, from the section describing Emile's encounter with the Savoyard Vicar, who, most scholars agree, expresses the inner-most convictions of Rousseau himself. This section is sometimes found missing from English translations such as that of Payne (1895), where it would appear between pages 232 and 233. However, a complete translation by Foxley includes this important passage, which continues:

Do we take more pleasure in the sight of the sufferings of others or their joys? Is it pleasanter to do a kind action or an unkind action, and which leaves the more delightful memory behind it? Why do you enjoy the theatre? Do you delight in the crimes you behold? Do you weep over the punishment which overtakes the criminal? They say we are indifferent to everything but self-interest; yet we find our consolation in our sufferings in the charms of friendship and humanity, and even in our pleasures we should be too lonely and miserable if we had no one to share them with us. If there is no such thing as morality in man's heart, what is the source of his rapturous admiration of noble deeds, his passionate devotion to great men? What connection is there between self-interest and this enthusiasm for virtue? Why should I choose to be Cato dying by his own hand, rather than Caesar in his triumphs? Take from our hearts this love of what is noble and you rob us of the joy of life. The mean-spirited man in whom these delicious feelings have been stifled among vile passions, who by thinking of no one but himself comes at last to love no one but himself, this man feels no raptures, his cold heart no longer throbs with joy, and his eyes no longer fill with the sweet tears of sympathy, he delights in nothing; the wretch has neither life nor feeling, he is already dead.

This text is conveniently available online in two locations. One, at the Gutenberg Project. <http://ia301510.us.archive.org/2/items/emile05427gut/emile10.txt> The quoted passage appears on page 204 of the downloaded text. Another, at The Online Library of Liberty, at http://olldownload.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=2256&chapter=212904&layout=html&Itemid=27. Both last accessed February 20, 2010. In my opinion, the *Emile* is one of the most important works in the history of Western thought. I direct you to this online free version in order to encourage its review.

⁵ Dar Williams, "I Had No Right," *The Green World*, Silverline (November 16, 2004).

⁶ My initial inclination is to capitalize Philosopher and Philosophy when making a point that this is "philosophy" done right, the Mother of all inquiries, as opposed to some lesser or even misguided practice. At times, I may employ this practice. For the most part, I will leave it to context and example to make this case for me, instead.

⁷ Sadly, "sophist" describes the currency in Western academic philosophy today.

⁸ Manufactured by Athenian leadership.

⁹ Except, oddly enough, on Socrates' estimation, for Socrates himself, as we shall soon discover.

¹⁰ Socrates called this opportunity for reflection "leisure," a diminishing aspect of everyday life under an increasingly militarized corporate state, but we will get to that in a moment.

¹¹ Book burnings are likely not far off, either...

¹² And why Socrates correctly claimed that he was the only one to practice the true political art, an equally valid criticism of the academy, today.

¹³ But we won't explicitly come to this until chapters 10 and on.

¹⁴ The "they" here were Anytus, his puppet Meletus, and a few others who aspired to power.

¹⁵ Here, I may lose some readers who are especially taken by the neurological determinism

seemingly substantiated by the famous Libet experiments (misunderstood), by Daniel Wegner's recent book, and others. I would only ask that they read on, unless they are indeed free not to.

¹⁶ Case in point, the Jewish religion holds that Jews are 'God's chosen' people, while all others are, by definition, cattle to be sacrificed in the fulfillment of (their) God's promise that they will rule the world, thereby sanctioning ongoing genocide by bigotry defined solely by belief, and not by descent. We shall examine this case in greater detail in later chapters.

¹⁷ Socrates will show us that there is at least one case in which their criticism does not hold.

¹⁸ In contemporary terms, take for example the incredible death rates of independent journalists in areas where free information may shed light on imperial brutality, or the assassination of Pat Tillman, whose example returns to us in the final chapter.

¹⁹ Recall how much duct tape Home Depot sold when those in government warned against religiously motivated bio-terrorism? Or, consider how much Al Gore has made, and stands to make should his plan be successful, on the carbon trading scam proposed to combat global warming, which is itself a fraud. Of course, pollution is a problem, but carbon dioxide is not pollution. It is plant food! And, terrorism is a problem, but those in government are themselves the greatest terrorists.

²⁰ Note the rising political influence of religious groups as crisis looms. Self-fulfilling prophecy? Perhaps...

²¹ Especially if, in this "most of us," we responsibly include the countless unborn children of every race and affliction we should yet hope will live in terms of this natural world.

²² Interestingly, "yoga," so recently popular in the West, literally means "to yoke" habits of body to habits of mind. Buddhism can be understood as a disciplined "un-yoking" of said habits from one to the other.

²³ This theme arises in the last chapters especially.

²⁴ This is not the only way of viewing Buddhism; however, it is a reduction of the primary message of Buddha's original thought, and consistent with Harris' primary target. Christianity's promise is *personal* salvation, and it executes this promise on the basis of a metaphysically presumed essential individuality. My salvation has nothing to do with yours, necessarily. A Buddhism, consistent with the metaphysics inherent in this text, is given by Narada Maha-Thera. A leader of the Ceylonese Buddhists in the first century AD, he expressed the Theravadin viewpoint, thusly: 'Buddhism is a teaching that appeals equally to those who wish to gain their personal salvation and to those who wish to work both for their personal salvation and for the salvation of others. There are some amongst us, who understand the vanity of worldly pleasures, and who are so thoroughly convinced of the universality of suffering that they seek the earliest opportunity to escape this cycle of birth and death and obtain their emancipation. There are some others who not only understand but feel all the sufferings of life; so boundless is their love and so pervasive is their compassion that they renounce their personal salvation and dedicate their lives for the lofty purpose of serving humanity and perfecting themselves. Such is the noble ideal of a Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva ideal, it should be said, is exclusively Buddhist. A Bodhisattva has not the ambition to teach others, except through his own example, and he pursues his spiritual career without ever losing sight of the welfare of his fellow-beings. Thus he ripens towards his aim and inspires others to do likewise.' This is found in Govinda, Anagarika. *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*. Samuel Weiser, Inc. York Beach, Maine. 1989. page 42. Many thanks to Jared Gassen for this information.

²⁵ We will approach this theme explicitly in chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9...

²⁶ William Dembski, entry on "transcendence" for *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics* available at www.designinference.com/documents/2003.10.Transcendence_NDOCApol.pdf

²⁷ I want to recognize Professor Alexander VonSchoenborn. This example is patterned from his own, often repeated in classrooms to the great benefit of his students, myself included. Thank you, Alexander VonSchoenborn. You are a great teacher, a leader, and a man to emulate.

²⁸ See, Professor Chant, this is how it is done, and this is how We do it.

²⁹ Though, I read about one once, in *Watership Down*.

³⁰ It is a failure of nearly every interpreter of evolutionary theory to under-represent environmental and group pressures in processes of “natural selection.” It is the generational component which is the key to an adequate interpretation.

³¹ Discovering patterns in information is the active ingredient in otherwise passive perception.

³² Humans aren’t alone in this capacity one bit. Take a butterfly’s wings, for example, that look like eyes to ward off predators...

³³ Now, if one of them is a liar, or a bad leader, you could either end up in a painful situation, or be denied a pleasant one, and still end up in a painful situation. Either way, a liar is the worst thing one can be. Liars mislead.

³⁴ As I shall note throughout this text, each generation of human organism is hardwired to explore, to deviate, and thereby to adapt, and we call this phase “adolescence.”

³⁵ We will confront this fundamental error in modern ethics in detail in the chapter on Kant.

³⁶ See Gallese (2006) for an especially relevant view. Also, in regards to children mirroring the mistakes of those whom they emulate, their natural leaders, adults, begin with the following summary of ongoing research: Tale University (2007, December 6) “Humans Appear Hardwired To Learn By Over-Imitation.” *ScienceDaily*, retrieved December 7, 2007, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/12/071205102433.htm>.

³⁷ This connection is diminished in adults. Some adults are able to laugh at another person who is obviously suffering, for example. An infant is not.

³⁸ It is important to point out that this process is not limited to infancy. Even as this text goes to print, newly revealed research shows that one person’s fears are as effective in moderating another person’s fears as are his own. We mirror not merely actions, and not merely as children, but we mirror the entire space of value in the world so long as we are open to the influence of others around us. A summary of research revealing the role of vicarious fear can be found at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/03/070316072634.htm>

³⁹ If it doesn’t do so beforehand.

⁴⁰ So far as I know, this is universal. In fact, it is increasingly popular that therapists instruct their clients to smile, purposefully, even if nothing seems worth smiling about. Results have indicated that this therapy is effective in treating mild affective disorders.

⁴¹ You may wish to begin further research with the following summary of ongoing research: University of Washington (2007, March 26). “Toddlers Engage In Emotional Eavesdropping To Guide Their Behavior.” *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved December 7, 2007, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/03/070326095423.htm>

⁴² This is universal to life. This is also the origin of any later bi-valencies, such as that presumed to be universal law by common bivalent logics of the sort entertained exclusively by most modern (analytic) philosophy. This thinking is shallow, rigid, and wrong. The implications of the affective root on an increasingly vacuous field of study whose proponents presume a privileged “rational” view on “truth” have yet to be adequately inventoried. What is clear, however, is that logical bivalency in the world is not fundamental by any stretch, but merely psychologically effective in the sort of coarse-grained parsing of the relatively stable natural environment which guides relatively simple engagements as those necessary to maintain common human lives. Any adequate model of mind cannot rest here, and anyone who builds fences to hold back the dark is no philosopher. The snake of Eden is a worm, and

the great lie of the misleader that there are only two states essential to the world, good and bad, true and false. Sadly, some contemporary philosophers bully others in this mode (of the worm, in the Christian sense, from under a Rock). We will bring his mode to light in chapter 12, and debunk his logic in chapter 15.

⁴³ Men can also orient to what is essentially bad, and take it for the good. In extreme cases, these men are like maggots. Maggots are especially destructive leaders. As maggots only consume dead flesh, they orient to death. Death is good for maggots. They create cultures of death, profit on industries of war, and make the situation such that it suits their determination that death is good. Examples are tragically too common, especially among current leadership.

⁴⁴ That is, with proper training.

⁴⁵ Picture a flock of birds aloft on the prevailing currents of history...

⁴⁶ It is this presumption which leads to the portrait of Buddhism given earlier, Buddhism imported into these western metaphysical grounds.

⁴⁷ See Dr. Aaron White's new book on adolescence for a review of the psychology of this process.

⁴⁸ And even less so philosophical. (Here, "philosophical" deserves a capital "P".)

⁴⁹ *The Ethics of Inquiry*. The title of my current manuscript...

⁵⁰ In other words, people tend to mirror and follow the healthy, wealthy and famous.

⁵¹ In other words, people tend not to mirror and follow the materially poor and powerless, even when rich with wisdom.

⁵² Thus, the evolutionary grounds for (mistaken) atomism about selves.

⁵³ Though, this may seem to describe most of the people you know, couch potatoes and lazy people, even they are motivated to do something, they simply do as little as necessary. We will tackle this tendency in rich detail in chapter 4.

⁵⁴ Like carrots...

⁵⁵ The trend to medicate children for being, essentially, *children*, is a major concern, for example.

⁵⁶ In still other words, it is like the difference between the science of chemistry, and the merely technical knowledge that is chemical engineering. From this text, you will learn the moral equivalent of chemistry. Apply as the application requires. Be your own moral scientist.

⁵⁷ Clearly, this last consequence of being open to the situations of others is both a boon, and a burden.

⁵⁸ *Philebus*, 48d.

⁵⁹ Some of this chapter, on consciousness, was delivered to the World Congress of Philosophy on July 31, 2008. Thanks especially to Peter Colosi and Lorenzo Magnani for comments from philosophy of mind including a charge of epiphenomenalism that has inspired me to utilize zombies of consciousness as a model for a moral equivalent, zombies of conscience. Zombies are touched on here, but are addressed more fully in my paper "On the Metaphysical Status of Moral Zombies." The charge of epiphenomenalism, a charge under which anyone who takes consciousness seriously might mistakenly grow comfortable, fails under the program delivered herein. In short, following the form of the principle expressions from the physical sciences, I am a matter-energy dualist. Energy, is not matter, is not reducible to matter, and it changes the world. Indeed, it constitutes the world. Expanding on my reply to Colosi at the World Congress in 2008, we live in a metaphysical world, not merely a physical one. This metaphysical world is constituted not by the physical brain, but by the objects of which it is conscious. Conscious states are energetic states. It is such a state, not the physical organization of the brain or body alone, that is represented when one, for example, draws a picture of any given object of consciousness. These representations

influence others, and indeed change the world, not because of their matter, but because of the energetic state that they represent. As such a state might inhere in any number of material configurations (as a twist on multiple realizability, including other brains not all that unlike one's own), matter alone cannot tell us everything about the world. Thus, there is something irreducible to consciousness, that being that it constitutes the world in terms of which self and others live and act, the metaphysical world. And, epiphenomenalism, as commonly understood, is denied.

