

CONSCIENCE: TOWARD THE MECHANISM OF MORALITY

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A dissertation  
presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
University of Missouri – Columbia

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In partial fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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By  
JEFFREY BENJAMIN WHITE

Dr. John Kultgen, Dissertation Supervisor

December, 2006

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled:

CONSCIENCE: THE MECHANISM OF MORALITY

presented by Jeffrey Benjamin White,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor J.Kultgen

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Professor A. VonSchoenborn

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Professor J. Bien

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Professor D. Sievert

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Professor R. Sun

Dedication:

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.

-- Socrates<sup>1</sup>

This work, this life, could not have been if not for Ann-Ellen Marion and Dr. Dan White, my parents and tenders of the fire in the flames of which I was both tinder then forged. Each in their own ways have shown me strength, courage, kindness and passion, without the tensions of which I could not have conceived this text. I miss the fireflies and elderberries and the evening crickets in the rooms of the house. From snowshoes on one side of a frozen winter river we saw otters sledding the far bank to ramp out into the ruddy water, splash, only to run up on a straight path single file shaking dry in the cold to wait and slide again on their backs and bellies skidding down and up and out, splayed wet fur in mid-air, splash. This text marks the end of such a climb and now, this morning, this dedication is a grateful reflection suspended over a long silent surface, like tears rippling an slow river, like years rippling a photograph faded in the sun. I love you both, and will always be yours. Much spills especially for Scott Jeavons, and sunsets on the lake, and bicycles, and skipping school and Frisbee and that life we should have seen had the world run right. Good-bye.

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<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, 1892, page 467.

## Acknowledgements:

The people in your life make you who you are. So many have supported me, fed me and on whom I have foundered. Few have seen an adequate return. Some have sacrificed as much as I for this end. Some still do. I must first thank my brother Justin, without whose patient and generous support I may not have seen this month, or the last, or the one before. Also, Aaron, without whose respect I may not have seen my self capable of this work, or the last, or the one before. When good men show one's self such love, one sees himself a good man alike. Thank you, both, and with them Renee and Skyler and Avery; I miss you all. I must also acknowledge those mentors who along the way put aside confusion for concrete direction. Foremost are Professors Alexander VonSchoenborn and John "Jack" Kultgen. In these men, there are lives worth living. I hope to do them justice with the rest of my own. Equally, thanks to Professor Ron Sun of Rensselaer Polytechnic whose assured brilliance has called me to this task. It is his scope which has inspired my reach. Also, thanks to Professors Joseph Bien and Donald Sievert, without whose timely support all was surely lost, and without whom I'd have known neither Rousseau nor Wittgenstein. Thanks as well go to Professor Sam Richmond, without whose encouragement and example I may not have recognized the surest path to truth: hard work with an open heart. And thanks Patrice Canivez: life is already another man's vegetable patch. I wish to recognize Professor Bill Wickersham for his lifelong commitment to justice. Bill may be the best man, most tireless and hardest working, I have ever known. Thanks as well to Professors Ng, Diraj,

Olsen, Ball and especially to John Luoma for unending support. Special thanks go to two young men who struggled over last-minute rewrites. Without them, there was no text. These are Joel Dittmer, a brilliant young Philosopher whose only limit is his opportunity, and Jared Gassen for his stolid enthusiasm and commitment. They give hope: we can save the world if we care enough to do so. From 20 years ago I must thank Allan and Nancy Eckert, for whom I produced a simple version of the basic scheme underlying even this work at hand. That they believed in me kept me going a very long while. There is always Racheal. There are Dan Miller, and Jason Collins, and Cortney McIntyre, and Ian Barrett. There are Lars, Tim and Omar, and Melissa, and Mark, and nearby there are Q, Tea, Rachael, Nick, KT, dear friends Lois and Sarah and the rest of the gang at Lakota, the work stage for much of these last years. I could not have made it without your kindnesses. Thanks to Douglas Keeth and Jonny Pez. These two gave of themselves while I was without hope, beset by different villains at different times. Thus, this triumph is theirs as much as it is my own. I wish to thank Kathy, Bill and Ernie, Schyler, Ezra, all the Ashleys, Tabitha, Yvonne, Sarah, Michelle, Allison, the Melissas and so many others who all loved me here, even in passing, Tom, Leah, Josh, Emily, Allen, Colin, Sarah, Brandt, Ron, Trent, Jason, Tiffany and Elaine, and long ago Kurt, Steve, Chris, Nancy, Tim, Chuck, Mike, Eric, Steve, Bones, Hovey, Joey, Bill, Otto, Boraski and all the old gang for what could have been and was. There has been loss, some above and others who have wished themselves away. Everyone, I have become, if not better, then by your presence simply what I am today. Thank you, all of you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Acknowledgements: .....	ii
Abstract: .....	v
Preface: .....	vi
Introduction: .....	viii
1. Conscience, and why we are awake. ....	1
2. Conscience, and why we live at all.....	23
3. Conscience, and the different faces of the right thing to do.....	31
4. Conscience, and how to do the right thing at the right time.....	40
5. Conscience, and the limits of experience. ....	50
6. Conscience, and the everyday. ....	67
7. Conscience, and the way of the world.....	78
8. Conscience, and the way we live. ....	101
9. Conscience, and the good.....	119
10. Conscience, and the appearance of the good.....	135
11. Conscience, and the fact of matter.....	160
12. Conscience, and freedom. ....	186
13. Conscience, and the just life. ....	203
14. Conscience, and the end of the world. ....	225
Appendix 1) Phenomenology and the Modern Tradition: .....	256
Appendix 2) Why Conscience, Why Now? Old Religion And The Case From The Environment: .....	268
Works Consulted: .....	280
Vita: .....	304

## Abstract:

Conscience is frequently cited and yet its mechanism is not understood. Conscience is most familiar as a voice protesting against actions which compromise personal integrity. Persons also cite conscience as that which directs towards actions such as seeking political office and sending soldiers to war. In order to explain the scope of its influence, this text develops a view of cognition in which conscience is foundational. The text melds thousands of years of philosophical tradition into the cutting edge of neurological research. The focus is a rethinking of the most philosophical of all questions: what is the meaning of life? The result is the ACTWith model of conscience. The model provides a system for the conceptualization of moral problems grounded in a thorough understanding of cutting edge neurological research. It provides a psychology which does not treat morality merely as an add-on to a primarily rational animal. It does so by uncovering the role of conscience in motivating an individual to do the right thing in every situation. The model is finally tested against the most compelling moral problem ever to face humanity: what can I do about global warming? Can conscience and philosophy help to save the world? This work shows that it can.

## 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.

-- Heraclitus<sup>2</sup>

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

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<sup>2</sup> Fragment 45.

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 arrange what had otherwise been unarranged. 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.”

## Introduction:

It is really very simple. A person embodies system states relative to various objects in the space of his life, and conscience compares these states. Some of the objects are chairs and tables, some are gods and love, and birth and death. The system states determined by relations with objects are “situations.” Persons are situated in terms of physical objects like chairs, and also in terms of metaphysical objects like gods, or good and evil. Thus, persons are situated in terms of the “space of metaphysics” and not merely in some physical space. Conscience compares situations on these terms, and the differences motivate a person to stay where he is, or to move on.

Every body gets thirsty. For every thirsty body, drinking feels good. When thirsty, the situation one is motivated toward is that which has a drinkable object in hand. This relation between situations is common to all beings who drink. It is not so for every situation. For instance, everyone is constituted to seek pleasure and to avoid pain, and to have religious experiences, and to see faces in clouds; but of the objects which determine these states, there are differences amongst individuals. Some seek pleasure in love and red hair, others in god(s), others in food, others in working with metals and still others in working with words. All of this is beside the point, however. No matter the terms, the mechanism which compares states and motivates from situation to situation, roughly speaking, is that of the conscience.

This text is motivated by a general principle. All things in nature seek rest in terms of the environment. Conscience, roughly, motivates to places of rest.

Conscience also grounds freedom. Persons are free with the capacity to determine, for themselves, in what terms they seek rest. A free action requires a further capacity to act towards that end, but this still presumes an act of conscience.

Freedom grounds that capacity to apply metabolism to work toward resting places other than those in which one begins. One is free to move against the pull toward rest. One is free to deny pleasure on the promise of an even better end, for one's self and for others. One is free, in other words, to suffer.

This text concludes with a challenge to applied ethics which affects the entire globe. Consider the following tragic irony. Technology has provided a view of the human situation on the planet Earth. Through its lens, scientists responsible for this technology see humanity at the cusp of a global environmental crisis. The irony is that the industries which provide for this technology are themselves responsible for the crisis. The lens reveals itself, and the view is not good. Thus, we must change the terms in which we live. Where are we to look for direction?

It is really very simple. Conscience opens the space between good and bad, virtue and vice, truth and deception, fidelity and disparity between god and other, man and nature. Conscience opens the space of life. It is the conscientious amongst us who keep it that way. This work shows how.

## 1. Conscience, and why we are awake.

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 Smith.<sup>3</sup>

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 Smith<sup>4</sup>

The focus of this text is the conscience. Consciousness, not conscience, has been the focus of most contemporary philosophical and psychological research. In this section I will investigate the relationship between consciousness and conscience.<sup>5</sup> I begin by developing a view of consciousness which is grounded in feelings of which one may not be aware. All of which one is ever aware is the feeling of being in a situation. One may be aware of being situated and not have a clue as to what to do about it. For this, there is conscience. Conscience has to do with doing the right thing at the right time in the right situation. On the view which I am developing, here, this evaluation proceeds without any necessary consciousness thereof.

Let me begin with an analogy. This will help to lay out the relationship between conscience and consciousness which is developed in more rigorous

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<sup>3</sup> "Knowledge of Future Events," page 193.

<sup>4</sup> "Theory of Moral Sentiments," I.I.29.

<sup>5</sup> My thanks to Professor Herb Tillema for his suggestion, the satisfaction of which filled the better part of two years with increasingly peripheral study, and the better part of two hundred pages of notes with increasingly peripheral relationships, hopefully to fill a half dozen pages with merely passable text.

terms in the text that follows. Consider the writing of a letter. I imagine sitting with paper, pen and envelope at a desk, alone, in quiet. I imagine that this is a letter for someone I love, but with whom there has been a misunderstanding. There are conflicted feelings. It is difficult to come to terms with them. I put pen to paper anyways, and as I write I discover more about the way I feel. The first efforts at finding words fail. Papers are marked and remarked only to be torn and crumpled and thrown away.

Before this exercise, I found myself writing letters in my mind even without the paper and the pen. Finally, I had to sit down and try to come to terms with the situation. Through this exercise, many things are brought to awareness and made explicit which before had simply contributed to a general feeling of being in love with a unique girl. These are the richest feelings in life. It all starts with a blank sheet of paper. It all ends stuffed in an envelope.

Even without a mark, the paper holds all of my roiling emotions within its margins. Sitting, staring at that paper, I see scenes play out and dreams crumble. Tears fall. This is anything but a blank piece of paper. This is me coming to terms with where I am in life, as opposed to where I wish I was. How do I express explicitly all the feelings which need expressing? How do I spill my heart in ink? There aren't enough words in the world. The letter must be read as it is written: "between the lines."

One word is especially inadequate. "Love" is such a quick little word for such a big lasting thing, but it is the best word she has. We are aware of this deficiency. I add "lots" and "forever" and "absolutely." Still, something seems left

out, or not quite right, so I crumple that paper and try again. This is what it is like to write a letter. This is what it is like to try to come to terms with one's situation. This is what it is like to be in love, looking at it from the inside out. Still, the words themselves are nothing without the folding, and the mailing, and the opening up.

In terms of this analogy, consciousness is the words and letters explicitly arranged on the paper. I am aware that I love her, and that I love her "lots." Underneath this explicit understanding is the paper itself. Even unmarked it stews with emotions. The blank paper seems to stare back, in mockery. In order to finish the letter, this emotive ground must be marked up, folded, and formed to suit its envelope. In order to finish this letter I must come to terms with where I am at, put these terms to paper and move on.

Conscience is the container for all of this struggle. Conscience is the envelope and the institution of letter-writing altogether. The envelope is the form which the letter fills. The envelope is the vehicle. It holds the address. It carries the intention. It names the place and the time. It holds this situation apart from another for their comparison. It is a snapshot of life at rest, seen from another resting place.

Conscience is that whereby one situation is understood as the feeling of being in a certain place in life. Without conscience, there would not be one situation understood as merely one amongst others. There would not be this letter to stand apart from and to look back upon, from another situation, the situation which involves the letter being finished, and stuffed into an envelope. There would be ongoing writing; but without an envelope, one would always be in

the middle of it. There would be only an ongoing stream of experiences all meshed together in one long series, each indifferent to the last. There would be no unique situation the understanding of which is the purpose behind the writing of the letter and reflection on its content altogether. Conscience is what makes a place in life special. Conscience is what makes being in one situation better than another. Conscience makes another place a position worth seeing, or worth leaving behind.

The letter encapsulates one such experience. Conscience, on the view to be presented in this text, captures the sense of being in a situation relative to others. This is how we know where we are, instead of merely how we are at any given time. The letter captures the sense of being situated in a single dynamic. It is enclosed in an envelope which captures the sense of being in a situation. Once folded and closed away in the envelope, the content of the letter can be held out and examined.

As situations change, the contents of letters change. Addresses change. Envelopes change. The reasons for writing letters remain the same. One must come to terms with his situation. A letter is the product of a rested reflection on the place one is in life. A letter is written for one's self. Sometimes, others will advise that one write a letter simply to come to terms with how he feels about a situation without any intention of sending it. The envelope is still operative, here. One writes the letter as-if it would be put in an envelope and sent away. It is a way of coming to terms with one's situation. It is a way of putting a situation behind one's self, to get distance from it. It is also a way of spelling out

anticipations of an uncertain future, against which what comes to pass can be measured.

Without conscience, one may be conscious of things without ever understanding how they all hang together as one situation amongst others. On this view, consciousness is not meaningful without conscience to contain it. With conscience, objects of our awareness are meaningfully arranged around a single theme, coming to terms with a situation. On this view, conscience and consciousness are necessarily related. We are conscious of objects which determine our situation.

On this view, consciousness is an extension of other homeostatic mechanisms of the body, and the brain is a more or less complex regulator. Just as basic homeostatic functions maintain the integrity of the organism in terms of its environment, the things of the conscious world become additional terms for homeostasis, things in terms of which we must learn to live, with which we must come to terms. On this view, conscience is what motivates the organism to situations whose terms are comfortably met. On this view, conscience is what motivates the organism to environments in terms of which integrity is maintained.

Most of life proceeds unaware. Though experienced, most of what we know we only know by acquaintance, not by conscious reflection. The pores of our skin open to aid respiration, cooling the body when it is warm, and none of us are conscious of the dilation of every pore. Everyone of us, though, is well acquainted with, and sometimes even aware of, the effects.

On the picture to follow, conscience is the controller of the homeostatic system. Conscience is a record of stable system states in terms of environment, the library of which guides the organism by holding the situation and associated state ahead for the organism's motivation. Conscience also controls the addition of new system states by either opening or closing the organism to the chaos of the external environment. New experiences yield new states attuned to different situations. Thus, conscience controls the development of practical wisdom. It is also in the capacity to open to the unknown that we find the loci of human freedom. All of this requires explanation. There are many pages to follow.

Consciousness is an aspect of conscience. This seems contrary to the everyday characterization of conscience as a protesting voice, but it is not. The voice of conscience may be that aspect of conscience of which we are most aware, but it is merely one aspect of conscience. Conscience has to do with coming to terms with situations generally speaking, and the voice of conscience appears to consciousness only in some specific incidents. Conscience has to do with doing the right thing at the right time in every instance, not only those in which its startling voice presents itself.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, there is more to conscience than we are aware. Analogies aside, all of this still requires explanation.

So, let's start with the basics. What is consciousness and what does that have to do with conscience? To begin with, a focus on consciousness as the fundamental object in cognitive sciences may be a bit arbitrary. Even the word,

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<sup>6</sup> Most letters are written without incident, to continue with the analogy.

“consciousness” is a conjugate, “con-“ and “-sciousness.” So, the question should be: what is sciousness?

This is not the first time that this question has arisen to philosophy. For William James, for just a moment, in his *Principles of Psychology*, 1890, consciousness appeared to be con-*sciousness*, where -sciousness, a stream of feeling and sensation, seemed to be the fundamental component of experience. James discounted this view, but that has not compromised its “strange attraction” to current investigators.<sup>7</sup>

Thomas Natsoulas describes James’ “sciousness hypothesis” as implying that all cognitive processes proceed within 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.”<sup>8</sup>

Now, one may object that he experiences his own feelings directly. This is correct; he does know his feelings and sensations directly. However, he does not know everything which goes on in his body, as blood chemistry and metabolism change slowly, and regularly, day to day. He is not aware of every sensation. Those that he is aware of, well, he is aware of; this is true. On Natsoulas’ analysis, sciousness names those processes deep inside the box, and no one, not even the individual whose conscious confines are this or that box, has an unimpeded view of these internal goings-on.<sup>9</sup> Thus, sciousness is

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<sup>7</sup> For instance, the article by this name: Andrew R. Bailey, “The Strange Attraction of Sciousness: William James on Consciousness”, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 34, no. 2 (1998): 414-434.

<sup>8</sup> Natsoulas, page 53, 1996.

<sup>9</sup> An envelope is much like a box.

not easy to talk about, as it is, essentially, those cognitive processes of which we are not aware.<sup>10</sup>

James dropped his so-called “sciousness hypothesis.” One reason for this may be that the tradition into which he was born supported the view that every individual does, in fact, have conscious – read complete, transparent, unimpeded - access to all the internal goings-on which matter. The sciousness hypothesis contradicts this presumption, directly. If sciousness were taken to be the fundamental term, and consciousness only a modification thereof, then what comes to matter is not necessarily that of which we are consciously aware. If this were the theory, than it would have clashed with the presumption of most of the thinkers of James’ era, and of our own, that the phenomena of consciousness is the most important focus in theories of ethics, in psychology, or in living the good life in general. All that glitters is not all there is.

This is important because, in James’ day, there was no instrumentation available for the investigation of what processes are at work in the body besides consciousness. What was available was introspection, and this method has some limitations. Unable to have the “sciousness hypothesis” confirmed, and with no access to investigate its operation, there would have seemed to be little sense in focusing on it directly as a basis for the emerging science of psychology.

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<sup>10</sup> On this view, all consciousness is an extension of other homeostatic mechanisms of the body, and the brain is a more or less complex regulator. See remarks to this effect in preface.

According to a rough conception of sciousness, the mental cogs and wheels which turn as we turn are hidden from immediate awareness. Think of sciousness as a continuous stream of feeling more so than a stream of determinate, discrete thoughts. Sciousness is the felt ground from which any thinking both begins and to which it returns. It is a silent ground, of which only certain aspects ever rise to awareness. Sciousness, thus, is 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 sensed moments, occurrences, sciousnesses, which, upon their reflective integration, become, a moment of consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

What is the con- doing here? Take sciousness to be the continuity of changing bodily states, much of which at any given time we are unaware.<sup>12</sup> Think of this stream of sciousness like the line drawn on an EKG machine, except that instead of regular punctuations of heartbeats and relaxations, the line of sciousness is not necessarily regular, and not usually so dramatically punctuated. Moods rise and fall, blood sugar rises and falls, hormone levels rise and fall, peripheral sensations flow in without demanding attention, yet have effects on bodily states nonetheless. Everyday, the stream of sciousness, for persons not living through crisis, may hardly rise and fall at all.

Next, take this graph of sciousness as indicative of what it is like to be in a certain place. Say, going to the department of motor vehicles. Waiting in line,

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<sup>11</sup> One can think of this as a process of repetition whereby the stream of sciousness repeats itself and in so doing these regularities become present to awareness with the rest cancelled as noise.

<sup>12</sup> This is a whole body state, and includes in my view even the growth of toenails, but with a minimal weight attached to such an incidental indication of system stability.

one's moods shift, it is boring, one's metabolism slows, and all without any necessary consciousness of this fact. Take this graph as a readout of this experience. Now, pretend that the same person returns to the department of motor vehicles, and a similar readout is produced. Here, we have two pictures of what it feels like being in the same place, even if one is not aware of everything he is feeling.<sup>13</sup> What we see here are two pictures of the state of the bodily system in terms of the same situation.

What the con- is doing, here, is overlaying these two graphs.<sup>14</sup> What the con- is doing here is comparing these two situations as system states. The overlay of the two amplifies the ups and downs which the two pictures have in common. What the con- is doing here is bringing to attention regularities. These regularities, through the con- operation, rise to the level of awareness and are those things of which one may be at any given time conscious.

This occurs as a matter of course, through repetition; recurring senses are consciously confirmed in their regularity.<sup>15</sup> And, hereby, something seemingly magical happens. As one finds oneself in terms of the regularities of his place in the world, the sense of self emerges. As a self built upon a continuous stream of sensations, consciousness of one's self is the awareness of what it feels like to be in a given position, this locus of regularity, mine. The self emerges as those

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<sup>13</sup> This describes what later in the text is called the feeling of being in a situation. Situation is fundamental.

<sup>14</sup> Think of this as a wave-addition problem wherein amplitudes which reach a certain threshold rise to consciousness, while those below remain sensed but of which there is not conscious awareness.

<sup>15</sup> The following picture suits early child development. Regular engagements lead to habits in which recurring senses are not necessarily consciously confirmed.

regular ways of being in the world which suit one's situation.<sup>16</sup> This sense of our selves as situated is ordinary; beforehand, there is simply nothing which answers to our notion of the self as an individuated being in the world, nothing of which we are conscious.<sup>17</sup> The consciousness of one's situation constituted on the basis of regularity yields "what it feels like" to be in a given place. The feeling of what it is like to be so situated only comes into question when one's situation changes, or a difference between one situation and another presents itself. In short, then, this sense of the "I" can be characterized as the sense that this moment, this awareness, this relationship with the world, this position is mine, while that space over there, or back then, is not.

One's self, so understood, is essentially positional.<sup>18</sup> There is always place in the time of life. It is this positionality which is the building block of conscience. Conscience and consciousness are related in this way. Consciousness fleshes out the objects and is the substance for evaluation. We become aware of things and take them in terms of how we feel as we engage with them. Regular affects lead to an understanding of being in the world in terms of these engagements. Regular engagements lead to an understanding of

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<sup>16</sup> This is what comes to be called a person's "character," of which we have a great deal to say later.

<sup>17</sup> This "I" marks the emergence of conscience. With a pattern established, there is a scene as that scene from that point, and this scene is compared with others, and this comparison yields the difference which is the felt content of the self. I try to make this clear in the passages to follow.

<sup>18</sup> There is direct correlation to be drawn, pertinent in this context, with the logic of our own memory. I would point the readers attention to the central role of the hippocampus in the processing of memory from short to long term, and its fundamental function – that is its function even in critters without the sort of long-term memory humans are famous for – in recognizing place as position. Thus, when an animal approaches a space which has some implication for its present individual purposes, say, the space signifies food is nearby, the significance of the position is thought to be encoded and retrieved through the functions of the hippocampus. This is consistent with the phenomenal evidence that places are sentimental. I am simply pointing to the essentially spatial nature of all thought, present or recovered, as qualified by an organism's capacities and requirements.

various orders of things, and one's place relative them. This understanding sets one's self in relation with all the objects of his world, physical or conceptual. This is the scene, the view, as one looks out over the space of one's life. It is one's situation. Physical things stand out, but not merely as physical things. Physical things stand out for their repeated significance, and this often has little to do with that material they are made of. There are crosses, and pyres, and to be far from one has sometimes meant to be close to another. Neither is significant for their material constitution. This relationship is not purely between one's self and some physical object. There is simply more to the space of life than that. It is a space weighted with metaphysical significance. I wish to be close to neither crosses nor pyres. These are not positions I wish to be in. Once understood, however, this understanding is not necessarily one of which there is any explicit awareness at any given time.<sup>19</sup> I understand that I don't go to church, but I am not necessarily conscious of it at any given time.

Much of life is lived in this mode. Consider the following brief illustration. One must walk through a dark room to get to bed. If the order hasn't changed, and the furniture is in the same array, then one may walk through the room without being directly aware of where the furniture is, but by merely walking between the determinations revealed in a prior journey. Conscience holds the bedroom up as a guiding light in the darkness. The comparison of the two situations, before and after navigating the dark room, reveals the path taken before in the difference. This path, laid down in past consciousness, becomes

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<sup>19</sup> Though, we can take it for granted that the terms of these engagements did at one time arise to consciousness, these determinations may become habitual, and so fall out of consciousness.

the space of navigation through an exercise of conscience. It is as-if one were in a lit room. One need not be aware of this activity at all, but the understanding of the lay-out of the room is effective nonetheless.

On the other hand, we are acutely aware of what it is like to be far from the leg of a table, for instance, when that table-leg may be all that helps us to stand upright. Otherwise, the leg of the table is not an object of attention, and there is no necessary consciousness of the space between one's self and that leg, at all.<sup>20</sup>

This goes as well for objects whose significance is not physical in the common sense. Consider the following personal example. I imagine that what it describes is familiar to many readers. I can remember struggling with the metaphysical weight of the cross, and the feeling of being increasingly distant in one sense, and increasingly close in another. Comparing these two, the distance of life between then and now, is what the conscience does, and it does so every moment of everyday.

The feeling of what it is to be in a position extends to all aspects of being in the world. Consider the following example in light of the preceding. One can have a sense that a crisis is approaching along with the anxiety which one might consciously attach to the phenomenon, and not be consciously aware of the

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<sup>20</sup> This note gets ahead of our discussion, but I will comment. It is the difference between what it feels like to stand and what it feels like not to stand which describes the intensional space, the space which must be bridged for the opportunity (to stand). The comparisons between a table leg near or far, in terms of an intension which includes standing, gives a good view of the landscape for the infant's infant conscience. Here the relation between consciousness of objects and space and conscience is explicit. One is the sense of being in a position, of having a sense of place relative objects, the other is a motivating comparison of this material.

anxiety or of the crisis. Perhaps there is a pattern in the present periphery which was part of a past situation. Conscience holds these together, and the feeling of the difference causes a tension. The difference is that presently there is not pain, yet. The painful situation is anticipated. This is dread.