⁶⁰ *Knowledge of Future Events*, page 193.

⁶¹ "Letter to Peter Carr," August 10, 1787, as published in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Federal Edition, Vol. 5*. G.P. Putnam's Sons: (New York and London) 1904-5.

⁶² Though, in most every case, *what conscience is* is taken for granted, and in every case not adequately described. *Crisis of Conscience, The Revenge of Conscience: Politics and the Fall of Man, On Conscience (Bioethics & Culture), The Conscience of a Liberal, Conservatives Without Conscience, The Nazi Conscience, and Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us* are titles of a few. Interestingly enough, the focus of some of these texts is not on conscience, but on the apparent *lack* of conscience. Psychopaths. There appear to be a few reasons for this. One is that persons seemingly without conscience manipulate others for their own gain without moral compunction, stand out from others for this capacity, and often rise to the heights of power, literally stepping over corpses of rivals along the way. A survey of the powerful persons dotting the landscape of the local news will provide evidence enough of this trend. Another is that this propensity appears to run in families, leading to a the most intriguing reason for recent interest in this condition. We have been led by generations of such persons, seemingly without conscience, into the global crises that we are enduring, today. Meanwhile, these same persons now promise to deliver us from these crises. Leading to speculation, supported by testimony, that these crises are largely manufactured for the benefit of a clique of conscience-less elitists, thus spawning a deep interest in conscience, specifically the lack thereof, and so the sale of books.

⁶³ With some notable exceptions. Stanley Milgram, for instance, has a great deal to say about conscience, but offers nothing in the way of mechanism. Likewise, questions of conscience arise in some of psychology's most famous and influential works and experiments, though again without its operations being adequately explained. For instance, deep questions of the malleability for conscience arise in the famous prisoner experiments by Zimbardo and colleagues, and conscience as the highest level of emotively grounded concepts in Antonio Damasio's texts. Contemporary research tends to be limited to studies in development, with some interesting work recently appearing that relates early indicators to eventual psychopathy. Philosophy is equally guilty of the neglect with its own exceptions, notably Thomas Natsoulas who, it should be noted, works at the interface of the two fields. However, the relative lack of interest in conscience in both fields is surprising, as the persons most responsible for their current forms, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger, not to mention Nietzsche and Sartre, also deployed conscience in ultimate positions in their respective proto-psychologies. We shall see Kant's view in detail in a chapter dedicated to his insights later on, while Hegel's view is the inspiration for the chapter after that, and these collected insights are then integrated through review of Heidegger's moral psychology following that.

⁶⁴ Those familiar with the subject may view the following explanation of consciousness, beginning with this chapter and continuing through the 3rd and 4th, as an extension into the 3rd person and enrichment from physiology of the view put forward by David Chalmers in a 2003 article "The Content and Epistemology of Phenomenal Belief" published in (Q. Smith & A. Jokic, eds) *Consciousness: New Philosophical Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, 2003,

and available on his website. His website is my source, first accessed September, 2008. There are some notable differences between Chalmers' approach and my own, however, starting with the ontology of belief. *I do not believe in beliefs*, and where I use this term it is purely in a non-explanatory way, a term of convenience rather than a term of art. And, frankly, once one follows the discourse through and finds 'belief' cashed out as 'propositional attitude,' and 'propositional attitude' watered down to the point of 'disposition,' a notion with which I am much more friendly, it seems that few outside of analytic epistemology do, either. Another notable difference – one that cannot be stressed enough - involves the understanding of *intension* generated in this text rather than *intention* as it is commonly understood in philosophy of mind. Intension as explained herein is a thick concept integrating metabolic potentials with metaphysical aims, so it is naturalized, and is limited within the energetic constraints of the embodied agent as contained in the complex system that is the brain/body unit, thus remaining metaphysical. Typical accounts of intention from action theory, for instance, are not so robust, and so in the end not so plausible. In this text, I employ the term 'intension' in explaining the phenomena. It should be noted that this use does not follow Chisholm, though I see no direct contradiction between adverbial intension and the bound potential toward some end as given herein. I figure that the adverbial only captures part of the phenomenon. I should also note that occasionally I do default to the use of the term 'intention' merely out of convenience, without any theoretical implications. And, finally, though it is late in coming, recent proposals of a phenomenal intentionality research program attempt to group theories of intention into families largely based on a distinction between how and when intention is “injected” into the world. Frankly, I have not done the necessary analysis to weigh the pros and cons of such a strategy, though I do object to the use of the notion “inject,” as it seems to isolate intention as an entity apart from the rest of the world, and so analyzable as a thing on its own. As should be obvious from my account of intension, I do not see this as possible. Intension is not injected into the world, but rather emerges from the agent. What is injected in the world is action, motivated as it is through the energy bound in intension. Furthermore, this position leads me to take issue with internalist/externalist distinctions. It seems more responsible to emphasize *situation* over internal/external distinctions, thereby placing the work at the interface of the world rather than in two separate places at once. An agent acts from internal tensions, and realizes success or failure in terms of energetic rewards or costs per homeostatic processes as described in this chapter. Thus, I am neither internalist nor externalist, but situationist. When push comes to shove, I suppose I should count myself as an NPIRP theorist, situationist, emotivist (metaphysically and epistemically), and phenomenal realist, though the applicability of such ascriptions tends to vary with the company who shares them.

⁶⁵ Note that I am not saying that one need know the *words* for these things. Although some symbolic representation is helpful - it can take the form of model building or vocabulary building so long as the processes are adequately profiled for effective navigation of the object environment.

⁶⁶ James, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), page 300.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pages 304-5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*. One problem with Descartes' foundationalism, at least as it is rendered in English, is that it effectively equates consciousness with knowledge. But recall that the word “consciousness” ultimately comes from “con-” and “-scire,” and “-scire” alone means “to know.” So, even on the face of it, consciousness is something more than knowledge, and any equation just doesn't seem right.

⁶⁹ Recalling Andrew R. Bailey, “The Strange Attraction of Sciousness: William James on Consciousness,” *Transactions of the Charles Sanders Peirce Society* 34, no. 2 (1998): 414-

434.

⁷⁰Natsoulas, 1996, page 53.

⁷¹James, however he may have failed in making consciousness clear, clearly understood that consciousness is grounded in deeper bodily changes. Especially important is his view that bodily changes rise to consciousness as a result of the bodily system's struggle to maintain equilibrium with its environment, a process called "homeostasis." Interestingly, James focuses on the capacity to consciously deny the body's next breath, otherwise taken automatically. Normally aspirated, one's body opens to the air around it; in denial, it closes. This embodied logic of opening/closing to the world is made explicit in the ACTWith model of conscience, and is not detailed until chapter 5. Homeostasis receives some due attention in the last part of this chapter.

⁷²For those with a mind for mathematics, think of this as a wave-addition problem wherein amplitudes that reach a certain threshold rise to consciousness, while those below remain sensed but of which there is no conscious awareness. This illustration captures an extremely successful architecture from artificial intelligence modeling human learning, hybrid models. For an unimpeded view of this approach to computational intelligence, see Prof. Ron Sun's 2002 text, *Duality of Mind*.

⁷³V.S. Ramachandran, *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness*, page 1.

⁷⁴ So far as zombies go, I do think that zombies are real, though not zombies of consciousness *per se*. I think that there are *moral* zombies, persons who do the wrong things without remorse for the suffering they cause themselves and others as a result. I think that there are zombies of consciousness in the sense that there are persons for whom there is no *why* of consciousness, except perhaps for consciousness, itself, and that these persons are often among the same persons who qualify as moral zombies. We will have a lot more to say about this sort of person later on. So far as ongoing debates about consciousness in contemporary philosophy of mind are concerned, I am suspicious both of the motivations and of the results. According to some philosophers, we are all zombies, already...

⁷⁵ There is direct correlation to be drawn with the physiology of memory. Consider the central role of the hippocampus in the processing of memory from short to long term. When an animal approaches a space that has some implication for its present purposes, say, there is food nearby, the significance of the position is rendered to long-term memory, and is thereafter retrieved, through the hippocampus. At root, this process grounds the essentially spatial nature of all thought. I am not suggesting that conscience is located in the hippocampus. Conscience concerns the situation of the whole organism, and consists in all systems, neural and peripheral, distributed throughout the body, working together to ensure the survival of the organism, situation to situation, per the larger psychology of conscience as developed herein. However, the hippocampus can be seen as a sort of bookend at either side of cognition, sealing the deal in terms of position, so to speak.

⁷⁶ The focus of which is called "attention" in the psychological sciences, pointing to the directedness, or "intentionality" of consciousness, and expressing the relative freedom to redirect consciousness in the attendance to different objects. Attunement at the level of the situation, rather than the objects within it, is called "attenuation." The role of conscience in attenuation to situations is briefly reviewed in this chapter. Intension is a central concern in the 3rd and 4th chapters. The moral import of attention and attenuation is best explained through an analysis of Martin Heidegger's moral psychology, the subject of the 9th chapter.

⁷⁷ A field that I personally find as redeeming as a tumor, with similar purpose and ends.

⁷⁸ Or, in more direct terms, "Do not force an equilibrium the terms of which will deny integrity of any sufficiently complex system." The universality of this rule rests in the essential similarity of persons. Any moral feeling begins here, and in fact extends to other things

beside persons. The scope of morality extends so far as one recognizes his similarity with all other worldly things, living and not. The source of this similarity is, as we have seen, the tendency for all things in nature to seek equilibrium in terms of their environment. In trading one's self for others on this basis, conscience is the mechanism of morality. Conversely, conscience is confounded when persons rather focus on their differences than on their similarities. Although essentially the same, all persons differ from one another in the particulars of their respective situations. One person occupies one particular situation, embedded within a certain array of objects, while others occupy others. This is why "I" am me and "you" are you. We see things differently, and come to understand ourselves differently in their light. This process is something that every person has in common. We become conscious of the world in light of where we reside in it. The trouble arises when one takes the result of this process as indicative of something much deeper. Conscience is confounded when one takes differences in objects of consciousness to be differences between persons, themselves. Taking the way one sees the world as an essential difference between persons, rather than accidental differences in their relative situations, stands in the way of the mechanism of morality. Thus, even as conscience is the mechanism of morality, objects of consciousness are its obstacles.ⁱ Overcoming these obstacles presents all sorts of problems, problems with which we shall deal throughout this text.

⁷⁹ From *The Novels and Other Works of Leo N. Tolstoj, Volume 18*, "What to do? Life" Charles Scribner's Sons (1902) page 242.

⁸⁰ For some readers, there may be an inclination to read this as a low error signal between modules responsible for the prediction and execution of action routines as often employed in AI models, and inspired by Hegel. Such an approach is partially correct, but the terms of the evaluation are a problem. As I make the case throughout this text, the terms for the evaluation of low error have to do with the result of the action in light of the whole life of action, understood primarily as a self-image current versus a self-image ideal end state, and not that of the individual action per se. We will detail the ideal end state as the happy ending to a life worth living in the third part of the text. We will tackle the issue of self-image opening the view to this end state beginning in the 6th and 7th chapters.

⁸¹ Childress, 1997, page 403.

⁸² Childress, 1997, page 404.

⁸³ http://i3.democracynow.org/2009/4/3/utah_student_who_prevented_bush_admin

⁸⁴ Mark Twain. "The Chronicle of Satan," 1905

⁸⁵ Although the Bush administration adjusted and radically interpreted domestic law to provide obfuscatory "legality" to their otherwise patently illegal designs, the fact that they are still condemned under international law is beyond question. Consider as well the deeper tradition. "Just war" has been understood, since Augustine, to describe the only morally permissible conditions for the initiation of aggression by one state against another. The most important condition is, arguably, that there be an imminent threat exhibited by one *state* against another. The traditional image of an imminent threat is one of troops amassed at a shared border, in obvious preparation for invasion – for instance, as the U.S. is posturing now along the border of Iran, or as Israel intermittently violates Syrian and Lebanese airspace with U.S.-gifted military fighter/bombers. Given these examples, it may arguably be just for Syria or Iran to go to war against Israel or the U.S. International law is grounded in the moral framework of the just war. Under International law, a war is unlawful if it does not meet just war conditions. Prosecuting an unjust war is a crime. This fact explains why Colin Powell's discredited testimony to the U.N. was so important for the Bush regime's push for war, and why Dick Cheney, Condoleeza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld, G.W. Bush and so many others perpetuated the myth that Iraq had, and intended to use, nuclear and biological weapons, the fabled "weapons

of mass destruction.” Watada learned of these fabrications, and understood that the people spreading these tales knew them to be fictitious at the time. Thus, on the basis of International law and a moral tradition in place for hundreds of years, he refused to take part in the Iraq invasion. He refused to take part in what is, essentially, a terrible crime. Speaking to Veterans for Peace in November, 2006, Watada sought to share what he learned with other soldiers: “They must realize that this is a war not out of self-defense but by choice, for profit and imperialistic domination. WMD’s, ties to Al Qaeda, and ties to 9/11 never existed and never will. The soldier must know that our narrowly and questionably elected officials intentionally manipulated the evidence presented to Congress, the public, and the world to make the case for war. They must know that neither Congress nor this administration has the authority to violate the prohibition against pre-emptive war - an American law that still stands today. This same administration uses us for rampant violations of time-tested laws banning torture and degradation of prisoners of war. Though the American soldier wants to do right, the illegitimacy of the occupation itself, the policies of this administration, and rules of engagement of desperate field commanders will ultimately force them to be party to war crimes. They must know some of these facts, if not all, in order to act.”