Now, I will embellish this bare form with a familiar story. Imagine that this is your own situation. Consider that you have a girlfriend and she is becoming very dear. The girlfriend has a boy who dislikes you move in as her roommate. She then plans to leave with this boy on a month-long musical tour in which they will sleep in a van with another boy and his girlfriend.<sup>21</sup> As these moves are made, your position relative to a most significant part of your life changes. You have an increasing sinking feeling. Meanwhile you are trapped alone, working on philosophy, battling sophistry and trying to make the world a better place. It is imperative that your work is finished on time. You feel crisis coming without looking at it directly, as if a hole opened under your desk, and you are falling into your own stomach. This is dreadful anxiety. You slog onward, working as well as you are able, but each step is harder than the last, as if you are working to climb an increasingly steep slope and all that you held dearest is behind you.

This is the sense of a movement through an affective landscape. Falling into such a depression is not a journey one asks to make. This is not how one would wish his life story to go. Most of us try to avoid tragedy. This is not an end one seeks. This is not a situation one wants to come to terms with. The view of conscience I am developing here parses this movement. What we have are two

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<sup>21</sup> I found out later that this was false; no matter.

situations, separated by change. What hurts is the difference between the two situations, before and after. After is where one finds one's self as he reflects on the transition. All in the middle is a blur. Consider the illustration, above. She loved you. That past situation, that was wonderful. The present situation is painful. The difference is falling into depression. What comes next is lots of hard work called "getting over it." "Getting over it" captures the sense that what comes next is crawling out of the depression. The depression is where one begins and in which many remain. Conscience sets out the highs and lows of life.<sup>22</sup> Most of the rest comes in between. It is slogging it up and down the hills and valleys of love, loss, and everyday living.

That one has this feeling is possible on the basis of conscience as I have described it. Conscience holds the feeling of what it is to be in one situation against the other. It is up to the experiencing self to reconcile these two positions, and to come to terms with his new situation. This situation is not that situation. The difference is pain.

The self-constitutive relation between one's capacities to feel relative to engagements with objects of the world is critical to an understanding of what I mean by conscience. Position is the affective space of embodiment. One can be far from the one he loves and still be in the same room. These engagements are unique. Not everyone would feel that way in that situation. One's position is the unique location that is "mine," or "yours" just as one calls his lover "mine" or

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<sup>22</sup> I neglect to develop herein an account for purely physiological influences on this affective ground, say for one who is prone to depression, or to mania. It is implicit, however, in the model of conscience to follow.

“yours.” The totality of one’s place in the world is one’s “situation.” In love, it is all yours.

Situations are shared. A person is essentially situated and understands himself in terms of his position relative to objects. Persons who share situations understand themselves through similar engagements with similar objects. The more significant the object, the more important the relationship. Coming to terms with one’s situation is limited by one’s capacities to engage with the objects of his environment. It is a bad situation if the object one wants to manipulate is in a van with another man 800 miles away. The physical distance between these two situations, let alone the emotional distance, is simply too great, and it feels that way.<sup>23</sup>

Think of coming to terms with one’s situation as a process of determination, as the literal de-termination of the space of life. As we feel our places out, we come to terms with the limitations of these spaces; we feel the terms of space at the limits of our own sensitivities to it. Where we find no limit, there is an opening, a space which may be further explored, a capacity yet to be fully exercised. So, as we determine the space of life, we find and set our own limits. The limits of one’s own realized capacities, thus, is one’s “situation” whose terms are more or less easily come to.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The one you love is not an object, this is not what this language is meant to express. It means that you share her situation as-if it were yours. It is shared in totality. Love is not simply sharing a bed. The loss of love is likewise more than the loss of a bed partner. The loss of love calls into question the totality of one’s place in the world.

<sup>24</sup> And are thus more or less ideal. This has a special importance in the section on Diogenes and bathtubs.

Understanding is limited by, as well as limits, one's capacities to engage with the environment. Some come to terms not so well, and these are the same who understand not so well. Thus, in engaging with the objects of the world, one delimits the space where his capacities begin and end, where things begin and end, and so determines where objects are aims and where they are obstacles. This is one's situation.

In the phenomenology of the embodied self, the place of position is central. In the phenomenological tradition, a "situation" involves the inseparability of the psychological agent reflexively engaged with his environment. Being situated means coming to terms with the environment, and these terms are then taken up as the starting point in further engagements with the environment. As these terms are acted upon, their salience is tested in the success or failure of the action. This process generates new determinations of the environment, which are then fed forward into the next series of actions. This reflexive engagement over the course of one's life describes the space of life in terms of one's own limitations. One pays attention to, and so values what meets the terms of his needs, and discounts or ignores what does not. In being in the world, "organisms (agents) do not interact with the objective world in itself, but with their subjective perception of it."<sup>25</sup> In so exhausting our capacities for discovery, we delimit the space of life, and so form expectations of life lived in these terms. In being in the world, thus, the world is made. This is the world of our understanding, inseparable from the sense of being situated within it.

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<sup>25</sup> page 169, "The Construction of Reality in the Robot". We will return to this notion with some force much later on.

Think again of walking through the living room in the dark. One's situation is understood. This space has been traversed before. It need not be the case that this path works again, however. In reconfiguring the furniture, new paths are opened up, and old opportunities for unobstructed travel are closed. This requires looking at the room from a different perspective, and recasting the relationships between the objects in the space. In this way, spaces of opportunity<sup>26</sup> are revealed. Thus, trapped, we look not for walls, but for a way past them.

Let us review. As awareness dawns, the self is realized essentially in its relationship with the world determined by its own limitations. Consciousness is that which makes what is otherwise merely sensed into objects.<sup>27</sup> This sense of location accompanies every conscious moment, and corresponds with the positionality of the "I" in the sense of the lived body within the fields of all things so determined. It may then be said that all life is positional, all feeling is the feeling of a space, and the situated self is the first, and only thing, of which we are ever consciously aware.<sup>28</sup> IT IS THE ESSENCE OF THE SELF TO BE

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<sup>26</sup> New modes of being, new routes for travel, new horizons to explore, etc.

<sup>27</sup> The focus of which is, appropriately enough, called "attention" in the psychological sciences, pointing to the directedness, or intensionality, of consciousness, and to the relative freedom to redirect consciousness to attend to different objects. This freedom is opposed to the more passive sensibility which serves as substrate for consciousness. A similar distinction will be made between -science and con-science in passages to follow.

<sup>28</sup> In fact, our awarenesses just are the felt differences between these positions, so given as self-reflection. In this sense, we can accommodate a strengthening of LaTour's notion of "proposition." Taken even more liberally than does he, we can allow that people are, themselves, "propositions," understood as pro-positions, or presented places, places put forth, projected, and so which must stand as prima facie argument places. What, then, is articulated in a given proposition, understood in its weak form as mere assertion, simply is a claim to a place in the world. Moreover, so understood, no proposition as assertion properly exhausts the content of its expression; this is nothing less than the entire felt space of the individual itself. And, by way of this concept, we can begin to make full sense of the import of the as-if comparison that is coming to terms with another; this is justice. The nature of one's position for another's in the

SITUATED, IN A POSITION, COMING TO TERMS WITH ITS ENVIRONMENT. IT IS SIMPLY THIS COMING TO TERMS WITH ONE'S SITUATION OF WHICH ONE IS EVER CONSCIOUSLY AWARE.

So given, consciousness is not the limit of the self; it is only the ripples on top of the water in the bucket. Conscience is the bucket; it is the space of feeling of which one becomes conscious. Conscience frames the situation. The self emerges on the basis of regular fluctuations in one's situation. These fluctuations arise at the level of sense, with or without awareness. On this picture, consciousness is "the critical biological function that allows us to know sorrow or know joy, to know suffering or know pleasure, to sense embarrassment or pride, to grieve for lost love or lost life."<sup>29</sup> It is the sense of a sense. Underlying all consciousness is the felt ground of experience, the landscape of sadness and glee, our position in terms of which we may, or may not, at any given time be aware: "-sciousness." Consciousness is merely a part of the whole.

Though conscious is how we find our selves, consciousness seems not to be so directly related to what's really going on in the world after all. There is a more basic sense of our integration with the world, one on which consciousness floats along, bouncing off objects jarring its attention like a raft for one filled with hot air on a sometimes choppy stream of sciousness. Modern neurology

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conscientious trade of comparison is always an originally given charitable equality, though qualified and dimensionally limited according to the phronetic potential of the conscientious agent, himself. In discourse, what is due the other is that his terms be met and in my mind the most significant terms are natural.

<sup>29</sup> Antonio Damasio, 1999, page 5.

confirms this picture: consciousness is turning out to be a bit player in the movement of human experience. This understanding is so well grounded, in fact, that one contemporary neuroscientist opens his latest text stating that: “Your conscious life, in short, is nothing but an elaborate post-hoc rationalization of things you really do for other reasons.”<sup>30</sup>

The *con-* in James’ picture of *con-sciousness* is what pulls objects out of the background of our experience and brings them to awareness. In their conjunction, moments of sciousness bring to consciousness an object of which one has a feeling in particular, and towards which one has a relationship. “James explains that the prefix *con* serves to describe the stream of consciousness as being reflexive, in addition to being directed outward, beyond itself.”<sup>31</sup> The *con-* is what makes sensing the *sensing of being with things in the world*.

We may, through the lens of consciousness thus presented, look at conscience as *con – science*. *Con-* plays a similar role in the analyses of conscience. Consciousness has to do with different objects of which we become aware. In *con-science*, *con-* does not signify the comparison of fundamental sensings which present objects to awareness through *con-sciousness*. This is

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<sup>30</sup> V.S. Ramachandran, *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness*, Pearson Education, Inc., NY, NY, 2004, 192 pages, page 1. Of course, this brings us back to mechanisms and explanations. He says reason here for the same reason I say situation otherwise.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Natsoulas, “The Sciousness Hypothesis - Part 2,” *The Journal of Mind and Behavior*, Volume 17, Number 2, Spring, 1996, pages 185-206, page 189. James entertained the so-called “sciousness hypothesis” before settling on a more conventional account maintaining consciousness as the atomic unit of the mental, preserving, in so doing, the common sense conviction that we have immediate and continuous awareness of our mental states, and not only derivative awareness on the basis of a more fundamental sciousness. It is believed that James makes this move at least partly to satisfy the terms of fellow researchers, but takes great pains to modify the convention to account for the role of sciousness without overturning it altogether.

consciousness built on the base of consciousness. Conscience is all of this, and more. It signifies the comparison of fields of these objects in terms of one's place therein. Conscience has to do with situations. One is always situated in terms of objects. What I feel is the difference between situations. Each field of objects compared describes a certain situation in terms of these objects. Each field is thus understood by way of a corresponding view on the array of the objects in the field.<sup>32</sup> What I am conscious of is some aspect of that field; so, consciousness is an aspect of conscience, not the other way around. Each place in the field, furthermore, finds different objects in different relations. Each person's perspective, even on objects nearby, is unique. Each person's conscience, thus, is his own, but that it is his is a universal condition.

Consciousness is that of which we are aware. Conscience is the source of its evaluation, the logic explaining why there are these things and not other things, and why any of it matters at all. Its content is the feeling that is the difference between two positions, for instance before and after the break-up and before and after stubbing a toe on a rocker.

As we shall make much of this later on, these differences cause strain, tension. The difference between here and there, good and better, is what makes this better place than that, and becomes the reason to go there. We wish to avoid situations which require painful engagements with hard things, and wish to seek comfortable arrangements, instead. All of this will become clearer as I develop this preliminary notion of conscience in the passages to follow.

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<sup>32</sup> The "as-if" of the as-if model of conscience is best understood as an as-if where, and what it shows is what it is to be in some position, related in a certain way with a certain world of objects.

We will change speeds in the next section. Where in this last section, the issue has been the role of conscience relative to consciousness, the issue in the next is the role of conscience in bringing things to consciousness. We will look at the example of Martin Luther King, Jr. for some insight into what motivates the conscientious man. The power of conscientious examples will remain important throughout the rest of the text. In King's life, we will find conscience at work through a look at the sorts of situations with which he was confronted, and with which he had to reconcile.

We will see a man who does the right thing at the right time, even though others found his efforts "untimely." This will prepare for the section to follow. Therein, we will look at an ancient notion which indicates the objective constraints on right action. In our review, we will find that practical wisdom is crucial for meeting these objective constraints at any given time. Before moving further, then, I will clarify the relationship between conscience and practical wisdom. In this way, by the end of this text, the reader may see clearly enough the relationship between conscience and doing the right thing at the right time so that he might aspire to do similarly, himself.

## 2. Conscience, and why we live at all.

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, 9<sup>th</sup> tablet.

It has been written about Martin Luther King Jr. that "one of King's great achievements as a leader was to give the nation "a vocabulary to express what was happening in the civil rights revolution.""<sup>33</sup> In his work, King not only had a vision of a better world, he developed a set of terms which characterized that view. He expressed his view in these terms, and the use of the language helped others to come to share his perspective. I think that this is the work of conscience. I will attempt in the following text to show that this is the case.

King took the established terms of his times and bent them to fit within the space of a new time, an unrealized future, when the past promise of the United States is realized, and "all men are created equal."<sup>34</sup> The vocabulary of segregation does not name the same things as does the vocabulary of equality, just as the vocabulary of war does not name the same things as does the vocabulary of peace. One speaks of violent ends and oppression, the other of peaceful ends and tolerance. Men grow up learning these vocabularies, and come to understand their positions in life according to the use of these terms. Men grow up speaking of violent ends and oppression, and live accordingly,

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<sup>33</sup> Berry, 112.