⁸⁶ <http://www.vfp125.org/watadaspeech.html>

⁸⁷ <http://www.thankyoult.org/content/view/81/58/>

⁸⁸ Canadian courts had upheld that American men and women of conscience who have left the U.S. rather than become war criminals for the Bush and Obama administrations may be granted official refuge in Canada. This, however, as the Canadian government has been corrupted by warmongers with the Canadian state increasingly militarized, as well, may be changing.

⁸⁹ Irony as a consequence of right action, and as inspiration, is revisited in force in chapter 12.

⁹⁰ Available online at <http://thoreau.eserver.org/civil1.html>. On his reasons for not paying certain taxes, the act that sent him to prison, and on his service to his fellows in providing an example of conscience to be emulated, Thoreau writes: “I have never declined paying the highway tax, because I am as desirous of being a good neighbor as I am of being a bad subject; and as for supporting schools, I am doing my part to educate my fellow-countrymen now. It is for no particular item in the tax-bill that I refuse to pay it. I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually. I do not care to trace the course of my dollar, if I could, till it buys a man or a musket to shoot one with — the dollar is innocent — but I am concerned to trace the effects of my allegiance. In fact, I quietly declare war with the State, after my fashion, though I will still make what use and get what advantage of her I can, as is usual in such cases.” Available online at <http://thoreau.eserver.org/civil3.html>

⁹¹ Madison continues: “...other property depending in part on positive law, the exercise of that, being a natural and unalienable right. To guard a man's house as his castle, to pay public and enforce private debts with the most exact faith, can give no title to invade a man's conscience which is more sacred than his castle, or to withhold from it that debt of protection, for which the public faith is pledged, by the very nature and original conditions of the social pact.” From *The Founders' Constitution*. Volume 1, Chapter 16, Document 23. The University of Chicago Press. Online at: <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch16s23.html> See the final chapters of this text for more on the role of conscience in American law.

⁹² *Ibid.* Sadly, in the contemporary age of mega-corporations and prisons for profit, this most sacred property is left with little market value.

⁹³ Letter to Thomas Jefferson, October 17, 1788, from *The Writings of James Madison, comprising his Public Papers and his Private Correspondence*, ed. Gaillard Hunt (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900). Vol. 5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* A worry to which Jefferson replied in more accurate terms: “The tyranny of the legislatures is the most formidable dread at present, and will be for long years. That of the executive will come in it’s turn, but it will be at a remote period.” Letter to James Madison, March 15, 1789, from *The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Federal Edition* (New York and London, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904-5). Vol. 5.

⁹⁵ This potential explains why the U.S. Federal Government has, through recently proposed legislation (HR 1959), attempted to classify non-violent protesters – U.S. citizens! - as terrorists, with instructions to law enforcement at every level to treat non-violent demonstrations as “low-level terrorism.” This flies in the face of the fact that many of these persons demonstrating against war, for instance, are pacifists. They demonstrate against violence, and are the last persons to employ it! How does it make sense that they are terrorists? Non-violent citizen demonstrators against violence – “peace activists” - are “terrorists” only to those persons who are terrified of a citizenry free to do the right thing, rather than do as they are told. They are terrorists only to those who are terrified of peace. In criminalizing peace, members of the U.S. Federal government can be seen for what they are. Terrorists. Only a terrorist is terrified of persons who try to change the world without terror. And, as the best way to change the world without terror is to demonstrate how to live in peace, Federal warmongers are doing their best to make sure that these demonstrations no longer happen. At least, not peacefully. After all, criminalizing peace is only to declare war on what is anti-war. It is to threaten violence. And, in effect, to make peaceful demonstration impossible. One solution to the Federal war on peace is for military and police officers to follow Ehren Watada's example, and act according to conscience rather than simply “follow orders.” Some, the so-called “Oath-keepers,” are pursuing such a path. However, barring a widespread moral awakening, Federal efforts may well prove as intended - a fatal blow to conscientious action. After all, the great power of the person of conscience lies not in violence, and never in terror, but in living example. In showing how to live according to conscience rather than convention, conscientious persons demonstrate for others that they too can do otherwise. They hold out the possibility of a very powerful thing, a better world for all. However, this better world is only truly possible when people do the right things regardless of the conventional forces arrayed against them, shirking the conventional incentives to profit from injustice rather than resist it. And sadly, even in the ‘land of the free and the home of the brave,’ it is the widespread lack of courage to actually live freely and bravely that limits the possibility of a better world, today.

⁹⁶ In their constant “wars” on everything from poverty (meaning the poor) to drugs (meaning any substance that politically empowered interests do not or cannot directly profit from).

⁹⁷ Berry, 112.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 111.

⁹⁹ “He takes conventionally negative terms, like “crisis,” “tension,” and “extremism,” and invests them with creative potential.” Berry, 113.

¹⁰⁰ Statement by Alabama Clergymen, April, 12, 1963. Sadly, these sentiments are far from relegated to a more ignorant history. In fact, the opposite appears to be the case. See the aforementioned U.S. HR 1955 for an example of a contemporary *Federal* mandate which goes much farther than merely condemning a lone courageous man to unjust imprisonment. If it becomes law, it will define actions like King’s as “homegrown terrorism,” and would even brand King himself a “homegrown terrorist.” In this political effort to limit conscientious action, any act, or perceived intention to act, viewed as exerting or intending to exert force in order to change existing conventions can and does fall under the legal class of terrorism. Not surprisingly, this measure appears at the end of an era of singular injustice on the part of political authorities in the U.S. Its obvious purpose is to cement the Bush administration

achievements in curtailing civil rights and eviscerating the U.S. Constitution.

¹⁰¹ King, Jr., *Letter*... Further use of King's *Letter* will not be cited. It is not long. It is widely available, and it is the sole source of all of King's statements quoted herein.

¹⁰² One can take up another's words, and act on these terms no matter how far removed in class, title, or constitution. This is why every aspiring tyrant destroys the literacy of his subject populace first, and slowly strangles the flow of information throughout the public sphere soon thereafter. Case in point, the U.S. before and after the tyrannical war on "terrorism," via the manufactured crisis that resulted in the despicable "No Child Left Behind Act," and the rapid assimilation of news media under a smothering religio-politically motivated corporate umbrella.

¹⁰³ And what of the limits of words, themselves? Aren't they as often contracts with the past as they are inspirations for the future? What of the stories they make up, and especially the great myths of religion and politics that contain us all? Is it not in these, in the end, that defenders of convention inevitably root their resistance to change, however immoral the status quo? And what of the logic which binds these great mythical structures, does it not preclude any formula for novel action to be undertaken within them? Is it not by contradicting the terms of this logic, after all, that revolutionaries are first branded irrational, and their goals impossible? These questions, and more, will be answered in the second and third parts of this text, beginning with the intersection of action and word in the story of one's own life.

¹⁰⁴ John Brown, November 2, 1859, upon being found guilty of "treason" for attempting to force an end to the cruelty shown fellow human beings unjustly indentured or enslaved for the selfish, though at the time "legal," enrichment of the propertied elite who also, it must be noted, composed, administered, and finally executed the law, "justice," even as federal forces and public finances enforced it. Brown was executed one month later. His arrest was orchestrated by Col. Robert E. Lee, who later "led a bloody war to perpetuate human slavery" shortly after Brown was hung, and was allowed a peaceful retirement upon his eventual surrender. For an honest portrait of Brown's heroism, see Henry David Thoreau's *The Last Days of John Brown*. For a greater understanding of the role of the conscientious objector in confronting injustice, continue reading this text.

¹⁰⁵ Commanding Hephaestus to serve as midwife in the birth of Athena, wisdom and justice, as reported in Lucian's "Dialogues of the Gods," taken from *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*. Translated by Fowler, H W and F G. Oxford: The Clarendon Press. 1905. Available online at <http://www.theoi.com/Text/LucianDialoguesGods1.html>

¹⁰⁶ Rosen, 252.

¹⁰⁷ Definition from Lanham, 1991.

¹⁰⁸ http://english.ecu.edu/~wpbanks/rhetoric/ra4_kairos.html

¹⁰⁹ Another translation of *kairos* is "weather," an especially poignant fact given the current age of global environmental crises brought about by bad actions.

¹¹⁰ Ultimately, this is also Hegel's view, as expounded in *The Philosophy of Right*, and the reason why, for all the similarities that a student of Hegel may find between the view of cognition presented in this text and Hegel's own, I ultimately split with Hegel, and so, rather than spend the reader's time disseminating Hegel's often ponderous position, I integrate his insights where they are correct. Specifically, the bathtub experiment of the 8th chapter is inspired by Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as well as is the inch-work image of cognition, reaching forward and pulling onward the tide of action that becomes history. Hegel is clear and correct on the importance of history, and in the mechanism of its creation, but he is, by the time he writes the introduction to the *Phenomenology*, too comfortable with his place in history to broach the means of its redirection, or even its revision. I, understandably, have no such qualms.

¹¹¹ In these terms, we can easily invent the following exchange:

Real-Estate Rookie- I figured if I tell the truth about the homes I represent, then I will build better relationships with customers, and this will help business.

Real-Estate Veteran- You'll learn your lesson.

Sadly, this sort of exchange is so common as to be expected. Here, what one knows prescribes what is counted good or bad. After a few experiences, the rookie will have to come to terms with the situation; everyone else is a liar. And, to succeed, even in the short term, he may learn the lesson that it is good to lie, too.

¹¹² Speech at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, June 6, 1966.

¹¹³ http://www.whoisleonardpeltier.info/letter_from_leonard_062509.htm Awaiting his first parole hearing in 25 years as a political prisoner, Peltier continues, "I am not a philosopher or poet or a singer or any of those things that particularly inspire people but the one thing that I am is the evidence that this country lied when they said there was justice for all."

¹¹⁴ That is, every situation but one: death. We will address this unique situation in the chapter dedicated to Heidegger, chapter 8, and assess the motivating tension that death imposes on each and every living moment.

¹¹⁵ Immanuel Kant thought of the conscience this way. In the 7th chapter of this text, we will explore the central role that this image plays within Kant's greater moral theory. In that chapter, we will find conscience at the heart of Kant's thinking, working much as one would expect a spring to work, stretched out from end to end, holding tension, and exercising this tension in pulling one's self forward to moral ends. In this chapter, however, we will explore the role of conscience in motivating persons to undertake actions, generally. And with these results in mind, we will finally be able to set out the ACTWith model of conscience in the 5th chapter.

¹¹⁶ This image is universal to every action. In fact, Socrates spoke in similar terms. He spoke of rest in terms of sitting, and practiced his philosophy for the most part while walking from one place to another. Later, Plato spoke of the ideal place of rest in terms of the "form" of a chair. Both of them thought of rest and comfort in terms of low-energy states. A chair is merely a place in which sitting, and so rest, occurs. The form of the chair is merely the place in which ideal rest, the greatest possible comfort, occurs. I will stick close to such Socratic imagery throughout the discussion in this chapter, so that we can most easily rejoin Socrates on the subject of action in chapter 6. All that will remain for us is the determination of what counts as comfort, or in Socratic terms, the "good."

¹¹⁷ This view is also Socratic. One's body feels "empty" and his memory of past satisfactions motivates him to find something to fill his emptiness. I am reminded of the following passages from the *Philebus*:

Socrates: Do we mean anything when we say "a man thirsts"?

Protarchus: Yes.

Soc: We mean to say that he "is empty"?

Pro: Of course.

Soc: And is not thirst desire?

Pro: Yes, of drink.

Soc: Would you say of drink, or of replenishment with drink?

Pro: I should say, of replenishment with drink.

¹¹⁸ This does not mean that once machines realize this potential there is no longer any difference. It only means that they are no longer, *strictly speaking*, machines, any more than human beings are. And, it must be noted that the program of conscience developed in this text raises the distinct possibility of the manufacture of exactly such non-machine like machines.