<sup>34</sup> Point made in Berry, 123. In this text, "men", "man", and "mankind" are intended neutrally.

making the world a violent and oppressive place. King wanted to change that. I want to change that.

In King's times, as is the case today, world affairs are punctuated by both war and inequality, oppression and anxiety. This is a world in crisis. Crisis is hard to come to terms with. This is a world which needs the vocabulary for change. It was looming crisis which originally spurred King's efforts, 8 years before his famous *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*:

As early as the initial mass meeting of the Montgomery Improvement Association, on December 5, 1955, King had expressed his anxiety that the times were in crisis, and that local and national catastrophe were just around the corner.<sup>35</sup>

King was far ahead of the curve on this count. This explains his role as a leader. He saw ahead, what was coming up, and expended much of his life in understanding the terms of those critical times. He expended the rest of it recasting these terms to fit times yet to be. King understood that the world had to be seen differently, had to be determined as a different world, in order for its opportunities to be realized.

What King does is to see around the conventional order of things. He then takes the vocabulary which represents the conventional order and molds it to fit his vision of a new world. He does so in a way in which the recast determinations open a space of opportunity to see the world in a positive light. "He takes conventionally negative terms, like "crisis," "tension," and "extremism," and invests them with creative potential."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>36</sup> Berry, 113.

Let's look at one passage, in particular. The following is an excerpt from the charges brought against King by the clergymen, and which prompted his response, the *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*. This excerpt gives an indication of the tension King was saddled with reconciling, all alone in a jailcell:

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.<sup>37</sup>

Notice the tension between the terms, here. Terms like "hatred and violence" are coupled with "technically peaceful" to describe the same activities of the same man. These terms are polar opposites, and Dr. King was to have been responsible for both prongs of their complaint. He would have to answer from both positions, however incommensurate. It was up to him to reconcile these poles within himself.<sup>38</sup> This excerpt shows us that his *Letter* is intended to defend the nonviolence movement against charges that it sidesteps truly peaceful channels of negotiation.

This is one of the most compelling images in all of history. Dr. King, sitting in a jail cell in Alabama, crafting his response on the side margin of a local newspaper, the same paper reporting his sitting, there, in his jail cell. Even as he was writing his response, the public read of his incitement to "hatred and violence." Here he sat intent, in tension, a man suffering a cruel irony. Though

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<sup>37</sup> Statement by Alabama Clergymen, April, 12, 1963.

<sup>38</sup> From circa 1300, from Latin reconcilare "to bring together again." From re- "again" + concilare "make friendly". From circa 1565, meaning "to make (discordant facts or statements) consistent." <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=reconcile&searchmode=none>

his actions were “peaceful,” he still sat in jail. This is a source of tension. He had not come to incite violence, but because “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” and “in Birmingham because injustice is here.”<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the injustice was that he sat in jail. This was a cruel irony. King does not write about that.

King opens by recalling the “recent statement calling [his] present activities ““unwise and untimely.””<sup>40</sup> He then questions whether there could ever have been a good time to call for change.<sup>41</sup> Answering the clergy’s charges of taking “extreme measures,” King writes: “Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily.”<sup>42</sup> The implication here is that anything like involuntary change must come by way of force. Forcing change is clearly an “extreme measure.” Any change is clearly forced for those who wish the situation stay the same. It is by this logic that King is jailed. It is in this logic that I find King trapped.

King escapes. He does force change; he escapes through the margin of a newspaper. He forces change by circling both poles of the attack. He skirts these bounds by finding the common grounds for so many conflicted terms. In his *Letter*, it is in the word “tension” that he reconciles his nonviolent activities with charges of inciting violence. Through it, he comes to terms with two contrary positions at once. In this statement, we also find a defense of his method, and

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<sup>39</sup> M.L. King, Jr., *Letter...*, page 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, page 1.

<sup>41</sup> Not simply a better time, but is there ever a good time for change at all on the clergy’s view.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, page 3.

philosophy. Non-violence 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.<sup>43</sup>

When we see King in jail, forced to reconcile the tensions between contradictory determinations of himself, we see him dealing with the same sorts of tensions through which he himself forces change in others. King's method is consistent. He believes that through this work, men can reach their highest potentials. For King, this is peace and wisdom. We will look more deeply at the role of tension in the conscience in the sections to come. We will end the text with a look at the role of conscience in reconciling tensions between the individual and his objective world. We will see the role of conscience in generating wisdom, and in providing for peace. For the moment, however, I wish to focus on the fact that King changes the world by changing the words which determine it.

King taking words to represent the way the world is, is not unusual. Everyone does this. It is called language. It is what he does with his language that makes the difference between this hero of conscience and the everyday man on the street. King developed a language which opened a new perspective on

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<sup>43</sup> King, *Letter...*, page 3.

the world. Anyone can take any term to mean anything, and in terms of his life this is its role. But, that doesn't mean that these invented terms permit another to see his place in the world in a different light. Some invented terms do the same work as do already established terms. They don't determine a different situation, they describe the same one, differently. Ruth Chang has written that:

If you stipulate that 'glog' means 'less than a millimeter in length', there is a sense in which this is what 'glog' means. By sheer stipulation, you can create a normative standard for the use of the word so that if you say 'Pencils are glog', you will have made a mistake.<sup>44</sup>

What is of interest now is that King does what he does with a higher purpose in mind. He had a calling, a dream of a better place, and it lay beyond the vocabulary of the given world. The determinations of racist America and the American war machine did not characterize this space. The inherited expressions were not useful tools, these expressions no longer named useful things. These old determinations were obstacles to King's dream of peaceful coexistence. They had to be overcome.<sup>45</sup>

King did not stick to the conventional uses of terms. He saw a different situation, and recast old terms in order to capture the order of things in that space. We now live in a space of opportunity championed by King. Our world was the work of his life. We still reside in the space of his determinations. Our current situation is a product of King's new vocabulary for equality.

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<sup>44</sup> Ruth Chang, "Personal and Impersonal Reasons," delivered at the University of Missouri Kline Conference on practical reason Spring 2006, unpublished, page 3.

<sup>45</sup> In approaching this text, I took a similar tack. I have taken terms given and have recast them in light of a great deal of new information. I think that in doing so, what results is a view of conscience which is useful in terms of a changing world. What results is a view of conscience consistent with today's neurological inspection and the philosophical introspection of ages past. I ask the reader to take my redefinitions in this light. If he sticks to the conventional uses of these terms, the view I am describing will not line up. Our objects will not be the same.

We may ask, preliminarily: how did King come to this understanding? Conscience. Picture King, again, the locus of such contrary accusations as “violent” and “peaceful,” working to free others from oppression while sitting jailed, indicted by the clergy while doing what he took to be the work of Christ. King had to reconcile these opposites, he had to come to terms with two contrary positions at once. This is conscientiousness.

What does it mean to be conscientious? It means taking up contrary positions and feeling the space of their difference. Conscientiousness is opening one’s self to be torn apart or to reconcile these differences. Often, contraries to one another evidence themselves in logical contradiction. In King’s case, he must come to terms both with the situation seeing him as “violent,” and that of his own professed non-violence.<sup>46</sup> How is it that he is both violent and non-violent at the same time? In another case from King’s example, he must come to terms with the Vietnamese perspective as well as the American perspective in order to speak for peace between these two opposing forces in war. This is an exercise of conscience.

If the difference between two contrary positions can be commonly grounded in the understanding of one life, then there is the opportunity for the conscientious man to express this understanding. Conscientiousness means understanding what may appear contrary in a way in which it is not. Conscientiousness here signifies a putting back together, a putting together of things which had come apart. Conscientiousness here means recasting the order

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<sup>46</sup> The particular form of his reconciliation, his subjective understanding met with the objective understanding of himself, is the subject of the concluding movement in chapter 13.

of things through the determination of a new situation, a situation which makes sense of opposites. Conscientiousness here means doing so in order to provide for non-violent opportunities for the good life, for others, for their futures. Conscientiousness here means doing the right thing.

Conscientiousness is a special mode of conscience. I think that this is also the mode in which philosophy is done. I have in life tried to emulate a similar mode.<sup>47</sup> I hope in this work to open a similar opportunity for others by detailing the modes of conscience which provide for reconciliation. This conscientious way of life is, for my money, the only life worth living, but it will take some work to see this clearly.

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<sup>47</sup> For all appearances otherwise.

### 3. Conscience, and the different faces of the right thing to do.

It is the consistency with which the terms of one's situation are maintained which points to the apparent continuity of our conscious lives. It is the regularity of the world which invites habitual modes of engagement with the objects of the world. Habit, the regularity of being in the world, depends on a world whose appearances are also regular. In times of crisis, for example, habits tend to fail to deliver their regular results. Persons tend to avoid crisis. Why? It is the smooth play of habit which 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.

Crisis also calls into question what we call "virtue." Depending on the situation, different virtues seem to fit. Bravery in battle, temperance in daily affairs, honesty in discourse. But, when these fields are torn in crisis, things look differently. What is brave in a rout. What is temperate in a drought. What is honest in uncertainty? Once the order to which a virtue is suited crumbles, it is not a virtue. Virtues are the right thing but only in the right contexts. Persons tend to construct and to stick in those contexts which suit whatever it is they take to be their virtues. This is a sort of bondage, being stuck in a given situation.

One mode of conscience, however, gives insight into a virtue which suits every situation. This virtue is practical wisdom, and the mode of conscience

which generates practical wisdom is that in which one is open to meet the terms of any given situation. One does not become wise by simply doing the same things in the same situations. One becomes wise by doing different things in different situations. As conscience has to do with doing the right in any given situation, conscience depends on wisdom to see its way through to the right thing to do.

Our discussion on these two meets in the universal structure of every situation. There is a universal structure to each and every moment, every beginning and end of every unique action. It is in this universal structure that the search for the virtue which suits every unique situation begins.

There is a long tradition of qualifying an action, good or bad, right or wrong, according to a principle, *kairos*. *Kairos* may be translated as “*time, place and circumstance*.”<sup>48</sup> *Kairos* names the ancient Greek daimon of opportunity.<sup>49</sup> The term is also translated as “opportune moment.”<sup>50</sup> I understand it to mean, generally, the situation which calls for action, and in terms of which an action is evaluated as either good or bad. For example, if it is raining, and the situation calls for action, the right thing to do is to wear a raincoat.<sup>51</sup> If it is not raining, however, wearing a raincoat simply doesn’t fit. If one holds open the door, that is the opportunity to pass. If she closes it, then that action no longer fits. Every moment, raining or not, big or small shares this kairological constraint. The

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<sup>48</sup> Definition from Lanham, 1991.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.theoi.com/Daimon/Kairos.html>

<sup>50</sup> [http://english.ecu.edu/~wpbanks/rhetoric/ra4\\_kairos.html](http://english.ecu.edu/~wpbanks/rhetoric/ra4_kairos.html)

<sup>51</sup> Another translation of *kairos* is “weather.”

situations which call for action range from epic to instant. That opportunities are present to do the right thing in each is universal.

*Kairos* describes that at which all actions aim. The understanding required to meet the terms of any given situation that calls for action is called practical wisdom.<sup>52</sup> If there is a house fire, and a kitten needs rescuing, the practically wise man understands how to save the kitten and in the right way depending on this unique situation. Practical wisdom is the “capacity to arrive each time at something new, namely, the correct *logos* for the current situation.”<sup>53</sup> By *logos*, what is meant here is the form of the practice which fits the situation requiring action. The *logos* is not the action, but the terms which define the action which fits the moment. The practically wise man does not have to do the saving. He must only have the understanding to determine which action is the right action at the right time.<sup>54</sup>

Stanley Rosen characterizes *logos* in this context as the product of a decision. On Rosen’s view, one chooses to do the right thing at the right time. To be able to make this choice, however, one must recognize the opportunity to do so. “But, this decision is itself dependent upon the general knowledge of human nature, and so of human affairs.”<sup>55</sup> This simply means that doing the right thing is dependent on practical wisdom. Practical wisdom, thus, is what informs

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<sup>52</sup> See Brickhouse and Smith for a compelling argument to the effect that wisdom is the single highest virtue, of which all others are some modification depending on context of application.

<sup>53</sup> Rosen, 252.

<sup>54</sup> If the practically wise man finds a solution to a problem that has yet to arise, and dies before his solution is utilized, he is still practically wise.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

deliberate action, and that which makes doing the right thing at the right time a possibility, in the first place.

*Kairos* indicates, and for some persons primarily indicates, a situation whose appropriate action is required by god(s). In these persons' minds, god(s) is(are) the objective constraint on right action, and the source of the motivation of conscience to meet these constraints. *Kairos*, thus, denotes an intersection between the instantaneous and the eternal. *Kairos* is where a man meets his destiny. *Kairos* is the space of the Moment with a capital "M".

Conscience, on this view, is a "seat of judgment" that is divinely inspired to meet the terms of these Moments. Some situations are so special as to call for acts whose purposes remain hidden from the agent, though which remain presumably clear to the mind of his god(s). Practical wisdom would appear to have limited benefit in such instances, as there is only the divine command to be pursued.