¹¹⁹ “Theory of Moral Sentiments,” I.I.29.

¹²⁰ *The Empire of the Sun*, (DVD released November 6, 2001), Warner Home Video. Adapted from the novel of the same name written by J.G. Ballard.

¹²¹ The ACTWith model integrates these two aspects, one of feeling and the other of reason, into one unified model of conscientious being in the world. Today’s engineers of artificial intelligence call this sort of model a “hybrid,” because it consists of both discrete and non-discrete modes of computation. But, not all hybrids are the same. The ACTWith model is what is called a “bottom-up” model in A.I., meaning that it is non-discrete first and discrete second. In simple terms, the non-discrete functions build a sort of map of the world, while the discrete functions symbolically represent patterns and regularities within this map.

Bottom-up hybrid models are learning models. Deriving rules from the space in which they act, engineered applications of bottom-up hybrid models are able to learn about their environment, and about themselves. They are able to learn the value of objects through their interactions with them. The value of these objects is determined in light of their goals. If the object furthers the pursuit of a goal, then the object is a “good” thing. If not, “bad.” And, these evaluations affect the map of the world, as well as leading to rules such as “If [a bad thing] then [avoid it].” In short, they are more than learning models, they are models of human learning.

In many ways, these computational agents are mirrors of our selves. They are embodied intelligences, learning through doing rather than starting off pre-programmed. What they learn are logical extensions of their bodily interactions with the objects of their environments, a subject to receive our particular attention in human beings in the second and third parts of this text. And, though their bodies differ from a human being's in composition – metallic and electromagnetic versus organic and electro-chemical - it can safely be said that their existences are becoming more similar as the science pushes forward. They are able to set goals and seek them, using prior experience to overcome current obstacles, and use current experience to set further goals and to overcome future obstacles. They do so in the space of a situation that is uniquely theirs, and suffer the consequences of their actions. They are, as we are, “situated” intelligences. They succeed or fail, live or die in by way of the maps and rules they have made and their powers to revise them as things change. And this is the central issue confronting us in this text, what should be done, when, and how can we know.

It is not surprising that computational agents so closely represent human learning and behavior. After all, they have been designed with human psychology in mind to do exactly that. As should be obvious, for instance, the process of mapping and extracting rules from one's experience of objects of the world matches the process described in the first chapter. That discussion was rooted in William James' distinction between sciousness and consciousness. William James' psychology has been deeply influential in AI research, for instance in that of my old advisor Ron Sun's work. In fact, it was while studying neural networks under Ron Sun's tutelage while at the University of Missouri that I recognized a need for a model of conscience which could suit AI applications, and began researching human moral philosophy and neurology toward creating the ACTWith model. So, it is also not surprising that the ACTWith model emphasizes the potential to expand the moral limitations of AI models through the application of observations of human morality.

However, it is surprising how much we can learn about ourselves and our limitations from studying AI models, and their limitations, along the way. For instance, where an rule does not cover some aspect of a situation, the agent who follows the rule may end up doing the wrong thing, perhaps even coming to an early end. For the computational agent, this could involve some dimension missing from the map of the world by way of which it navigates and from which it extracts the rules that guide it when time is short. For human beings, the

picture is the same. One typically does not fare well in a moment of crisis when he fails to recognize it for what it is, a critical moment. Unaware of change, one is caught flat-footed, surprised, and this is hardly ever a good sign. Rules can fail an agent when that agent fails to update its rules in light of new information in another way, too. This can occur when an agent holds onto outdated rules. The rules become too rigid, too heavily weighted, and so cannot be rewritten. The agent simply moves along, unable to learn anything new, until the old rules set fails it, and all its action stop. Again, the picture looks the same for the human being. Simply holding to codes of right and wrong because “it has always been that way” is a sure way to, if not obsolescence, then extinction. In these cases, we say that a person seems to be living in the past, haunted, or simply old-fashioned, clinging to dear habit. Meanwhile, having no rules at all, or competing or contradictory rules, can also lead to bad ends. In the computational agent, this could entail a rules set that is not properly consistent, so producing inconsistent results. Or, it could mean having no rule for a situation, as any rule that might suit it contradicts a rule already in use. The agent may simply stop, and fail to act at all. And, where time is an issue, this could mean weighing options until time runs out. Or, doing, and then undoing, effectively running around in a circle, wasting energy. In the human, again, similar cases are easily imagined. In a moment of crisis, the unprepared person can miss a crucial opportunity, searching for a clue or comparing possible ends as prescribed by competing directives, or simply running around confused, and such mistakes can end up tragically.

As we see in the above examples, computational agents display many of the qualities we find in human agents. However, the extension of these results from general action and learning to the morality inherent therein has yet to be accomplished. There has not yet been engineered a purely computational conscientious learning agent. It is my hope that the ACTWith model can push this field ahead. However, our primary interest is not in learning more about computational learning agents, but in learning more about ourselves.

To this end, let's return to studying how reason and affect, discrete and non-discrete computation, figure into our own moral lives. Perhaps we can distill some lessons into a form more easily engineered into moral robots. At the very least, we will benefit from the clarity demanded of such applications. If we can reduce the incredible complexity that is morality into a basic model, then we will at the very least be able to more easily apply this model to our own lives. If we cannot engineer a virtual conscience, at the very least, we will be able to accomplish our original goal, and re-engineer our own.

¹²² If we were to develop the case for the existence of a moral zombie, it may begin by exploiting the predisposition to act on the basis of convenient fictions such as this one.

¹²³ Adam Smith, “The Theory of Moral Sentiments,” page I.I.2. Smith is most famous, today, for authoring *The Wealth of Nations*, but before this work he developed a powerful moral theory grounded in compassion. Relative ignorance of his moral theory has led to widespread misappropriation of his economic theory.

¹²⁴ There is an old Zen story that makes this same point. A self-described expert on the tea ceremony went to visit a Zen master for a cup of tea. He knew every little detail that had to be followed, and if the master skipped a step, the expert would note it. Finally when it came time to pour the tea in the expert's cup, the master poured the entire contents of kettle into it, spilling tea all over the table and floor. The expert was shocked and didn't understand what was going on. The master explained, “Your cup was already full, you had no more room for this tea.”

¹²⁵ For example, with the future in mind, and able to teach 1 a lesson, in some cases 0 may purposely withhold the potato. Even if it hurts him to do so, 1 can become a wiser, better person and behave differently in future trials if he is forced to come to terms with not having a

potato. 0 may even go so far as to eat half the potato, and hide the rest, until 1 begins to appreciate a potato-less situation. Then, 0 may reveal the half-potato, and share it, having helped 1 learn a valuable lesson, while allowing them both to survive. In any case, every person must come to terms with the consequences of his or her actions in light of scarce resources.

By considering the consequences of acting in certain modes of conscience rather than others, we can come to a better understanding of a more realistic conscientious agent. Realistic agents are persons, and a person does things in characteristic ways. We can think of these characteristic ways of doing things as the habitual exercise of certain modes of conscience when presented with certain sorts of situations. In terms of everyday life, the consequences of this exercise are very complex. One of the things that the habitual exercise of particular modes of conscience results in is a person's character. Understanding a person's character is not a simple task. A person's character is too complex to be captured by a simple game like the potato game, for instance. So, understanding the way that characteristic modes of conscience as described by the ACTWith model result in a portrait of realistic agency will take some work.

¹²⁶ The payoff for the closed minded is more difficult to determine, however must be found in the momentary sense of sufficiency, an adequacy due only to ignorance, that propels the closed character forward.

¹²⁷ There are some interesting implications relative contemporary philosophy in the realm of neuroethics. Joshua Greene initiated a set of experiments that confirm two things about human moral thought. In these experiments, Greene asked respondents to decide between two possible outcomes with tragic moral consequences. One option is: the subject must divert a threat away from 5 persons and toward one person, resulting in the death of that person, while saving the lives of the other 5. The second option is: the subject must place a single person in line of the threat, again saving 5 but killing one. The responses are observed with modern brain scanning instruments. The results show that persons who consider the first option utilize emotional modules of the mind, whereas those who consider the second utilize working memory modules. These results, in other words, show a strict division between bottom/top style computation in moral reasoning. Interestingly enough, most philosophers have taken this to indicate that most people (roughly 90% of all respondents fall into the first class) are irrational in moral thought. Meanwhile, it should also be noted that this 90/10 figure mirrors the projections that 10% of the population are psychopaths – that is, without conscience. This topic is covered in detail in my forthcoming paper "Conscience, affect, and the end of moral rationalism." For useful sources, begin with the following bibliography under Greene, Hauser, and Dimasio.

¹²⁸ I was, in fact, laying the groundwork for this text at that time.

¹²⁹ We often witness political leadership oscillating between these modes, imposing terms (o/c) and ignoring or withholding information even when its determinations are questionable (c/c).

¹³⁰ As exciting as life became under such a tyrant, all was not well. To make a long story short, however, his tenure in the department was over before my own, for all his efforts to the contrary.

¹³¹ Universally, this is the conscience of an infant. It is pure subject, absolutely impressionable. It is also the aim of some religious ways of life to either return to, or to exalt, this state.

¹³² This freedom causes a lot of problems. For example, from this capacity, in changing the natural environment to suit their own terms rather than to change – or fail to change – to suit it, human beings deviate from natural equilibrium. They create unsustainable environments

and unnatural laws in terms of which they are comfortable, and equilibrium, on their side of the equation at least, is easy. They create artificial environments in which to find the leisure they have lost, and the sense of community they have destroyed along the way, all at huge energetic expense. Meanwhile, they pollute, poison, and in the fog overpopulate. We will touch on these themes in the third part of this text. And it is fully developed in my current manuscript, *The Ethics of Inquiry*.

¹³³ In models of computational intelligence, this phase represents backpropagation.

¹³⁴ Adam Smith, "The Theory of Moral Sentiments," page I.I.2. I have added the ACTWith shorthand in brackets [] for emphasis.

¹³⁵ Strictly speaking, all experience is transformative, but the word "transcendence" is typically reserved only for especially noteworthy transformations, and so only for exceptional experiences.

¹³⁶ And why one's sense of self is only as constant as are the situations he embodies. This process of self-formation is the reason that many philosophers have been so perplexed by the role of memory in the metaphysics of identity. Memories are of terms to which one has come. As each self is uniquely situated, the terms to which one has come, and so remembers, are also unique. Thus, memory has appeared to be a suitable ground for a metaphysics of personal identity. But the self is not merely memory; it is memory in motion, memory made and memory lost. This is the source of the confusion. The self *is* memory, but most of one's 'who' is not what one remembers. One is never more himself than when his self is forgotten.

¹³⁷ *Energies of Men*, page 331.

¹³⁸ *Outside Magazine*, January 2007, page 64.

¹³⁹ Not so silly, but a matter of deadly seriousness, as this issue arises again in the moments leading to Socrates' execution.

¹⁴⁰ 38 c-d, and the discussion following. *Philebus*, 1892, page 38. Distance is temporal (past or future) as well as spatial (back or forward).

¹⁴¹ Heidegger calls this process of seeing better according to a metaphorical getting closer "de-distancing," bringing the appearance to understanding through inner discourse, only later testing the product, an assertion, against the new-found practical familiarity.

¹⁴² That this parallel specialization holds physiological water to this day is simply an amazing fact and testament to the power of Philosophic introspection

¹⁴³ Language is an aurally adapted translation of this discourse, and works because human beings have similar physical constitutions, tuned to a similar dynamic natural world, voicing their attunements to common objects of the world.

¹⁴⁴ *Apology*, 38a.

¹⁴⁵ And, even only anticipating that action will be necessary, with opportunities for action approaching, Philosophy is *always* the thing to do.

¹⁴⁶ In other words, no one knows the value of truth better than a good liar.

¹⁴⁷ *Gorgias*, 487d.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 520d.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 518d. This fascination should seem familiar to any modern member of the U.S., for instance. Well, it gets worse...

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 518d.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 522d.

¹⁵² He didn't wear gloves, likely, but I add this for dramatic effect. What a tragic picture!

¹⁵³ It also takes three points to make a plane. Thus, the poets of old paint the picture that justice arranges all things on a single surface together, in common terms. Socrates, in his story, places himself on this plane, then testifies that it is on these terms that he evaluates his everyday actions. This is the mechanism of his morality, and why he is the most just man in

Athens.

¹⁵⁴ *Gorgias*, 526d.

¹⁵⁵ Typically, this begins by imagining an embodied situation without the embodiment.

¹⁵⁶ All things appear in the plane of justice at once.

¹⁵⁷ *Gorgias*, 521a.