The commands of a higher power are expressed in religious systems. Religion, on this view, takes the place of practical wisdom in providing the grounds for doing the right thing at the right time. Common religious rituals are intended to represent the conditions of such a situation and take the place of practical wisdom as the "capacity to arrive each time at something new, namely, the correct *logos* for the current situation." Indoctrinated accordingly, the agent is prepared so that he may seize the opportune moment, so that through him his god(s)'s will is done.<sup>56</sup> For the ecclesiarch, *kairos* refers to that moment of

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<sup>56</sup>As Andrew Newberg writes: "In this case, the transcendent experience is more than just space-time oriented; it is related to a creative and immanent force to which one can respond through

fulfillment which is an instantiation of the will of god. The rituals of prayer and congregation simply prepare the individual conscience to be the site for god's agency.

Even the most mundane moments have a similar shape as do the mystical. There is a kairological structure in little "m" moments, too. Simply recall the cases of a pen found or lost on the chance of a late bus, or a dog found or lost on the chance of a speeding truck, or a pizza hot or cold on the chance of heavy traffic. There is no need to recruit a deity to account for the temporal structure of objective requirements of right action in these cases. The pizza delivery driver does both that of which he is able and that which is required. As the light changes, and the traffic swells and slows, he moves toward his end, your hungry house. Good or bad is merely late or early. There is always the right thing to do and the right time to do it. Sometimes, people simply miss the opportunity. Some pizzas seem destined to arrive cold.

This aspect of the temporal structure of *kairos*, where man or pizza meet destiny, is preserved in every moment from answering the call of god(s) to the most mundane, from saving the world to reading a map well enough to ring a doorbell. There is a culmination, a moment when everything adds up. In the little "m" instance, it is the guy who ordered the pizza who evaluates whether the terms of the moment are met or not. In the capital "M" instance, if it is god, then I must meet the terms of the great thin-crust orderer in the sky.<sup>57</sup> In either case,

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religion and religious experience." Newberg, page 506. Though, not necessarily through religion. ACTWith conscience captures the essence of this "force" without recourse to supernatural or mystical devices.

<sup>57</sup> And we, we are just delivery drivers.

*kairos* names an essential feature of every moment. It simply doesn't seem so significant with its everyday face on.

What is most significant about everyday moments is that each becomes another and another and another. Each has a predecessor, a presence, and a progenitor. Because of their everydayness, however, this series is often neglected. The most significant moments of a person's life arise less often. Yet, it is these that become the most significant in the course of a life. It is these which become the rolling drama of one life's story. When caught in reflection, recounting the story of life, persons tend to remember being at weddings, and at funerals, and not at the coffeepot. Furthermore, it is the big moments, the moments with the capital "M's" which persons dread, or become anxious about. Here, there is climax, and catharsis. Amongst these are the moment of death, the moment of birth, and the moment a loved one will be leaving forever. All of this happens in the space of a moment, and then it is gone. The powers to avert it, or to avoid it, or aver it, are beyond that of one's mortal coil. It is no wonder that these moments leave many calling after a god. This is the character of *kairos*.

*Kairos* has traditionally been understood in epistemic and in rhetorical terms. The temporal structure of every moment in either case is retained. Epistemically, *kairos* points to the context dependency of what epistemologists call knowledge and moral theorists call the right thing to do. This implication is implicit in our discussion above. I repeat it here in these terms because it leads to a second epistemic implication. It is in terms of one's situation that one comes

to know the world, at all. Knowledge, itself, is context dependent, and only comes by way of coming to terms with one's situation.

For instance, in a world of honest persons, it might be counted as knowledge that lying is a bad thing to do. In a different context, say, one more like today's society of business in our latter-day capitalism, lying is a good thing, and one is more knowledgeable if one lies well, and less knowledgeable if one lies poorly.<sup>58</sup> Together, these two epistemic implications imply that meeting the terms of the moments of one's life shapes the person one becomes. All in all, this not a surprising result. Hard times lead to hard men with heavy hearts and broad shoulders. Hard times lead to men who have known hard times.

Rhetorically, the temporal structure of *kairos* offers three different perspectives, and three different modes of delivery. The mode corresponding to the past delivers a judgment, or a report of information. The future oriented delivery seeks to persuade the audience that some thing is upcoming, or that some practice or action will meet the terms of approaching times better or less well than others. The third mode captures each of the three temporal aspects more explicitly. This is the mode of demonstration. This mode takes place in "real-time," "live" so to speak.

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<sup>58</sup> 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.

A very simple example of a demonstration which displays all three aspects of the temporal structure is that of a chemical demonstration. I am thinking of that common demonstration in elementary chemistry, an iodine clock. With starch and iodine, a color change can be demonstrated to occur at a specifiable time all within the scope of the demonstration. In such a demonstration, there is a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning state is clear liquid swirling in a flask. The middle is a transition from an ionic to a molecular form of iodine in solution signaled by a swirling cloud of purple color first forming and then filling the flask. The end is this saturated color, with the reactive ingredients spent, and the swirling slowing to a stop. The demonstration is over.

The entirety of a life can be seen in terms of this structure, as well as every moment along its way. Its details are not as tidy as are those of the iodine clock. However, we can imagine a person's life beginning in the beaker of the womb. In the middle, out of the womb and then out into the world, he changes. The beaker changes. He mirrors others, and their reactions, and their reaction vessels. He changes to suit the beaker or changes the beaker to suit himself and others. The reaction takes off, and slows, spurting along in the swirling course of life. This is one's self, a living demonstration of enduring change in situ. As change slows, the reaction comes to a stop, and life ends. This is the time of one's life.

Understanding that this describes a necessary structure is critical to understanding the conscience. As a fundamental structure of demonstration, this structure holds for any demonstration including that of a human life. There is an

endpoint to the reaction. Persons are motivated to find a comfortable situation. Conscience motivates by holding out situations as ends. In the case of the entire lifetime, conscience holds out the best situation as that toward which one is drawn.<sup>59</sup> This situation orients the person, when he is in the middle of his life. It draws him on to his own end. Conscience thus holds out the situation at the end of reaction. It is in terms of this end that the middle has any meaning. This is a life with a purpose.

Let's look further into the relation between *kairos* and conscience. Where *kairos* seems to indicate objective constraints, conscience appears to differ in that it is most familiar from the first person perspective. A conscience is always some unique person's conscience. A person's conscience is what motivates an individual person to do the right thing. *Kairos* points to the fact that the right action is contextually dependent, and every context has a temporal structure. In terms of conscience, *kairos* indicates contextually dependent objective constraints on right action. For every instant there is a right thing to do, no matter how minimal and no matter how distant. The trick is getting one's self in a position to do it.

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<sup>59</sup> Global attractor defined by basic system states determined discretely by terms of experience.

#### 4. Conscience, and how to do the right thing at the right time.

“Only he who understands is able to listen”

-- Martin Heidegger.<sup>60</sup>

In this section, we will begin to better realize what we mean when we say “conscience.” Also, in this section, I will add to our vocabulary of conscience by reinterpreting certain terms in light of their supporting roles. Taken altogether, these terms should begin to fill out the new view of conscience which is our focus.

We have just seen that every opportunity for action has a common temporal structure. I take the common object of every action to be that it meet the terms of the situation calling for action in the first place, and this means the right thing at the right time. If it does so, the action is successful in meeting the terms of the situation at which the action aims.

All ends and all beginnings of actions are situations, which provide opportunities to move to other ends. Every situation is a position within a world of objects. Conscience holds these situations in comparison, opening the space of difference between them. It is the differences between these situations which provide the motivational force of the conscience. I will now briefly describe a view of intension which elucidates the motivational force of these differences, and thereby the directing force of the conscience.

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<sup>60</sup> *Being and Time*, page 154(165)

I had indicated above that persons with particular virtues tend to seek those situations in which their virtues are, well, virtuous. Being so motivated, however, is nothing special to human beings. In my view, conscience is a basic operation of any organism in the world with the capacity to retain and then to compare what it feels like to be in a given situation relative to another, whether these be ends of fairy tales or simple meals. All organisms are essentially evaluative; each has a sense of the good place and the bad.<sup>61</sup> Some fish stay in warm waters, some in cold, some bacteria in reductive environments, some in oxidative. Some persons stay safely sunbaked even within failing traditions, while others set foundation stones for new philosophies in the rain.

Conscience motivates according to one's capacities to meet the terms of the situations held up for comparison. This is because, if one attains some end, he will have to live there, and moreover he will embody the experience of having come to terms with that situation. When ends are uncertain, or unselfish, only some modes of conscience are open to the risk.

Consistent with this view of conscience as embodied source of motivation, I analyze motivation in terms of intension. First, let's consider the easy case; the case of an individual intension. By intension, I mean "in-" "-tension", an internal feeling of unrest, like a spring stretched out from one point to another.<sup>62</sup> Consider this. When we are satisfied, say like Socrates sitting, we are at rest.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> See Rolston, page 97.

<sup>62</sup> Kant uses the notion of a spring to describe conscience much as I intend it, herein, as we will see in greater depth later on.

<sup>63</sup> Rest is classically illustrated as Socrates sitting, and for later Plato in the form of a chair. Both of these indicate low-energy resting states; the chair is merely the form in which sitting occurs. Anything sittable is a chair, though not the ideal chair properly speaking. The ideal chair is the most comfortable place to rest.

Satisfied with where we are, we are without tension. Now, when we feel some need, and its source of satisfaction is not here with us, we have to get up and get it. A gap appears between the thing we need and the position at which we were at rest. To get there, to this better place, we must expend energy.

On my view of conscience as spring, the spring must stretch to an end and pull oneself up to it. The end to which it must stretch is that which it reveals as a situation up ahead to be reached. Ends which are distant, or difficult, are themselves a source of strain, especially when energy is scarce. It is not a comfortable feeling when one must be in some situation, and be at once unable to be there. So, persons tend to move to ends which alleviate tension with the least effort to themselves. Often enough, this leads to habitual modes of being in convention and routine.<sup>64</sup> For example, there is no sense walking out of one's way to turn the lights on if one navigates the dark room well enough to satisfy his needs. The extra effort, from this perspective, seems senseless. We will have more to say about this in the following pages.

Picture Socrates walking, talking, and setting the course for the ideal Republic, for example. Unsatisfied with where he's at, with the situation at the beginning, he moves toward rest, towards a place in which he is satisfied and may again find rest. This basic picture works for every case: The hungry man wants a bologna sandwich. A tension develops. He walks to the fridge and builds one. Then he eats it, moving in this series from dissatisfaction to

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<sup>64</sup> Slavery for instance can be explained in this way: it's easier to make someone less powerful suffer than to suffer one's self.

satisfaction, empty to full. The feeling, internal, of the tension between dissatisfaction and satisfaction, I call "intension."<sup>6566</sup>

This gap of intension is both spatial and temporal. It takes time to close the distance between a here and a there, and, together with the mass moved across this space, these are the measure of the energy required to do this work. Again, picture a spring, first at rest at point A, then stretched from points A to B, then at rest again at point B. In other words, there is a certain energetic expenditure involved in the closure of the gap; this is the tension in an intension, to my thinking.<sup>67</sup> Tension is the difference between unrest and rest. Generally, in plotting the course across such spaces, people take the easiest road their little minds can imagine; nobody wants their spring over-sprung. What persons and springs both seek is rest. The more tension, the more forceful the movement.

Consider this. It takes a number of calories to do anything from getting up to change the television channel to pushing a button to reach that same end. In either case, we intend to close a gap between this programming and some other. Considering the on-the-spot energetic expenditure of getting up to change the channel – after all, couch potatoes are heavy! - it is not surprising that most people use a clicker to eliminate the tension. In any event, this gap, and the

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<sup>65</sup> So, a space of intension which will not close is addiction, or incontinence, or love.

<sup>66</sup> This view is Socratic. One's body feels "empty" while 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.

<sup>67</sup> In other contexts, I call this what it is, a "work function."

feeling of needing to close it, I call “in-tension,” or, intension, and the feeling of tension is proportional to the energetic requirement of getting from here to there. All that is left is figuring the path to closure, and this has to do with practical reason, not conscience per se. Conscience simply provides the grounds for the motivation to have the channel changed by comparing the present situation, in which the show is a rerun, and another situation, in which something new and exciting is playing.<sup>68</sup> The felt difference between these two situations motivates the man to change the channel. The man needs to be entertained.

What I am describing here is the way in which spaces between situations open up. I have described how this happens on the basis of a feeling of need. This is not a feeling of which one must be conscious. As the gap between situations opens in terms of need, then, persons move to close it as efficiently as they are able. The feeling of being in need is the internal tension that is the felt ground of intension. Of course, some gaps are more difficult to close than others, and it feels this way. It is harder to ride 20 miles than it is 10 for a cup of coffee. Unless it is 10 uphill and 20 down, or the 10 is ridden standing up and the 20 lying down, or the 10 with higher speed, and the 20 lower. In the Tour de France, for example, each rider rides the same distance and the same hills; each rider intends to finish the race, to cross the distance, to close the gap between beginning and end. The winner rides fastest of all; he closes the gap between

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<sup>68</sup> However, even practical reason depends on the experience of being in different situations to figure how best to meet the terms of any end of action; this experience in meeting the terms of different situations is practical wisdom. To say much more will take us far from our present course, however this matter bears one additional comment. Smart critters may bridge gaps with minimal energy, but practically wise critters open gaps between more ends which are more fully determined.

start and finish in the least time. He pays the energetic cost of closing the gap before any other rider. It is good to win.

Now, all organisms are essentially evaluative, they move from places of need to places of satisfaction, or move satisfaction into them, where this satisfaction is the good. The good motivates, unless it is already realized. For a professional cyclist, it is good to win, until he has won and then it is good to rest. One may even refer to some especially consistent cyclists as “pedaling machines.” Yet, there is a potential difference between a cyclist and a machine, at least insofar as there has been presumed any difference between a man and a machine whatsoever. A machine, an automaton, is one for whom the good, and so motivation, is already given.

Persons, however, appear to have a capacity to do otherwise. This is what philosophers call freedom, or free-will. I believe that conscience is the source of this freedom. Let me explain.

Freedom is evidenced by a sense that things could be otherwise. In human beings, this capacity is pronounced. Persons routinely imagine what it is like to be in a better place, or a worse one, to be another person, a winning cyclist or a supermodel or a superhero.<sup>69</sup> Persons routinely imagine what it is like to be another person, and even emulate them, and become alike to them. All of this begins with a comparison of places, positions, or perspectives, views, or scenes. All of these are situations, recalling that they are defined as those spaces in which lives are lived and lost, spaces in which beings of all sorts are

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<sup>69</sup> This capacity extends beyond one’s own race, and includes putting oneself in the place of any other being, a bug, bat or a stone.

situated, that is, in which they come to rest, to sit, at the beginning and end of every action in life.

If ends are fully determined by needs, then there is no freedom that things could be otherwise. Necessary ends are simply that: necessary. There are instances in life, however, when the needs which require action are met. Imagine what it must be like to have a dissertation finished. Imagine this from the perspective whereby for as long as can be remembered there has been only writing, incessantly, and editing all day everyday. From the perspective of the work finished, the work needed to be done. There was simply no getting around it. In this case, when what needs to be done is finally finished, there may be an opportunity to deliberate over ends which are not necessary. One may think about jumping from a bridge, for example.<sup>70</sup> With needs met, there is an opportunity to deliberate over ends unattached to any object of need. One may make it an end to simply stand and wonder at the way that butterflies fly, for example. For Socrates, this opportunity is where philosophy comes in, and where practical wisdom is so important. Where there is the time, there is opportunity.

Socrates stresses the need for a certain leisure in Philosophic thought, and by this he means being unbound, free to think of any thing because he is not tied by need to any particular end. In free deliberation, in leisurely thought, no action is required. Thus, Socratic leisure is liberation from need. Likewise, without any need requiring action, whatever ends appear in deliberation are not necessary. A man is free to deliberate insofar as he is at leisure, and insofar as

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<sup>70</sup> With a bungy cord, of course. Clearly not a necessary action.

he is able. That is, insofar as he is not tied to some end of necessity he is through philosophy able to consider others. The determinations of these others are constrained by his own understanding, at first, and by the other's if one is open to it. In opening to other situations, one comes to have more practical wisdom about what ends are possible, and what ends are good. If one has a great deal of practical wisdom, he is able to deliberate over more ends, and find the value in others'. The capacity for Socratic philosophy can be developed through an increase in practical wisdom. Should someone wish to be a Socratic philosopher, opportunities for practical wisdom are to be sought after. We shall return to this theme as the text closes.

Let's review this picture for a moment. Picture Socrates walking to get a drink because he feels a need for water. The tension between one situation, thirsty, and another, satiated, motivates him to bridge the gap between these two positions. Having had his drink, Socrates is now standing. He has no pressing need. He is, so to speak, free from need, liberated. Here, in the space of this moment, he has an opportunity to deliberate. Beginning with where he had been, he thinks of where he is, and wonders what to do next. Hereby, he opens himself to the opportunities of the moment.

Practical wisdom thus bears on *kairos*. Not everyone recognizes the same opportunities in the same space of time. It is as if these persons live in different moments, altogether. They do take different perspectives, and are differently situated. It is the practically wise man who sees the opportunities in

the situation when others do not. This is a valuable skill, as opportunities tend to rush all too quickly by.

For the Greeks, Kairos was signified in human form. The daimon *Kairos*, minor deity of opportunity, is depicted as a sprinter. He has no hair and no clothes but for a single lock hanging forward over his face. This figure is intended to capture the elusive nature of the opportune moment. If he is seen coming, at all, he may be grabbed by his forward lock and the opportunity seized. He is only there for a moment, and then he is past. From behind, there is nothing to hold onto, nothing to grab. This signifies the fact that, once an opportunity passes, the moment is gone, and there is no way of bringing it back.

It is the practically wise man who sees the opportunities coming when others do not. It is practical wisdom which is the “capacity to arrive each time at something new, namely, the correct *logos* for the current situation.” It is the conscience which holds the situations which result from these opportunities and compares them, as if one had taken this or that action. It is the conscience which compares these ends of opportune action, and evaluates their relative worth. In order to gain practical wisdom, in the first place, however, one must be conscientious. This is being open to coming to terms with others’ and upcoming situations. In understanding another’s situation, one comes to terms with things in other ways than those which suit his own routines. This is understanding that can be brought to bear in coming to terms with onrushing situations, and in helping others to do the same. This is especially important in critical times, changing times, when one’s own limited understanding lies in question and one’s

own future is uncertain. This is when practical wisdom is most valuable, and when conscience is the guide. Thus, to discover opportunity in the world to do the right thing at the right time for one's self and others alike requires both.

In the following section, I will present a game which demonstrates this relationship. Through this illustration, I will present the basics of the ACTWith model of conscience. This model will be enriched through the sections to follow. We will rejoin the following game in the final section of this text.

## 5. Conscience, and the limits of experience.

“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.”

-- *The Empire of the Sun*

Persons, at their best, have the hardest time doing the most basic calculus while at once having a great and under-appreciated genius, to see and to feel as if some other, more or less like themselves, in spaces of life of which they have had no actual experience, and without consciously directing their 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 place.

Nonetheless, what the following text develops is a calculus of the good, a logic of conscience. The idea is a simple one. Conscience is “con-” “-science”, the motivating comparison of fields of objects arrayed according to purpose. One’s purposeful relation with objects determines the value of the position in which those relations hold. Persons are positional. Positions are that in terms of which things like persons live, in which (and through action) they are (and become) situated. To be situated is to be in a position. Conscience, roughly, compares positions.

The ACTWith model operates through two essential movements. The “as-if” is a taking up of a perspective or an adoption of a point of view. The as-if is putting one’s self into a situation. It is a function of mirroring another situation. It has two basic modes. One is either open to another situation, one’s self or

another's, or closed to it.<sup>71</sup> Adam Smith captures the sense of openness to another situation, which may be our own different situation, in the following passage:

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.<sup>72</sup>

This is the “as-if” of another situation. The “coming to terms with” is coming to an understanding of what it is to be in that position. It is determining what it is like to be in a certain situation. This has to do with enduring the limitations and enjoying the opportunities of any given situation. One comes to terms with another situation by opening to it, instead of imposing a prior understanding on the situation. The terms to which one comes are those which he then brings to his next situation. These determinations he employs in his conscientious comparison of different situations. Adam Smith captures this aspect of the operation in the following lines:

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.<sup>73</sup>

In coming to terms with a situation, one feels it out, perhaps actively searches for clues, and comes to an understanding of what it is like to be in that position. One

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<sup>71</sup> I draw an explicit connection between closure and disgust in the appendices, and introduce this talk in the section on Kant.

<sup>72</sup> Adam Smith, “The Theory of Moral Sentiments,” page I.I.2. There are very interesting results from neuroscience which empirically confirm this picture. See especially the work of Gallese, Kohler, and Ochsner amongst others as cited in bibliography.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

is “brought home,” as-if it were his situation, and in his residence he comes to understand his place. The more terms one has come to, the more terms can be brought to bear in understanding other positions. The fewer terms he has come to, the greater danger there is in imposing these limited terms on any given situation. To come to terms with a situation, in either case, one must relax his prior understanding in order to take the situation as it presents itself. There can be no new understanding if a prior understanding is merely imposed on the moment. This goes no matter how wise one becomes.

There are four fundamental modes of the ACTWith model of conscience. These correspond with the open or closed modes of the two constitutive operations of the model, “as-if” and “coming to terms with”:

As-if (closed) = one’s own situation, insofar as one has prior understanding thereof, is at issue.

As-if (open) = one is open to another situation as the issue: “we enter, as it were, into his body.”<sup>74</sup>

Coming to terms with (closed) = one’s own understanding is imposed in evaluation of 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.” By “the thought of what he feels,” I see Smith noting coming to terms with the situation.<sup>75</sup>

These simple operations lead to four possible permutations:

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<sup>74</sup> In most basic terms, I see this mechanism as one of disgust/love.

<sup>75</sup> This has to do with taking situation modeling offline from bodily updates.

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

As-if (open) coming to terms with (closed)

As-if (closed) coming to terms with (open)

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

Now that I have described these modes of the ACTWith model of conscience, I will describe the attitudes they bring with them. To facilitate the illustration, I have invented a simple game involving scarce resources which makes explicit the moral implications of these basic modes of conscience. Think of the following simple case. 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 ever missed a meal. The other person, call him 1, does not know what it is like to be hungry, and to remain hungry. He has never had to come to terms with unsatisfied hunger, and he hasn't ever seen anyone else go through it either. So, he has had no opportunity to know what it is like to have hunger go unsatisfied.

1, when hungry, always has had a potato fresh and ready to eat so as to satisfy the hunger; he stays filled up, so to speak. 0, however, knows what it is like to stay empty. However, he also knows what it is to eat. He has come to terms with either situation, and brings this understanding into the game.

The game as described is a one-off game. This only happens once, so the understanding generated in this run does not affect what the agents do with the potato. A one-off game involves players who are not interested in learning

anything, or in teaching each other any lessons. The agents themselves expect not to gain understanding in playing this game, or at least nothing useful in further life. It all happens once. They act only according to prior understanding. We will look at what any of the four modes looks like when habitually applied after we discuss the one-off situation. The focus on a single transaction allows a glimpse at a critical moment, where the rubber of wisdom meets the road of life, so to speak.

Now, consider what happens if 1 begins with the potato. 0 is present and hungry. 1 has four basic perspectives available on the model given, above:

1) c/c. Closed to the perspective of the other, closed to the terms of the other's 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.<sup>76</sup>

2) o/c. Open to the perspective of the other, closed to the terms of the other's situation. Having never come to terms with hunger, and having no idea what it is like to have hunger unsatisfied, he eats the potato understanding that if the other were in his shoes, he would eat the potato too!<sup>77</sup> Though he may wonder why the other is getting so upset, he has no terms to begin understanding that condition.

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<sup>76</sup> If the 0 resorts to force, imposing his own terms to secure  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the potato, 1 faults him for doing the wrong thing [remember the clergymen's indictment of King while he sat in jail] and returns or preempts attack when possible. Likely, over many iterations, perhaps over many generations, 1 extracts a rule such that anyone without a potato cannot be trusted to respect the property rights of the potato bearer. Not because they are hungry, but because they have no potato, is the issue for the agent whose experience is deficient in the relevant way.

<sup>77</sup> If the agent were to learn from the game, he likely extracts a rule such that whoever has a potato should eat the potato.

3) c/o. Closed to the perspective of the other, open to the terms of the situation. Though having never come to terms with hunger, and with no idea of what it is like to have hunger unsatisfied, he eats the potato while witnessing the other come to terms with his situation, which is unsatisfied hunger. 1 thus comes to terms with hunger, but he is “brought home” to it in a limited way. Hunger is still something he has not felt, but has only understood as a difference between himself and the other without the potato. By the expression on O’s hungry face, he begins to understand the value of the potato.

4) o/o. Open to the other’s perspective, and open to the terms of the situation. 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. Coming to terms with unabated hunger generates an understanding of what it is like to have no potato.

What this description is intended to illustrate is the role which prior experience plays in the determination of the right thing to do. On the basis of this prior experience, 1 had no understanding going into the game of the real value of the potato, for he had never gone without one. On the basis of the terms available to his evaluation, he only shares the potato in the open/open mode. This is the mode which invites doing the work of enduring changing situations, and coming to terms with them. The fruit of which is an understanding of another situation in the fullest possible light. In going hungry, if he were to learn from his experience, 1 becomes wiser. In the other modes, the result is variable.

Let us consider this same set of options from the perspective of agent 0. 0 has four basic perspectives from the model given, above:

1) *c/c*. Closed to the other's perspective, and closed to the terms 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.<sup>78</sup>

2) *o/c*. Open to the perspective of the other, and closed to the terms of the other's situation. Having come to terms with hunger, himself, and with this understanding of what it is like to have hunger unsatisfied, he shares the potato.<sup>79</sup>

3) *c/o*. Closed to the perspective of the other, and open to the terms of the other's situation. Having lacked a potato at some point prior and with the resultant understanding of what it is to go hungry, 0, open to the hungry situation of the other, shares the potato.