¹⁵⁸ The student of Philosophy will see the implications for Mill's utilitarianism immediately. Mill, of course, provides a different, less satisfactory, explanation, one grounded convention.

¹⁵⁹ And, when there is no call to action, no necessary right thing to do, left alone, at leisure, one may be found sometimes standing in the rain outside his own house, thinking, as had Socrates.

¹⁶⁰ Consider again Dick Cheney and Iraq, whereby his own personal wealth has accumulated at a staggering rate.

¹⁶¹ *Gorgias*, 516a-d

¹⁶² Equally the politician, as we shall see, and have been seeing.

¹⁶³ This does not draw into question musicality as a virtue, or music as a thing to do. Focus on the following: vicious is the character which fails to find selfish reinforcement from musical audiences for a lack of talent, and turns instead to seeking selfish reinforcement in Philosophy. Beyond suspicion, on the other hand, are those who work through music to bring others to understand their own positions as citizens, as persons whose situations are shared. Here, for example, think of *Rage Against the Machine*, *Tool*, *Dar Williams*, and other socially conscious musicians. Though not philosophers, per se, these musicians compel others to come to terms closer to universal, and thus are philosophical. Typically, they are not motivated by fame, and are known to say unpopular things. These are not mere musicians. They are philosophers who make music. Thusly, music may serve as an avenue for Philosophy, when other avenues fail. Exactly opposite is the guitarist who turns to philosophy only after his attempts at fame through music fail.

¹⁶⁴ The motivation of the failed guitar player cum philosopher, for example. And, increasingly a concern for Analytic philosophers, generally. What good is philosophy if it is intended only for other philosophers, in fact other persons within one specific branch of philosophy, and purposefully unintelligible to no one outside these circles? For discussion of a different sort of Philosophy, see Simon Glendinning, "What is Phenomenology?" *Philosophy Compass*, 3/1 (2008), pages 30-50.

¹⁶⁵ A summary version of this chapter was delivered to the World Congress of Philosophy in Seoul South Korea, on August 3, 2008.

¹⁶⁶ John 8:43, International Standard Edition, (2008).

¹⁶⁷ *Being and Time*, page 154(165)

¹⁶⁸ From section VI of "Some distinctions that have been made on the subject of religious liberty, and toleration considered" (paragraph 5). As appearing in *An Essay on the First Principles of Government, and on the Nature of Political, Civil, and Religious Liberty, including remarks on Dr. Brown's Code of Education, and on Dr. Balguy's Sermon on Church Authority. The Second Edition, corrected and enlarged.* J. Johnson. (London) 1771. E-book available at http://files.libertyfund.org/files/1767/Priestley_0893_EBk_v4.pdf, page 54.

¹⁶⁹ Kant, *Metaphysics of Ethics*, page 43.

¹⁷⁰ Velleman, page 68.

¹⁷¹ In other words, don't do it, you will just look stupid.

¹⁷² Velleman, page 74. Interestingly, here is one possible form of the Imperative so read: man is free to choose those terms by which he arrives at a logically consistent account of his ends. Or, he is free to choose rationalizable ends, rationally. See Velleman, page 75, especially. Either case is still limited to the notion that conscience is only a punctuating voice in the face

of reason.

¹⁷³ Here, I am reminded of the Kant who, in *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason, Alone*, asserts that one should not execute any action the ends of which he is not already certain. One possible interpretation of this assertion, one which denies *any* action at all, is: only act towards ends the reasons for which are grounded in terms whose values are themselves certain even as the action is undertaken. This appears to make moral action impossible in any *changing* world, and seems to make any experimental action immoral.

¹⁷⁴ Or, it is merely routine. For the most part, the ways things have been done are presumed to be the right ways to do things, now, and these ends are already well-known. John Stuart Mill takes explicit recourse to this fact of life, quite famously, in meeting objections to his *Utilitarianism*, for instance. Arguing, in essence, that the wealthy are best off giving to the poor, as there is more utility in a healthy happy educated society, than in a divided and co-dependent one, Mill reminds us that, though we have no time to calculate utility at every action, we begin with what practices we are given. And, even at that, conscience is the final judge to continue with routine, or not. And conscience demands we give to the poor.

¹⁷⁵ *Metaphysics of Ethics*, page 92.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, page 43. Kant's emphasis.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, page 81.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, page 82.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, page 35.

¹⁸⁰ The physiological grounds for the moral test which the categorical imperative represents as contradiction is disgust. See Wickers, et. al., 2003, for starters.

¹⁸¹ *Metaphysics of Ethics*, pages 178-179.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, page 180.

¹⁸³ The depth of the identity between one's self and others in Kant's ethics is evasive. The emotive/constitutive foundation of the categorical imperative had evaded my attention until I turned directly to the study of this less popular late text. In fact, it seems that in all of my coursework on this issue, Kant's ethics was presented as a rationalist counterpoint to other systems of ethics whose authors explicitly relied on emotive aspects of selves, like sympathy and compassion. But, as suggested at the beginning of this section, it is impossible to make consistent sense of Kant's view on this reading, alone. I can only understand that Kant was so presented as rationalism is the prevailing mode of today's academy, which has no capacity to understand his full method.

¹⁸⁴ *Metaphysics of Ethics*, page 141.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, page 60. In a further note, Kant adds: "The dependency of the will on sense is called appetite, and it always indicates a want or need; but the dependency of the will on principles of reason is called an interest." A "moral" interest is clearly both.

¹⁸⁶ To the objection that I am neglecting the privileged status of rules, laws, or conventions, I must respond thusly. There is no use in a rule past its moral revision. Anyone who thinks otherwise has missed the point of the rule (and is equally unfit to serve as *ruler*).

¹⁸⁷ *Metaphysics of Ethics*, pages 83-84.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, page 83. Echoing this distinction is Heidegger's "caring for" and "caring about," coming to our direct attention in chapter 9.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, page 84.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, page 83.

¹⁹¹ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, 2.0121

¹⁹² *Moby Dick*, Section 109. At this point the ship is leaking the whale oil which is what the fishing trip is ostensibly after, and Ahab is intent on traveling on instead of salvaging what can be salvaged. To this command the mate Starbuck protested. Ahab threatens him with a rifle.

Starbuck exits saying “let Ahab beware of Ahab.”

¹⁹³ Lost is an especially unpleasant end, and misled by men of bad conscience an especially unpleasant way of getting there.

¹⁹⁴ Fordyce, “A Brief Account...” pages 177-178, remarking on the Cynics, for whom morality was the only true science, causing them to renounce worldly attachments.

¹⁹⁵ Though Diogenes may have not been an avid bather in reality, I am hoping the reader can overlook this and enjoy the illustration.

¹⁹⁶ The Truth is that *all things in nature* do the same thing: all things in nature move to rest in terms of their environment.

¹⁹⁷ Hegel has written that conscience is “...this deepest inward solitude with one’s self where everything external and every restriction has disappeared.” Cited in Paul Ricoeur, 1992, page 344, fn.51, from Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* page 254. What Hegel means is that conscience represents what it would be like if the world perfectly aligned with one’s own personal wishes. Ricoeur recalls from Hegel that this is a lonely situation until and unless made actual through ethical life. This causes Ricoeur to reflect on Hegel as follows. “It is the absence of contents, which ethical life alone can bring, that condemns conscience to this solitude and this arbitrariness: “Here at the abstract standpoint of morality, conscience lacks this objective content and so its explicit character is that of infinite abstract self-certainty [Gewissheit], which at the same time is for this very reason the self-certainty of *this* subject...”” Ricoeur here cites page 91. I take this aspect of Hegel’s thought – abstract self-certainty – and put it to work in the illustration to follow. I work to make this aspect of conscience clear in order to make way for the ethical life, so ordered.

¹⁹⁸ The feeling of being in a bath is familiar to most persons. It allows the relaxation of external restrictions, and this is what I want to emphasize. Also, not simply coincidentally, bathtubs look like gravity wells, or potential wells more generally, and represent low energy states wherein external demands are relaxed and internal demands take over. That is, their very shape describes the space of rest sought by all things in nature, from molecule to mankind to solar system.

¹⁹⁹ Instead of beginning by rationally disbelieving all beliefs, as Descartes did, I am offering an affective method. We begin by feeling. If you are having trouble, begin by taking advantage of the everyday feeling of what it is to take a bath. Put your self in this situation. Let your self sink into the tub, close your eyes, and relax. It is like being without tension. This is the feeling we are after. We will modify this feeling in a moment. The idea, here, is to remove all sources of tension, to strip down to the bare situation, and then to become aware of the feelings of tension as corresponding objects are reintroduced.

²⁰⁰ When the order of the array is less an issue, think of them as “scenes” rather than “sciences.” Conscience holds two scenes out for comparison. That is what conscience is doing here.

²⁰¹ This is the “form” of “the good.”

²⁰² The role of practical reason is to lower the energy barrier.

²⁰³ This is the leisure that Socrates intends when he speaks of leisure as necessary for doing Philosophy, as discussed throughout this text.

²⁰⁴ Perhaps this explains Alexander’s remark, that if he could not have been Alexander, he would have been Diogenes.

²⁰⁵ See Angst, next section.

²⁰⁶ A summary version of this chapter was delivered to the World Congress of Philosophy on July 31, 2008.

²⁰⁷ *The Facts of Perception*. Anticipating dynamic systems, and the agent on the edge of chaos, frantically ordering the turbulence simply to ensure that the plane of his existence

remains continuous in all its critical dimensions. This is the picture of conscience at work, artistry, the workhorse of Philosophy.

²⁰⁸ Beth Orton, "The Sweetest Decline," *Central Reservation*, Arista Records, 1999.

²⁰⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1996, page 249(270). Where possible, notes to Heidegger's *Being and Time* are from the same edition and will follow this format: *B&T*, page xxx(xxx), with English pagination first, and German pagination in parentheses.

²¹⁰ I use the word "highest" to describe what Heidegger is translated to refer to as one's "ownmost" potential. Though "ownmost" captures the sense in which one's understanding is unique, and so the possibilities stemming from this potential are always, uniquely, one's own highest possibilities, I will often simply use the term "highest" as it captures this sense for all persons equally.

²¹¹ *B&T*, page 249(270)

²¹² This movement need not be understood spatially, though this picture is easiest to grasp. Consider this example. What's the difference between a Socrates sitting and a Socrates standing? Ex-stasy! To think of ex-static in this way, as the English word appears, ex-, meaning having been, and -static, meaning at rest, is not far off, but must not be confused with 'especial glee.' It may be understood as excitability resulting in embodied difference though experience, and this requires no spatial movement per se.

²¹³ The locus classicus for Western Philosophy's role in disclosure resides in Plato's *Myth of the Cave*.

²¹⁴ Sheehan, page 276. The astute reader will realize the parallel with the three aspects of temporality in *kairos*; the what is the past, what is judged, the present is that which is on display, and the future is how these become new, again. Interesting!

²¹⁵ For Heidegger's own clarification, in terms which suit the following discussion, see *B&T*, page 125(132-133). We will return to these passages later on, in the next sub-section, in any event.

²¹⁶ *B&T*, 114(121). I have substituted "one" for "it" for readability.

²¹⁷ *B&T*, 179(192)

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 296(322)

²¹⁹ Heidegger, *The Way Back to the Grounds of Metaphysics*, appearing in Kaufmann, page 213.

²²⁰ "As the understanding discovery of what is unintelligible, all explanation is rooted in the primary understanding of Dasein." *B&T*, 309(336)

²²¹ The ordered and ordering space in which orders are ordered, or, in other words, the created and creating space in which creations are created.

²²² As we shall see in more detail as we proceed, conscience does special work in this enterprise. Conscience calls back from ahead of us, disclosing whether that situation is clear or not.

²²³ "It is not that the self is conceivable by some sort of reduction. It is not a thing out there, to be arrived at "by purely logical means." "Rather, the I is the subject of logical behavior, of binding together. The "I think" means I bind together." *B&T*, page 294(319)

²²⁴ *B&T*, 301(328).

²²⁵ *Ibid*, 309(336)

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 310(337)

²²⁷ *Ibid*, 179(192)

²²⁸ Again in two senses...

²²⁹ There is a note to this phrase: "Clarifying more precisely: *saying-I* and being a self." *B&T*, 293(318)

²³⁰ *B&T*, 295(321)

²³¹ Ibid, 113(120). Not limited to people.

²³² Which is the picture one gets when he reads Descartes, for example. For more on the failings of this way of thinking, and of the immanent failure of the contemporary tradition built on Cartesian solipsism, see Appendix 2, this text.

²³³ As is the rubric, for instance, in contemporary fields like action theory and decision theory.

²³⁴ *B&T*, 117(124). This picture gels nicely with that of contemporary neurology. See the bibliography.