4) *o/o*. Open to the perspective of the other, and open to the terms of the other's situation, with an understanding of what it is to go hungry, 0 shares the potato if he does not give it away completely.<sup>80</sup>

What this description is intended to illustrate is the role which prior experience plays in the determination of the right thing to do. On the basis of this prior experience, 0 had understanding going into the game of the real value of the potato, for he had gone without one. On the basis of the terms available to his evaluation, then, he only fails to share the potato in the closed/closed mode.

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<sup>78</sup> Think responsive to the body, as-if one's bodily needs were the situation.

<sup>79</sup> Likely expecting the other will do the same in reversed situations.

<sup>80</sup> This is the mode of the martyr, of selfless charity and love.

The agents in the preceding illustration are what is called “ideal.” That is, they are not very realistic. Realistically, persons learn from experience. Further, there is a great deal to be said about the ways in which feelings of others are mirrored in the brains of human beings, especially important in the development of the infant into the adult form of the organism. But these discussions would take us far from where we need to be next.

What if this were more than a one-off game? What if the agents didn’t simply share potatoes? What if these were real people who simply adopted certain modes in certain situations habitually throughout life? Then, we would have a picture of a more realistic conscientious agent. These agents have a character. The following short discussion will introduce themes to be reckoned with through the rest of the text.

We can make a bit more of the four basic modes to represent the dynamic whereby an agent comes to terms with a situation. The first two permutations represent modes which are closed to the world, and the latter two modes which are open to the world. Openness implies taking the world on the world’s terms. This openness appears variously as charity, giving the benefit of the doubt, and the mode of genuine inquiry. Closedness, on the other hand, implies going on as if one’s own determinations were adequate to assess the situation. This is the space of habit, routine, and prior programming. This is the space of egoism.

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 the person into his next situation. But

there is a price to pay for an understanding that comes by way of remaining open to the changing terms of other situations, and not closing off to the world, instead of proceeding simply on the basis of one's own prior understanding.<sup>81</sup> This price comes in the form of turbulence. This mode of conscience is open to the terms of the situation even if these appear, on the basis of past experience, chaotic. The price lies in exposing one's self to crises, and in the anxiety that comes with uncertainty, especially when that uncertainty attaches to where one is going to end up next! Staying open to the world is hard work.

This points to a crucial asymmetry in the relationship between the "as-if" and the "coming to terms with" parts of the model. This is that terms which have been come to in past experience become definitive of the self in further experience. So, prior experience is pushed forward in this mode. One is as-if what one has come to terms with. However, in being open to the world, prior experience is not taken to determine the new situation. For instance, in the mode of *o/c*, one feels as-if another only insofar as his past experience allows an insight into his situation. This is characterized as caring *about* some one without actually caring *for* them. In this mode, one may give a gift of one's own favorite candy to a diabetic friend. In the *o/o* mode, this asymmetry appears differently. One can remain open to another situation and in effect mirror what it is to be in that other situation, and await for clues to present themselves as to what it is to be in that position when there is no prior understanding of that situation to begin

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<sup>81</sup> This is simply prejudice.

with.<sup>82</sup> It is as-if one were in that position experiencing what it is to be so situated. This is the work of conscience. I call this mode conscientious.

Of the four, it is this mode of being open to another and open to the terms of another situation which, as we shall see, characterizes conscientiousness, goodwill, and sensitivity to the necessity of the moment.

So understood, these basic ACTWith attitudes are not merely transitory. Habitual adoption of any one in any given sort of situation becomes a characteristic mark of one's personality. One becomes used to being in given contexts in certain habitual ways. These four modes, thus, not only signify context dependent conscientious being in the world, they indicate different sorts of personalities which seek those contexts in which their habitual modes are effective. They indicate expectations of the situation one takes with himself even as comes into that situation. They describe different types of people, and different types of people make different sorts of things happen. Out of habit, these persons bring their characteristic modes of being in the world with them, wherever they go, and in so doing bring their world with them, too.

For example, think of a tyrant who runs a faculty meeting. This mode of conscience will raise different issues in different ways to different ends than will its opposite mode. Where the first may stress rules and regulations, and work at pushing contrary opinions out by showing them false, the latter stresses flexibility and care, and works at finding consensus whereby the best efforts of each

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<sup>82</sup> In the case of realistic, embodied agents, many experiences are basic to the organism, and the fact of a shared constitution in a shared world leads to universal experiences amongst all such beings in the world. In these cases, all such agents understand what it is to be others alike. For example, humans have experience of pain, and so each have an immediate clue into another's pain because of common pained responses and common objective engagements leading to pain.

diverse member of the department can be realized. When we return to the ACTWith model explicitly in the final chapter, I will make more of the fact that different habitual modes lead not only to characteristic types of personality, they also lead to characteristic ends. We will conclude the text on this note.

Of the four modes, it is the first and fourth which stand out in experience. Consider the person whose conscience operates in the first mode, c/c. This person is tuned to his own needs, and understands nothing past the limits of his own situation. 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. Unable to understand a situation beyond his own, he holds all others to the standards he brings to bear as-if these were objective. In fact, this is the first personality to claim some privileged insight into objective truth. After all, he can see things no other way. This is the conscience of a sociopath, a sadist, and a bigot. It is also the conscience of the evangelist, the inquisitor, the prosecutor, and the oppressor, as well, I suspect, as that of a few contemporary politicians. This mode is the mode of imposition and dominance, commonly known as *not* having a conscience. This person “without a conscience,” so to speak, bases evaluations of situations on his own terms, forces his terms on the moment, and preserves claims to reason through broad, self-serving platitudes. These rigid generalizations are likely constructed in order to overcome an essentially selfish

sense of locality in the face of diversity.<sup>83</sup> Inflexible, forcing the issue, he is interested in universals and in absolutes, as these stand in for a certain contract with the world whose terms are static and enforceable. This is his situation.

The fourth is the opposite. It is the conscience of a saint or an angel, of mercy and grace. This is the positive mode of morality, when one sacrifices one's self for what another needs. This mode of conscience is open to the world and to the terms of others in it.<sup>84</sup> Dealing with this mode of conscience is like finding a soft-spot in a proverbial brick wall. This person is tuned to the needs of others, and understands his own situation in terms of those of others more or less alike. This is the mode described in the passage from Adam Smith, given above in two pieces, and reproduced here in its original form:

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.<sup>85</sup>

This person is happy with less if things are fair for others. He bases evaluations of goodness in terms of how things turn out for others as much or more than how they do for himself. Flexible, at the right place at the right time, he is ready to meet the terms of the moment. He is interested in universals and absolutes as well, but for other reasons, as these constitute a contract binding on

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<sup>83</sup> We will see much more of this in the section dedicated to bias, prejudice, and partiality.

<sup>84</sup> Universally, this is the conscience of an infant. It is pure subject, absolutely impressionable. It is also the aim of many eastern religions to return to this state in age.

<sup>85</sup> Adam Smith, "The Theory of Moral Sentiments," page I.I.2.

him. These are the terms to which he must come, not the terms to which he holds the world to account. This mode of conscience is tolerant, selfless, and takes the world on its own terms.

The other two modes of conscience are hybrid modes. In one, conscience is as-if another, coming to terms with one's own situation. For example, think of when one cares about another without really caring for him. This sense is captured by the phrase "If you were me...". This person, perhaps, can't understand why the poor spend so much time outside in the summer because he cannot understand life without air conditioning. He may be heard saying "If you were me, you wouldn't sit outside so much in the summer" or "you sure would love air conditioning!"

The other hybrid is the mode of conscience as-if one's self, coming to terms with another situation. This sense is captured in the phrase "If I were you..." This person understands why the poor spend so much time outside in the summer, he just can't understand why they don't get an air conditioner. He may be heard to say "If I were you, I couldn't live without an air conditioner" or "aren't you hot? It's too hot out here."

One thing to bear in mind is that these modes are all regularly engaged by all human beings. There may be some truly psychopathic or saintly persons who are more or less incapable of their opposite modes in life. The ACTWith model is inclusive of all of these modes, and presumes that most agents move from mode to mode as a fact of the dynamic of everyday discourse with self, world and other. During a day, one may say "why don't you do what I did?" as well as say "I

should do what you did,” even though, by the ACTWith model, these are two disparate modes of conscience. The fact is simply that through experience and as persons age, certain modes become characteristic of certain persons. One becomes more or less apt to adopt certain attitudes as life becomes routine and engagements with the world matters of habit or office.

Certainly, the reader has noticed in the space of their own lives that different persons characteristically engage the world and hold themselves up to account for their actions in different ways. Philosophers call theoretical accounts of these modes of operation the study of ethics, and in this field persons who hold to certain attitudes are said to be “x”-ists or “y”-ists or to act under the rubric of “x” or “y”-ism. Thusly, through the first mode above, c/c, is expressed the views such as Egoism, Fascism, Evangelism, Imperialism and Political Tyranny. The fourth, o/o, is found in Christian charity, Pacifism, Communitarianism, and is the mode which might permit the sort of anarchy which is only possible when everyone is a saint, or perhaps, as hinted at early in the *Republic*, a natural philosopher. The hybrid modes are more difficult to categorize.

All are modes of conscience, and all possible permutations thereof are explained in terms of the ACTWith model, though, the proof is in the pudding, and the final course, hungry reader, is still a long way off. What we are confronted with now, however, is the possibility that we may have some power over who we become. Shall I be a tyrant, or a martyr? That is a question which we shall pursue through the rest of the text.

I have mentioned that conscience works to reconcile conflict through finding common grounds for contradictory determinations. I have indicated that this happens at least in part through the medium of language. The meanings of words must be changed in order to represent the new situation, that is the one without contradiction. For example, King finds common grounds for his own and conflicting positions. He then casts this understanding in terms of a revised vocabulary. In this way, conscience does what otherwise may have seemed impossible. On the basis of the understanding of one standpoint, the other is not even a possibility. It is impossible, a thing to be denied. Conscience finds room for both. Of course, this all requires further explanation. We shall see in greater detail that to which I am pointing in the sections to follow.

Conscience also bridges the gap between another very special sort of contradiction. Conscience opens the possibility of a special relationship within one's self. This relationship holds between who one's self is and who one's self always already is not, that person one will be. This is a difficult issue. I wish to focus on this movement as the movement from the subjective to the objective perspective. This may not appear clear to the reader, but I will lay out the issue as I see it in brief here.

Let me introduce the issue of the subject coming to an objective perspective of himself. The following points will be developed in the sections to follow. I introduce them here to give the reader a heads up.

As-if has to do with subjectivity. It is the feeling of being a self in a situation. This self is constituted by having come to terms with prior situations.

This is understanding. Practical wisdom is that understanding which can be brought to bear in meeting the terms of any given situation. It is being already able to come to these terms. The terms to which one comes are those of the objective situation.

Coming to terms with has to do with objectivity. It is feeling out the situation in order to meet its terms. Meeting the terms of the situation generates understanding. Understanding is terms met and processes generative of those terms, i.e. search routines. Applied to the moment, understanding is practical wisdom. Socrates has a method in seeking truth which works; he is practically wise. In coming to understand that this method works, a routine is generated. Socrates is practically wise in that his routines succeed in discovering truth at any given moment, even moments where others' do not.<sup>86</sup>

Together, the as-if and coming to terms with aspects of the ACTWith model represent the role of conscience in "transcendence" or the realization of one's subjective experience from the objective perspective. I will only venture a short comment on this here. More will be said in the final chapter, after this movement from subjective to objective is laid out in the sections to follow.

One begins life as an infant subject. One ends life as a corpse object. The infant is purely subject to the world, and as he comes to terms with it he becomes self determined by a unique situation. As one comes to terms with his situation, he experiences himself in terms of the objects of his world. It is the self enriched by this experience of objects which enters the next situation. He comes to terms with this situation through its objects, then the next, and so on. He

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<sup>86</sup> "Socrates is easily refuted, the truth is not."

comes to understand himself increasingly in terms of the objects of the world. This movement from experience as subjective to experience in objective terms I call “stitching one’s self into the world.” This image carries with it the sense that coming to terms with one’s situation essentially fixes one’s self in terms of that space. In stitching one’s self into the world, one creates himself. This is a synthetic process. As synthetic, the self is the shape of the space of life in the world.

We will begin the next section by looking at a seeming anomaly in this self synthesis. Conscience opens the space between one’s self and the self up ahead. Sometimes, however, conscience closes that space. Conscience forbids one from moving to certain situations, from becoming a certain person. This is called “conscientious objection.”

But, waiting for conscience to forbid becoming that man up ahead is no way to plan a life. In the section to follow the next, Socrates will help us to understand how philosophy works to get a clearer view of the sort of man one should become. He then will show us how he guarantees for himself that he becomes that man. He shows us how by specifying that situation in terms of which a good man lives a just life. In his philosophy, Socrates does not use the language of conscience, but that doesn’t mean that it isn’t at work. Thus, the discussion will proceed on Socratic terms, and then I will conclude with a short review which puts what we shall see in terms of the view presented here.

## 6. Conscience, and the everyday.

Though divided in the expressions and forms of their faith in the ideal, men who are eager to fulfill to the end their destiny as human beings are united in the inmost aspirations of the conscience.

-- Emile Boutroux<sup>87</sup>

In this section, we will confront another universality of every situation. This is that, wherever one goes, he takes himself with him. Conscience, in its most recognized form, is a voice which forbids moving to certain ends. Consequently, if certain ends are forbidden, it motivates to others. In this section, we will review the common understanding of conscience in these terms, and then look at the sorts of situations which person have conscience have gotten themselves into. Hereby, we shall begin to realize that acting according to one's conscience is often difficult, even risky. Living with a clean conscience is not an easy road to hoe.