²³⁵ Some especially dull “philosophers” have criticized Heidegger for not composing an ethical theory. If these people had ever read his work, and then bothered to understand it, they would see the ridiculousness of their criticism. It is their ethical theories which are merely sign of their own philosophical deficiencies, and not the other way around.

²³⁶ As is the case with deficient modern moral philosophies of the Cartesian stripe. J.N. Mohanty has been openly critical of these approaches, which seek to bridge isolated selves through some force or other, like empathy, and he notes that Heidegger’s great gift to moral philosophy is this insight: that such contraptions are unnecessary, and wrong.

²³⁷ *B&T*, 111(118). See appendices for insight into how this position differs from that of the modern tradition.

²³⁸ Ibid, 118(126)

²³⁹ Ibid, 121(129)

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 118(126)

²⁴¹ Every one of “them” is an “us.”

²⁴² Who do we hold to account if the standard goes wrong? We shall see in a “moment.”

²⁴³ *B&T*, 119(127)

²⁴⁴ This is the picture of a police state, wherein each citizen is on the diligent look-out for deviance in other citizens, wherein reports to the government of this deviance is encouraged, and wherein deviance is punished for the sake of deviance. It is fascist Germany under a paranoid Hitler, and the U.S. under Bush.

²⁴⁵ *B&T*, 121(130)

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 119(127)

²⁴⁷ This criticism of public life is not new to Heidegger. Aristotle asserts that wicked people seek the company of others in order to run from themselves. There is nothing to love within them. They have instilled no virtue in themselves and have perhaps done worse, have become vicious. As a consequence, according to this account, wicked people don’t like to be alone. For Aristotle, vicious people themselves, by having to be in a group which reinforces their vices, in fact serve as an example against vice.(1166b27-8) Socrates, in fact, holds a similar position; the virtuous philosopher maintains the truth, even when this truth is unpopular. The Philosopher must be able to resist the temptation to hide from his responsibility to represent the truth. It is the motivation of the sophist to “bake pastries” as if for “children,” to act and to speak in flattering, comfortable terms. Socrates, with Aristotle, both hold that one may be “led into better ways of living and talking”(13a23-4) while at once one who is in the most wretched condition of life seeks the company of others in order to distract themselves from taking the steps to actively end their vicious condition.(1166b11-13)

²⁴⁸ *B&T*, 119(127)

²⁴⁹ World, of course, means the “how of the world” and its order, or “kosmos.” One need not understand how the world works. He only must take it for granted that it works the way they say it does. This is the sense of world from which one is closed off.

²⁵⁰ It may be in order to identify people exposed to these pressures that the current American regime has put in place computer systems to monitor the expressions of persons in public places, like airports. If one is moody, then he may be on his own in a world of turbulence and

not hiding away in the average opinion.

²⁵¹ *B&T*, 129(137)

²⁵² *Ibid*, 128(136)

²⁵³ Long, page 381. Long puts it thusly: “In the early Heidegger, at least, *Verstehen* [understanding] remains tied to Nietzschean self-assertion: having gotten myself back from “everybody’s” standard, everyday (mis)-interpretations of things and owned my very own authentic self, I now open up, *erschlieBe* [would open], significance for myself.”

²⁵⁴ *B&T*, 115(122-123)

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 315(343)

²⁵⁶ Recall the potential for Kantian self-disgust from the last sections, and you will get close to the feeling of *Angst*.

²⁵⁷ *B&T*, 176(189)

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 315(344)

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 283-284(307)

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 285(308)

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, 176(189)

²⁶² *Ibid*, 315(343)

²⁶³ *Ibid*, 176(189)

²⁶⁴ To which there is a note: “*a taking place of being – philosophy, freedom.” *B&T*, 248(269)
Man’s highest potential, discovery.

²⁶⁵ In Plato’s dialogue, *Laches*.

²⁶⁶ “That is, the clearing of being as being.” *B&T*, 297(323)

²⁶⁷ *B&T*, 275(300)

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 301-2(328)

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 283-284(307) he continues: “Disregarding those, it individualizes *Dasein* down to its potentiality for being guilty which it expects to be authentically.”

²⁷⁰ *B&T*, 179(192)

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, 252(273)

²⁷² Highest and unique.

²⁷³ *B&T*, 274(299).

²⁷⁴ Always shared. When apparently not shared, one is lonely, which indicates a deficient mode of sharing.

²⁷⁵ *B&T*, 275(300). Here, Heidegger is sounding like “reverence” is one’s highest potential, and I think that this is right. He does flesh out what this amounts to, the life worthy of reverence, in giving cash value for a man’s highest potential in understanding. By “factically,” read determinatively.

²⁷⁶ Olafson, page 47.

²⁷⁷ *B&T*, 276(301)

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 284(308)

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 301-2(328)

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 319(347)

²⁸¹ For insight into what Heidegger means by “Moment” see the discussion on *kairos* in this text. Though I do not make this tie any more explicit, Heidegger’s notion of moment is *kairological*. In fact, I developed the earlier discussion on *kairos* and action in this text in part specifically in order to prepare for a better understanding of Heidegger’s thought.

²⁸² It is this situation to which Socrates was also called, as detailed in those sections dedicated to Socrates in this text.

²⁸³ My interpretation of the discussion at *B&T*, 284(308)

²⁸⁴ *B&T*, 299-300(326)

²⁸⁵ o/o
²⁸⁶ *B&T*, 276(301)
²⁸⁷ Living the life of the “they” is not a way of coming to terms with the world as it is taken on terms whose significance is already given, and not discovered in light of the authentic situation.
²⁸⁸ Heidegger calls death the possibility not to be bypassed; there is simply no getting around it. It is certain, but for its date and mode.
²⁸⁹ *B&T*, 204(222)
²⁹⁰ Luke 20:17-18 (*New International*)
²⁹¹ Tool, “Schism,” *Lateralus*, Volcano Records, 2001.
²⁹² Rolston, page 97.
²⁹³ Ballard, 1976, page 111.
²⁹⁴ Properly speaking, the -science of con-science is a total system state of situated being. Conscience holds system states against one another.
²⁹⁵ Heidegger, *B&T*, 204(222)
²⁹⁶ McKenna, page 117.
²⁹⁷ McKenna, page 115.
²⁹⁸ Likewise, one looks to cultural leaders in order to see success in the flesh.
²⁹⁹ *Ibid*, page 112. “You do not question your perspective....” This uncritical attitude over one’s inherited way of life, Husserl called the “natural attitude.”
³⁰⁰ Raised in a given culture, one comes down with a case of his culture before one’s culture comes down with a case of him.
³⁰¹ McKenna’s line continues – “... (you can think here of the value dimension of the life world and the kind of experience that some people have of it when in a foreign land that motivates them to reject what they experience).” McKenna, page 117.
³⁰² However his is the first too name it “situated objectivity,” and to develop it in detail. This is the work of conscience, reconciliation, as was introduced in chapter 2 of this text through the example of Martin Luther King, Jr.
³⁰³ Boutroux, page 67.
³⁰⁴ Boutroux, page 65.
³⁰⁵ A similar point is pressed in Mann, 1999. For Mann, tolerance of competing or even contrary ways of life is affected through “structural expansion” [read introduction of new and significant determinations] of narrative identity. We will attend to this view in great detail in the next section.
³⁰⁶ Mohanty, 1970, page 102.
³⁰⁷ *Ibid*.
³⁰⁸ And that means being open to the present and to the opportunities of the moment, as we saw in Heidegger.
³⁰⁹ McKenna, page 112.
³¹⁰ Feuer, page 389.
³¹¹ Note that the word “bigot” is composed of the root “bi-“ meaning “two,” as in bivalent and bipolar.
³¹² McKenna, page 117.
³¹³ Tortured in Guantanamo rather than free to live as a Muslim, for example.
³¹⁴ McKenna, page 117.
³¹⁵ Like watching a lion at the zoo. This is o/c and c/c in ACTWith terms.
³¹⁶ Like a zoologist living amongst the lions in their natural habitat. c/o and o/o.
³¹⁷ McKenna, page 118.
³¹⁸ Conscience holds one system state of engagement against the other, and the difference is

what it feels like to be in another culture.

³¹⁹ Ballard, page 111.

³²⁰ *Acts*, 9.1 (New International).

³²¹ *Acts*, 9.3 (New International).

³²² This issue has received a great deal of popular attention. The transcript including the cited conversation with neurologist V.S. Ramachandran can be found at:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/features/stpaul/st_paul_script.html

³²³ William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, page 42.

³²⁴ Descartes speculated that the pineal gland was structurally significant to the experience of God; and, although everyone has a pineal gland, he was wrong. Although, his speculation carries interesting implications, as pineal glands in lower animals bind fundamental physiological processes, especially those related to sexual reproduction and metabolism, to the cycles of the Sun. There is now a branch of work dedicated to looking deeper into the neurology of religious belief, specifically, called "Neurotheology." Much of what follows is this field's fruit.

³²⁵ It is a feeling of sharing one's situation with everything else. I am here intending to develop it as a standard objective perspective opposed to subjectivity.

³²⁶ Newberg, 2001, page 147

³²⁷ The self-reports, understandably, come in the forms of linguistic expression native to either sort of religious commitment - i.e. the Buddhists explain their experiences in Buddhist terms, citing feelings of selflessness and universality, while Christians report sensing the presence of God.

³²⁸ An interesting starting place with much research:

<http://www.innerworlds.50megs.com/>

³²⁹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/paul_1.shtml

³³⁰ *Galatians*, 3.28 (New International Version).

³³¹ *Galatians*, 3.25 (New International Version).

³³² As we shall see in the final chapter, we are in a world, and under laws, which appear to have been inverted the other way.

³³³ I am thinking of Saul's conversion from o/c<->c/c, suiting his rigid thuggery. Saul's conversion which blinds him begins with an habitual o/c<->c/c state, then through a magnetically induced o/o and c/o, and then returning to an habitual o/c<->c/c state through the course of Saul's life, bringing forward with a much affected understanding. I suppose a home computer corollary may be the flash-memory of a bios. Saul had his bios flashed. And, though it only happened once, it had lasting effect.

³³⁴ *Acts*, 13.9 (New International Version).

³³⁵ o/c.

³³⁶ If magnetic pulses propagate from earthquakes and some populations have members sensitive to magnetic pulses then these more sensitive members may serve as important sources of community revision throughout deep evolutionary time. This interface between emergent life and radiative backgrounds holds promise in explaining many folkloric anomalies.

³³⁷ I will remind the reader that conscience is defined as that capacity which opens the space between situations, reconciling them (or not), and point to the relevance in this context as capturing the sense of one's entire life, beginning to end, one extreme to another.

³³⁸ *War and Peace*, Thomas Y. Crowell and Co. (New York: 1898), page 233.

³³⁹ *Rousseau On Education*, edited by R.L. Archer, Edward Arnold:London(1912),page 91.

³⁴⁰ As quoted by Gore Vidal, who is quoted in *The Independent*, "Gore Vidal's United States of Fury," (October 7, 2009).

³⁴¹ See Christoff 2005 for research to the effect that persons are bound by experience in what directs even spontaneous thought. That is, even “free” movements proceed on the basis of prior determinations. It takes time and attention to see a happy ending if you’ve never seen a happy ending before.

³⁴² Mann, xvi.

³⁴³ Ibid, 12. If the reader feels that this makes emplotment sound like living a life of fiction, I wish to refer him to Ochsner et. al. 2003 for a sterling review of emotional regulation mechanisms which permit a selective engagement with the organism’s situation thereby contributing to a self-constructed world-view. Life stories are not fiction, but they are constructed, and there is deception of self and others within them.

³⁴⁴ I am thinking of the *Sound and the Fury*.

³⁴⁵ Consider the classic psychological experiment wherein kittens are raised in rooms wallpapered solely in a vertical bar pattern. Once the visual system prunes for optimal performance in that limited environment, the kittens fail to recognize parallel bar patterns perpendicular/orthogonal to the original. They literally bump their heads on objects arranged in such patterns, physically unable to see them, and so to avoid them, at all.

³⁴⁶ The strength of a nation, thus, is the strength of this mythic symbol, its flag. The material thing has no significance of its own if it does not represent lives lived in terms of a common situation for a common end, lives lived in and for one another.

³⁴⁷ Mann, 84

³⁴⁸ Mann, vii.

³⁴⁹ Mann, 55.

³⁵⁰ Mann, 59.

³⁵¹ Thanks to Dr. Eddie Adelstein for the suggestion.

³⁵² Though I use fairy tale examples, the very real and everyday presumption of an exclusive narrative structure exerts forces in a very real and everyday way. These pressures are captured in phrases like “get a purpose in life” and “the key to success is choosing a narrow specialty and doing that one thing very well.” This sentiment also encourages slogans like “shoot them all and let God sort them out.” What is presumed is that there are others who need to be shot, but one’s self never does. Whether or not this is deserved is beside the point. It is the narrative structure which originally provides space for such brutality.

³⁵³ Mann, 27.

³⁵⁴ Fairy tales, religious or not, are the greatest lies of all. Yet, for some reason, we insist on orienting our children within them even as we teach them language. Imagine how deep and lasting the impact! Of course, our own chains are forged similarly.

³⁵⁵ Her criticism is that it is insufficient to accommodate typically feminine stories. She argues that traditional structures are “psychologically repressive.” I agree. Though, I have dropped the qualifier “feminist” from the discussion as I see no reason why the point doesn’t hold, generally. Although, if one must be essentialist, there is good evidence of physiological grounds for generalized differences in storyboard preference, though I shall not review this research here.

³⁵⁶ An opportunity for which this text shall close in offering the reader.

³⁵⁷ Mann, 59.

³⁵⁸ I cannot stress this point enough. Recall the discussion on the concentrationary universe last section. See the systemic “need” for a tyrant in upcoming sections.

³⁵⁹ September 14, 1775

³⁶⁰ http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/20070326_defending_pat_tillman/

³⁶¹ This goes for space as well as for time: “who moved my shoes?” marks a similar phenomenon to “where did the time go?” In these instances, it is objects external to one’s

self which determine the difference in the situations. This analyses applies equally well to changes in the self, with a slightly different result. When forgetting an appointment, one is heard to say things like “where did I put my head?” or “I lost myself.” In these instances, it is one’s self as an subject which determines the difference in the situations. In either case, it is the changing situation of the body relative to some object which is expressed.

³⁶² Mann, 59.

³⁶³ Ibid, 16.

³⁶⁴ Most recently in the section on Heidegger.

³⁶⁵ Sometimes, you just can’t help it! Consider adolescence. All organisms with a sufficiently complex brain undergo an adolescent phase in which prior enculturation is discounted and the neural networks which pattern the merely repeated actions taken up from prior generations are reordered around one’s unique individual experiences. In this way, the group of organisms benefits as each individual agent embodies his own unique experiences, identifies as that unique embodiment and struggles to survive as that product. Thus, each individual is – in terms of the group - an experimental agent, an agent in the mode of discovery in order that others learn from his example, to live his way, on his terms, or not. This is from the perspective of the group, the only perspective which makes sense of the process of evolution (contrary to the implicit egoism of genetic determinism, which is an adulteration of the true science and product of the ethical atomism common to contemporary theorists). The upside is that a few of these experimental cases succeed in developing new ways of being in terms of novel evaluations of objects common to the shared situation. The downside, of course, is that most fail. Such a theoretical result challenges contemporary social-political theory which rests in atomic agency and individual responsibility, having even gone so far as to put forward a bankrupt, though shrewd, theory of freedom. This theory is centered in individual agency which is correct so far as this goes, but fails in landing responsibility for the outcomes of agent-centered freedoms solely on the shoulders of the individual without consideration for the common benefit implicit even in individual failures.

³⁶⁶ Mann, quoting Judith Butler, 27.

³⁶⁷ Take, for instance, the life-long criminal branding of harmless recreational drug users in the so-called “war on drugs.” This is a bigoted war on culture, without scientific grounds, that ruins lives. However, it is also a cash-cow for the U.S. government’s covert wars without end. Who is the monster, here?

³⁶⁸ Mann, page 28.

³⁶⁹ Atkins, 2004, page 345

³⁷⁰ I do not think that this is all it takes to be a person, but I will skip this problem for now.

³⁷¹ For all appearances otherwise, the human situation is always nestled inside an envelope of natural order. It is important to understand that the mode of being open which is ultimately productive of practical wisdom is being open to the objective terms of the situation whether another’s or one’s own, in ACTWith terms, */o.

³⁷² This returns us to Heidegger’s “anticipatory resoluteness.” In this mode of being one is open to come to terms with his situation however that situation comes to be determined. This is how one comes to understand one’s situation. In fact, it is only through resoluteness that the situation is understood at all.

³⁷³ “Only as the present, in the sense of making present, can resoluteness be what it is, namely, the undistorted letting what it grasps in action be encountered.” *B&T*, 299-300. Think o/o, or at least */o.

³⁷⁴ Everyone always already understands that every body wants to be happy, to live comfortably and securely in terms of his situation. Every body wants to live the good life, and this is why everyone always already knows that it is bad to keep another from doing so, and

that it is good to help.

³⁷⁵ Here is my understanding. It may appear that he rejects one side or the other but this is not the case. In order to do his work, he must understand both sides to issues. He may speak against one side or another, but his intentions are not to reject the other side, but to expose it as untenable and to at once provide an alternative interpretation without such conflict. This is basic reconciliation, by my view.

³⁷⁶ By my analysis, I isolate nine groups: intersubjective, subjective, and objective, crossed with past, present, and future, yielding a matrix with nine groups. I do not review them systematically here.

³⁷⁷ Though, he decidedly did not always do as authorities directed.

³⁷⁸ And, it does.

³⁷⁹ *Crito*, 53d. Looking much the ogre he has been made out to be.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 54.

³⁸¹ *Apology*, 28d.

³⁸² *Ibid*, 19c.

³⁸³ *Ibid*, 29d.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 29d-30a.

³⁸⁵ *Apology*, 28d-29a.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 23c-d.

³⁸⁷ *Apology*, 31d. Clearly, the voice of conscience.

³⁸⁸ The great tragedy is that Socrates, who met every citizen of Athens eye to eye and one on one, treating each with the respect of his equal esteem, is treated with an opposite regard by the City, itself. Should he have discussed with each jury member one on one he would have been found not guilty and freed, as he himself attests in *the Apology*. How can a man be just and good to every other man, and still be found unjust and evil in the eyes of the City as a whole? Tragic irony.

³⁸⁹ *Apology*, 39d. See remarks to this effect in the Introduction.

³⁹⁰ Again, see the Introduction for further remarks on their possible motivations.

³⁹¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*, page 3.

³⁹² Without fully developing this argument here, I believe that this is because, at the level of physiology, laughter is the sense of getting something for free, of gaining something for nothing, while tragedy is the sense that the organism is losing something for nothing. This symmetry is the embodied source of all irony, and the reason for its universality.

³⁹³ I am thinking of the farmer's plot in Rousseau's *Emil*.

³⁹⁴ The agent on the cusp of disorder, stitching himself into the world and the world together with himself as he moves back and forth between what it feels like and what it is.

³⁹⁵ From his suicide note. February 18 2010.

³⁹⁶ *Economic Sophisms*, page 152.

³⁹⁷ "Ford Sees Wealth in Muscle Shoals," *The New York Times* (Dec. 6, 1926).

³⁹⁸ "In the interview on the widely followed "Parkinson" show, Mr. Blair was asked about sending troops to Iraq, ITV said." *New York Times*, March 4, 2006. Online at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/04/international/europe/04blair.html> It should be noted that the same author, Ed Gomez, is responsible for the critical spin on this talk in multiple publications.

³⁹⁹ Regarding the claim that the Blair government manufactured evidence subsequently used to validate the illegal invasion of a sovereign and otherwise peaceful nation, this has been widely reported. See, for instance an excellent article from Rebecca Howard of Syracuse and available online at: <http://wrt-howard.syr.edu/Papers/NoMoreBush.htm> Regarding the claim that God told bush to invade Iraq, this claim has also been widely reported. Originally to me

from the BBC, and available in condensed form here:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2005/10_october/06/bush.shtml

⁴⁰⁰All of this comes by way of one of my favorite online resources:

<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=religion&searchmode=none>

⁴⁰¹ <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/religious>

⁴⁰² Kant, *On Education*, section 106, page 45.

⁴⁰³ This result bears interesting implications for the Christian tenet that the church should be organized like the body of Christ, as it puts the authority in the practicing mass, rather than in those few headmasters who preach it.

⁴⁰⁴ Kant, *On Education*, section 106, page 45. As an interesting aside, Karl Marx is often quoted as having said that “religion is the opiate of the masses.” This is often enough represented as a dispersion on the person held in the sway of religious ideologies which in effect enslave the poor critter, likely for the benefit of some selfish tyrant. In fact this is not at all what Marx wrote. Marx, criticizing Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, intended that religion is a set of ideas offering the calming space of fantasy for the oppressed and the poor. Marx feels for these people; *he is not maligning them*. All sick and suffering critters seek solace in some substance, pharmaceutical or otherwise. His original text reads: “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.” It is Kant’s formula, above.

⁴⁰⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9-2.

⁴⁰⁶ Here, I am thinking of the Blair administration's manipulation of information regarding the lawful arrest of British sailors sent as bait into Iranian waters, specifically the creation of a fake map purportedly showing a non-existent border between occupied Iraq and Iran. This story has been widely reported. One particularly good account: <http://www.alternet.org/blogs/peek/49862/>

⁴⁰⁷ James Madison, letter to William Bradford, April 1, 1774; from Edwin S. Gaustad, *Faith of Our Fathers: Religion and the New Nation*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987, p. 37. Interestingly enough, Madison as well as every other great leader and every one of their earnest followers would be considered “terrorists” under the incestuous fascism that passes for government in the U.S., today. We shall have a great deal more to say about this later.

⁴⁰⁸ Thomas Jefferson in his *Autobiography*, 1821; from Thomas Jefferson: *Writings*, New York: Library of America, 1984, p. 40. Then, why are so many of these men, Mohammedan especially, now in prison for no other apparent reason than their religion?

⁴⁰⁹ Not surprising, considering his intellect and education, as related doctrines were shared by the wisest of men throughout the ages and throughout the cultures of the world, from Kant to Rousseau, who Jefferson and his compatriots most certainly read, and from Lao Tzu to Heraclitus, of whom Kant and Rousseau were almost certainly aware. How does deism differ from contemporary Christianity? Deists hold that the truths of the world are available to human reason. They do not believe that God works through some special few persons – prophets, princes, clergymen, ministers or messiahs – in communicating these truths. Instead, deists hold that any person who spends life open to the natural order, intent on understanding its apparent mysteries, can come to know all that one can know about it, and so come to know best all that one can know about “God.” The “faith” of the deist, thus, is in the underlying rationality of the natural order, itself, rather than in the paid representatives of its silent and invisible designer.

⁴¹⁰ If one feels that commitment to 'truth and justice' is the 'American way,' then all he need do is contrast the actions of the founders with those of the Bush and Obama administrations on things like public funding for Christian and Zionist schools, or the coup of 9/11, to see how far from truth and justice America has become.

⁴¹¹ John Adams, letter to Thomas Jefferson, Sept. 14, 1813; from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence*, Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987, pp. 373-374.

⁴¹² Absurdity, it bears noting, is ridiculous, and ridiculousness, recalling Socrates, is the worst form of ignorance.

⁴¹³ Thomas Jefferson, letter to Horatio Spafford in 1814; from George Seldes, ed., *The Great Quotations*, Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1983, p. 371. For remarks on the contemporary collusion between leaders of government, of industry, and leaders of religion, see the Introduction and the first Appendix.

⁴¹⁴ In my mind, that things have gotten so bad is the failure of Western Philosophers first off.

⁴¹⁵ James Madison, in a letter to Edward Everett: March 19, 1823; from Jack N. Rakove, ed., *James Madison: Writings*, New York: Library of America, 1999, p. 796.

⁴¹⁶ As covered in the Introduction, Harris has an affinity for Buddhism as its practice leads to the opposite of intolerance. I cannot endorse this form for political agency, but I see its usefulness in the context of allaying tensions. Especially in the West, persons may find it effective for reduction of their material expectations, and over-consumption. Even a slight reduction here would reduce pressures internationally, and warring. But, in the positive political direction, I think we need more; to become tied to the right things, not simply untied to the wrong.

⁴¹⁷ And denies the legitimacy of their governance. For those familiar, Jurgen Habermas has explicitly tied the porosity of a political power structure to the legitimacy of that structure. According to Habermas' program, the legitimate structure takes the form of an ideal democracy. It is on the basis of a system so legitimized that he pins his hopes for a peaceful world order. But, even his program presumes the possibility of a world-wide conversation, whose arenas are open to the influences of the "periphery." To this end, in order to overcome all the difficulties which I shall not here review, J.N. Mohanty recommends: "You can ... save the idea of an ongoing conversation by making it minimally structured, in which case you approximate to the Habermas-Apel notion of an ideally communicating society as the transcendental foundation." (Mohanty, page 97). This very text is presented as a formula for the satisfaction of Mohanty's recommendation: the minimal structure is the open mode of conscience as detailed in the ACTWith model. Legitimate democracy is in your heart, or it is not at all.

⁴¹⁸ It always stuck me as odd that those faithful in their own eternal reward in the after-life are the first to kill and the last to die for doing the right thing. This situation is only aggravated by the neuroleptic that, since one good man was murdered 2000 years ago, it is for the good Christian to stay alive at any cost, now.

⁴¹⁹ For instance, prejudicially Christian, publicly funded, "faith based initiatives" are emphatically un-Constitutional.

⁴²⁰ Thomas Jefferson, letter to John Adams, May 5, 1817, taken from nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/livingrev/religion/text3/adamsjeffersoncor.pdf September 18, 2008.

⁴²¹ Thomas Jefferson, letter to John Adams, April 11, 1823; from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence*, Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987, p. 594.

⁴²² These are the same motivations behind the execution of Socrates, if you will recall.

⁴²³ And there are few examples to live by on this count, especially in our current "democracy." Consider the following, written by Jason Scorza in "Liberal Citizenship and Civic Friendship": "Politics in liberal democracies has degenerated into the worst conceivable version of Madisonian pluralism, with citizens divided and conquered by special interests, and public

opinion manufactured by powerful media forces. Ties uniting citizens as such are practically non-existent, except at the concrete level of the state, where individuals enjoy the status of taxpayers and clients, and at the abstract level of nation, where citizens often love their country but not their countrymen.”

⁴²⁴ Thomas Jefferson, letter to John Adams, August 22, 1813; from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence*, Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987, p. 368.

⁴²⁵ Again, wars by definition take place between nations, and cause terror. Here, there is no other nation against which this nation has declared war, and it is we who are the greatest perpetrators of terror the world around and getting worse.

⁴²⁶ One may object that Christ was a pacifist. I will remind him that he started out that way, but in the face of egregious empire, he got very angry, and took rather radical, if symbolic, forceful action.

⁴²⁷ Meaning, as pertaining to a unified body of individuals, intersubjective, social, governmental; “corporate” in its original terms, common, cooperative, same body.

⁴²⁸ For instance, see the film *Iraq for Sale*.

⁴²⁹ Kevin Tillman, 2006, “After Pat’s Birthday,”

http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/200601019_after_pats_birthday/

⁴³⁰ This is no secret. For instance, consider the sources of funding, and the decidedly suspect message, of the September 2006 broadcast on ABC of the *commercial-free* 6-hour docudrama *The Path to 9/11*. Also suspect is the absent mainstream media and mainstream science in regards to the use of thermite explosives in the demolition of World Trade Towers, and WTC 7.

⁴³¹ As this book goes to press, Indian fascist interests appear to have staged their own coup, in the style of 9/11, with the aid of the usual suspects, Israeli intelligence and the American CIA. The purpose seems to be to isolate, and perpetuate war with Pakistan, for the fact that the militant tyrant who had run that country as directed by the U.S. executive was replaced, in ‘fair’ election, with someone less militant and much more tolerant of so-called ‘radicals.’ It may pay to recall that U.S. frustration with Pakistani popular sentiment resulted in the staged assassination of Benazir Bhutto. The same day she was to release information on how the American supported dictatorship stole elections electronically, the popular Bhutto was shot twice in the head under circumstances suspiciously similar to the assassination of John Kennedy. These include: the stand down of security forces as the most striking similarity, a fact shared by the recent events in India in November of 2008, and the fact that evidence of trauma to the brain continues to be hidden from public review a startling second correlation. This raises the difficult question, whether cruel and unjust leadership does not act as a force in the artificial selection against persons of conscience, resulting after many generations in a race of men essentially selfish, closed to the suffering of others, heartless, shallow, and ignorant. It also raises the question whether or not our current predicament is already a product of this sort of mechanism operative over generations past. This is a question I pick up in detail in my next effort, *The Ethics of Inquiry*.

⁴³² Freedom of conscience - the necessity of which being obvious to the framers of the Constitution that they felt it bore no specific protections beyond the explicit limitations already placed on government from violating the conscience of the citizenry - has no specific protection under the “law” without some recourse to freedoms of speech, or freedoms of religion, and any protections for these have been decimated under the so-called Patriot Act, the Military Commissions Act, and are degrading further under new legislation every day. This is no mistake. These acts that strip freedoms of conscience pass one public consent gained only on the basis of crises manufactured especially for that purpose. It is no mere

coincidence, of course, that Bush began his tenure with the destruction of the symbols of U.S. economic strength, and ended his tenure with the final destruction of the powers that those structures represented. The government that remains is the worst form of fascism, the marriage of government and the industry of debt, FINANCIAL FASCISM.

⁴³³ January 12, 2009.

⁴³⁴ The New Radicals, "Someday We'll Know," *Maybe You've Been Brainwashed Too*, MCA records, 1998.

⁴³⁵ One essential difference has been that computers have yet to be designed which will modify their own hardwired logic, as human brains modify their structures in learning. Baby brains learn and healthy brains adapt to changing environments. People are plastic, at least in the beginning, in ways in which machines are not. But, programmers are rapidly bridging this gap, as well.

⁴³⁶ In general, I am skeptical of the MySpace phenomenon. Insofar as computer mediated socialization stands in for direct care for another human being, I see a problem. I feel that it is always best to remain responsive to local needs first, as this is generally where one's capacities to care are most effective. Insofar as persons live in terms of MySpace mediated relationships, much of that most effective capacity to care for persons near at hand is underutilized, undervalued, and left unpracticed. Meanwhile, MySpace devotees collect friends as an object all its own, not to care for them as persons in the real world, but as evidence for one's own virtual worth. This is a vacuous existence, at best.

⁴³⁷ As should be clear, this fragility is a consequence of its energetic expense primarily. That is, it takes a lot of energy, in the form of human life and other resources, to keep this sort of thing going. Too much.

⁴³⁸ There are other sorts of logic, like fuzzy and multi-valent logics, but these are not often represented in academy, and the discussion of which I will neglect here.

⁴³⁹ Except for itself, which is where the logician goes wrong, but we shall get there in a moment.

⁴⁴⁰ This process raises some issues, like where are you when you are imagining this space, because you can't be inside it and see it all at once, so you must be outside it, which means there must be more space than the space you are imagining. But... we will solve this seeming paradox momentarily.

⁴⁴¹ The Introduction makes this very clear.

⁴⁴² After all, we do live in a concentrationary world.

⁴⁴³ To which he added that the other side birthed children, at all, for the sole purpose to have them shot in the streets. On his account, the children are sent, by adults, to attack tanks with rocks, so that the adults will have opportunity to justify their own eventual suicide bombing, later. Utter madness? Yes, he did.

⁴⁴⁴ Bear in mind that Palestine comes from "Philistine" and that many of the old Jewish myths are glorified fish-tales about the slaughter of Philistines, and that many of the current Jewish holidays are celebrations of these slaughters, and you get a deep historical picture of the sort of bigotry with which we are confronted in Zionism.

⁴⁴⁵ March 18, 2007, Eugene, Oregon.

⁴⁴⁶ *Economic Sophisms*, page 190.

⁴⁴⁷ Judge James Fox, *Sullivan vs. U.S.A. et. al.*, March 21, 2001, transcript page 19, lines 4-6.

⁴⁴⁸ The undue attention to carbon dioxide is a ruse that will accomplish two things. Redirect attention away from the most dangerous effects of chemical pollution at the corporate and State levels to focus on the individual, to the benefit of the same corporations and States most responsible for the destruction of the natural world, and to serve as a seemingly innocent wedge between those willing to submit to rigid controls over their lives and those

who see through the ruse and resist. Needless to say, the conspicuous consumption that had characterized the Western way of life and which G.W. Bush saw in need of defense is a problem. However, carbon taxation schemes of every form, vehicle monitoring, lifestyle inventorying, all of these are not solutions to this problem. They are merely parts of a carefully constructed fable that leads to global domination by a few especially cold-hearted interests.

⁴⁴⁹ It is not merely hard; it is bad. Whistleblower laws crippled with enforcements relaxed, corporate liabilities for health and environment reduced or removed completely, attorneys illegally dismissed for investigating corruption, support for poor and moderate income persons drying up, a get-ahead-at-all-costs academia of self-aggrandizement, evangelists calling for assassinations, liars for leaders and without consequence, you name it, the contemporary corporate-political-industrial-religious environment is made by and for the success of the selfish, the shallow, the sycophantic, the psychotic, and *not* the good.

⁴⁵⁰ Thomas Jefferson famously maintained that we would need a revolution every 25 years to keep the democracy going. It is no mistake that I have stressed, throughout this text, in various ways, the necessary benefit of generational updates in light of a changing environment. Jefferson was right; we are 6 revolutions behind.

⁴⁵¹ Frederic Bastiat, *Economic Sophisms*, pages 17-18. Bastiat continues: "Then the statesmen take over. They hold the power of the government in their hands; and what is more natural than to put it to use in increasing and spreading obstacles, since this is the same as increasing and spreading wealth?"

⁴⁵² Recall Socrates in the *Euthyphro*...Does it grow because it is good, or is it good because it grows? Both!

⁴⁵³ Whew!

⁴⁵⁴ Thus, Socrates, it is good because it pleases the gods, and once the gods are pleased it is even better. The god here is the economy.

⁴⁵⁵ Recall Bush telling the U.S. citizenry to buy duct tape after the staged anthrax attacks following 9/11. Yes, it happens like that.

⁴⁵⁶ Recall that "economy" essentially means the way one orders his house.

⁴⁵⁷ In fact, mankind is alone in a capacity, however underutilized, to curb his over-population in light of looming scarcity. I use these examples for ease and effect.

⁴⁵⁸ A slogan used to generate discussion while I taught as an assistant at the University of Missouri from 2001 until 2006. Props to an anonymous graffiti artist for quoting so exactly in black paint on the bricks of the Bank of America Plaza in front of the new Business Building of the U.MoCo campus (home of the alumni "Ken Lay" endowment), 2004. Jack Kultgen strolled up and asked "What's that?" To which I replied "Signs of effective teaching."

⁴⁵⁹ Development directives (IMF, World Bank) enforced as rigid precepts for "progress," (often militarily) for instance.

⁴⁶⁰ Interestingly, cancerous cells produce chemical inhibitors so that other cancerous cells do not grow too rapidly, thereby overbearing the system and destroying the organism too rapidly. We can see parallels in the global economy. Imperial forces also regulate remote growth by destabilizing regional economies, thereby maintaining their own potential access to resources.

⁴⁶¹ Perhaps the best measure of which way the system is leaning, to sickness or to health, resides in the reconciliation of the two terms "pacifism" and "terrorism." Somehow, non-violent resistance to economic imperialism has been equated under the current regime with terrorism. The sense that we make of this equation, "pacifism is terrorism" points to the eventual state of the global system. This marks a bifurcation point, and the projected ends ahead ground interpretations of "pacifism is terrorism" today. If this equation adds up, then

we are moving to a very sick world, indeed. If it does not, then our ultimate end will not tolerate such paradoxes.

⁴⁶² Not surprisingly, fungi, and virus, and other such critters work this way, too. Increasing need and consumption until the source of energy (food) is run through, then forming spores and casting off into the emptiness of space in the hopes of landing on some other energy source (food) to then again colonize, run through, and repeat. The plan of man in which we are tenants looks a lot like a mushroom: spread out, eat it all, rise up, and cast out into space from atop a great tower like a phallus spitting seed to the stars.

⁴⁶³ Case in point: Iraq.

⁴⁶⁴ One of Al Gore's famous lines.

⁴⁶⁵ There is especially no justice in any so-called "war on terror." Again, let us examine this phrase, "war on terror." It is meaningless. After all, "war" is "terror." Therefore, "war on terror" really means "terror on terror," or "war of terror." This phrase describes our current situation much better than does the original as, for there to be a "war," there must be nations in conflict with one another. Yet, today, what we see is the same "nation," in fact not a nation at all but a handful of government/industrial interests working in collusion, arming all sides, financing all sides, and encouraging all sides to conflict. They do so by causing terror, and this motivates reactionary violence, which they then call "war," and by way of this reasoning recruit the wealth of nations to further terrorize, impel the good people of the world to further react, and thus to further their cause of war - for their own enrichment - in perpetuity. The only answer, I believe, to "terror on terror" is "war on war," and this is to turn the other cheek, to take one's enemy as one's self, to live and let live. This is o/o, rather than c/c. This is love.

⁴⁶⁶ "Magnanimity," per Aristotle. Though we did not attend to Aristotle directly, his characterization is sufficiently captured by two others much closer to our current era whose works we did cover, Kant and Heidegger.

⁴⁶⁷ The bathtub experiment was designed to provide a moral gymnasium of sorts. I call it "The Socratorium."

⁴⁶⁸ And it is in the murders of heroes like these, people courageous enough to question the overseers of the military/industrial/financial complex, that we are finally aware of the depths of corruption at work in our own City. This example is based on that of Pat Tillman.