It has been said that life is a journey. If it is a journey, it is a journey whose end is always one's self. Whatever lies ahead is always met by one's own mortal self. It has also been said that life is a story, a story written and rewritten as it jerks along. In the beginning, older persons asked "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Impulsive, a child latches onto whatever image springs to mind. Often enough, I remember simply saying what was conventional, and believing that I meant it. The instances are characterized by a feeling that I had not the conceptual resources to fill in all the blanks which an answer for such a question required. Yet, the question gets the mind moving in

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<sup>87</sup> Boutroux, page 67.

the habit of generating such an account; it will come up again, that much was understood.

Though I had answered often enough "fireman," or "doctor," or "lawyer," I had no determinate notion of just what ways of life these occupations required. Even though my father was a doctor, I had no idea what it feels like to live a day in the life of a doctor. I had no idea what a Doctor's situation demands. This knowledge might not be necessary. People make decisions based on incomplete information often enough, if not all of the time. Perfect information is the sort of thing attributed to omniscient things, like gods, not persons.<sup>88</sup> Incomplete information is simply one's own complete understanding, brought to the moment. So, I would say "fireman." That person, up ahead, that "what do you want to be when you grow up" asks one to envision is often difficult to see clearly.<sup>89</sup>

The point is that conscience sets up a most important view with which a present position is compared. It is the substance of this comparison which constitutes what it feels like to have a conscience. This is the comparison between one's self, here and now, and one's self ahead in life.

Where do we go, however, when what lies ahead is one's self, and one simply cannot go there? What is the next chapter in life when the story cannot go on in the same terms as it has? The feeling of being trapped between a past and a future, with no way to reconcile the two, is the phenomenon known as "conscientious objection."

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<sup>88</sup> We see this same point arise regarding Kant's ethics in another section.

<sup>89</sup> Never more so than in *Angst*, to be explored under Heidegger in another section.

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...<sup>90</sup>

Things feel radically different when conscience throws itself in the 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."<sup>91</sup>

The way that conscience works, according to Childress, is as a counterfactual; if I were to commit some act in question, I would violate my conscience, impugn my personal integrity, and "not be able to live with myself." "This violation would result not only in such unpleasant feelings of guilt and/or shame but also in a fundamental loss of integrity, wholeness, and harmony in the self."<sup>92</sup>

The conscientious agent, thus acts upon having made a "prediction about what would happen to him if he were to commit such an act,"<sup>93</sup> a prediction based on past experience. "Conscience is personal and subjective; it is a person's consciousness and reflection on his own acts in relation to his standards of judgment."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Childress, 1997, page 403.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 404.

<sup>92</sup> Childress, 1979, page 318.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Childress, 1979, page 318.

Not surprisingly, conscience objects in critical times, when the value of one's past experience is called into question. During the Vietnam War, for instance, there were many conscientious objectors, as there have been at all times during crisis. In the winter of 1972, one pilot captain refused to fly further bombing missions over Vietnam because "a man has to answer to himself, first."<sup>95</sup> This was simply not a journey this man could again take.

Conscience does not merely object during war, and against violence. Conscience says "no, do not do this" in discursive contexts, as well. The following illustration involves Arthur Miller, play-write and suspected "un-American" agent under the pressures of McCarthyism to violate his conscience.

Arthur 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 a very famous man, and some of the people under anti-communist attack were his friends. He was commanded by the authorities to name his friends, thereby exposing them to the same hostility under which he was suffering. His cooperation in this regard would have guaranteed him kinder treatment. He refused to incriminate his friends on the grounds that his conscience would not allow it. Mr. Miller cited his conscience as protective of his sense of personal integrity.

Interestingly, the convention of law recognizes the right of persons to not testify when their testimony would incriminate themselves; one has a right to maintain personal integrity. This is captured in the language of the Fifth

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 317.

Amendment: *“No person shall be... compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself.”*

To testify against one's self would be to represent two opposite views at once, defendant and prosecutor, as if one person were really two, one acting against the other.<sup>96</sup> Acting against one's self represents a violation of personal integrity, and one should not testify where testimony violates one's personal integrity.

Even though he was called to incriminate others, these others were his friends. Bringing them the same trouble as had befallen himself, or worse, would have violated his own sense of personal integrity. It is as if he were acting against himself in incriminating these others, as if he would have suffered in their stead, and so avoided that end as if it were his own.<sup>97</sup> We have come to understand this feeling as-if another as the open mode of conscience. So, Miller refused to testify against these other persons, as if he was being commanded to testify against himself. Miller's refusal was not well received.<sup>98</sup>

Miller's actions, in the interest of his own personal integrity, make sense if the interests of the others were somehow his own, part of his own self. How though, is this possible?<sup>99</sup> The ends to which they all would have been brought

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<sup>96</sup> Imagine one's self, looking ahead to one's self, indicting one's self, and carrying these warring selves into the future as-if they were one.

<sup>97</sup> In ACTWith terms, o/o. As-if others, open to the terms of their situations.

<sup>98</sup> Childress, 1979, page 316.

<sup>99</sup> Neurology makes this very clear. In witnessing some other experiencing some feeling, say pain, much of the observer's brain mirrors the suffering person's brain in just the patterns which indicate a pained state. That is, unless that other is an object of disgust, or the observer is autistic. The first thing that people do when they want to hurt someone else is to cast their status as somehow less than human, or otherwise different from one's self in ways relevant to a lack of sensitivity. These two conditions represent the difference between closed and the open modes of the ACTWith model.

had he testified against them, just as the ends to which they were brought as he did not testify against them, were shared. No matter his decision, he was to be responsible for their ends. In his estimation, these others' situations were as important as was his own. Had he sent them to suffer the indignities and possible imprisonment which he himself faced, he would have been responsible. Had he not, he also would have been responsible. Each of these paths of action lead to ends, ends from which either Miller himself would in good conscience be able to respond, or not. Conscience reveals an end as if it were taken. It shows what it would feel like to be in that situation. The voice of his conscience, then, is a voice from the future, asserting that, should personal integrity be maintained, some futures are impossible. For Miller, another's unhappy ending was simply not a life's story he could write for himself.

An even more poignant American story of conscience is that of Thoreau. Thoreau was famous for his civil disobedience and became a singular figure in our American history, even though his old teacher, Emerson, predicted that his objection to convention and his minimalist isolation was a waste of his talents. Arrested, and in jail, Emerson visited, reportedly asking "What are you doing in here?" To this, Thoreau replied "What are you doing out there." In trouble with the law, conscience was on Thoreau's side.

His communion with nature, and rejection of the corruptions of 'civil' society, drew attention in his day. His example has served as a model for conscientious Americans, and hippies, ever since. Regardless of the age, Thoreau embodied the intellectual free spirit of the country. The spirit of the

American law, perhaps, was always on conscience's side. Since Jefferson and Madison, conscience has been everyman's private purview; its freedoms were to have been guaranteed. "Conscience is the most sacred of all property."<sup>100</sup> Sadly, in the contemporary age, this property has no market value.

Recently, the death of Rosa Parks drew a great deal of popular attention. Parks famously disobeyed convention, in her famous picture resolutely staring out of that bus window, as-if in another world, perhaps a just world. Unlike Thoreau who was able to go out and find a world that suited his terms, a natural rather than a conventional situation, Rosa Parks was unable to escape oppressive men so easily.

Instead, she stood apart and simply refused to live in terms of the world as given, even though she would surely suffer for her disobedience to unjust convention. Only weeks before, a black passenger died after arrest from that bus line due to police mistreatment. Her act was courageous, especially with this information. This was her situation. This was her seat on that bus. She did not choose to be this person in this seat, she chose against being another person in another seat. She chose to no longer be the oppressed person. On this decision, her seat was not chosen, it was assigned.

By ignoring institutional discrimination on the basis of her race, she shows other people how to live in the face of injustice. This is her role. I imagine that

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<sup>100</sup>Madison, 1792, <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch16s23.html>. 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."

picture, resolutely looking to a just world out of a black and white bus window. She showed that it could be done. Parks is a hero of conscience, and her example is a singular one, as unique as the life she lived but with global impact. Though we cannot see through that photograph and into that woman's heart, we see her conscience at work through the terms of her situation. She denied an old one, only to be caught in black and white in another.

The West doesn't have a lock on the hero of conscience. Contemporary conscientious objectors pull forward the unfolding histories of other nations as well. Consider the lasting effects of the uprising in Tiananmen Square, the famous photo of the young student standing before the tank, stopping its progress. After standing before a line of tanks, this anonymous man stepped up onto the lead tank of the column, and appealed to the conscience of the driver: "Why are you here? My city is in chaos because of you." His world's order disrupted, a space opened up, and conscience filled this space with an heroic appeal to close the gap: give us back to order. Give us back our world.

All too often, in standing out over convention, the conscientious objector distinguishes himself. This individuation is seen as deviance, and the self appears to the conventional world as an enemy of that conventional order. In terms of the conventional way of life, it is the conscientious person who represents the breakdown of order. Instead of being recognized as a clue that the conventional order is in need of re-evaluation, these persons are recognized as being in error. In standing apart, these persons are an easy target for the masses. Why are they targeted, though? If they are merely in error, what is the

threat to the conventionally minded masses? The conscientious persons are a clue to one thing in particular. They are individual in their individuation, and exemplify the freedom that each and every other holds deeply in their own hearts though it is silenced in shrouds of convention and habit. They who are conscientious confront the conventional with the fact of their own untapped freedom. They are often killed for it.<sup>101</sup>

With this in mind, it makes no sense to call the conscientious objector “they” at all. Individual, how can “they” be alone? Individuated, “they” are no longer part of the crowd, but stand resolutely apart from it. In his individuation, the conscientious man is no longer one of “them.” How can “they” be “they” and “not-they” at the same time?

In one’s self-standing, one becomes a target, a target who is often destroyed for his example, for his self-determination, for obeying the voice of conscience, for denying injustice. In being open to the world, one loves the world enough to let it in, and so becomes as much a product of it as anyone else. What this person represents in his difference is not just his different experience of a conventional world. The conscientious man represents another world. These persons represent a world in which the conventional no longer holds. The conscientious objector, for instance, represents a world in which all others can equally live. In objecting to war, for example, the conscientious man demonstrates a way of life which suits a peaceful world. It is this world and not the objector’s different experiences of the same world which is denied. This is

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<sup>101</sup> In the case of the student’s resolve demonstrated at Tiananmen Square, we hope that this is not the case. This hero was recognized by the crowd, by his city’s friends, who took him into itself where he blended, faceless again, and was spirited away.

how these individuals become a “they.” “They” are over there. “We” are over here. This is our world. If they do not want to live in our world, then they must find another. It is this reasoning which leads to the following result. “They” must leave this world. “They” must die.

Martin Luther King suffered such a fate. Socrates did, too, and, perhaps most famously, Christ himself was put to death for exercising the just authority of his conscience. These men struggled to open the opportunity for others to live in another world, a just world. Moreover, this just world is simply this world, seen differently. Others denied their vision. Champions of the conventional order refused to see the world this way. So, King Christ and Socrates all are destroyed rather than to have their examples provide a perspective from which the conventional ways of things appear in need of rearrangement. These men came to these positions because they were open to the world and to the needs of others in it. It is hard to believe the end for which these men set out, to be marginalized and then executed as public pariahs. Yet, it is easy to see how their life stories could have come to be written this way.

In the next section, we will look in on Socrates to see more clearly how this might have happened. Socrates will give us an insight into a process which has been touched on throughout, “stitching one’s self into the world.” Socrates helps to flesh out how it works. He describes a process of inner discourse by way of which a man comes to see his situation more clearly. This inner discourse proceeds on the basis of two aspects of the mind, one which feels out the situation and another which determines it. One’s situation is most critical when it

is that to which one moves in life.

Socrates will help to illustrate the value of this process in reaching for one's highest potential. It is in stitching one's self into the world that a man comes to be the man he comes to be even as his world comes to be the world he lives in. From a basic understanding of this process, many things in the sections to follow should be clearer for the reader. Socrates' philosophy influences both Kant and Heidegger, for instance, and this brief introduction is intended to prime the reader for these sections to follow.

## 7. Conscience, and the way of the world.

Do the things external which fall upon thee distract thee? Give thyself time to learn something new and good, and cease to be whirled around. But then thou must also avoid being carried about the other way. For those too are triflers who have wearied themselves in life by their activity, and yet have no object to which to direct every movement, and, in a word, all their thoughts.

-- Marcus Aurelius<sup>102</sup>

So, life is a travelogue, often punctuated by conscience warning against tragic stops along the way. It pays to have good examples to follow after. What we need now are examples for our examination.

In other fieldwork, the convention is to take a specimen, and dissect it, analyze it, and “carve it at the joints.” This is how anatomy is done: with dead animals. Now, I disagree with this approach. Although we are not here to do anatomy, per se, I have always figured that the best way to study an animal is to study one in action. For instance, to study a philosopher at work, find a good one, and watch.<sup>103</sup>

However, in the case of philosophy this is especially hard to do. Philosophers think. Thinking takes place in the mind. “Anyone’s body and brain are observable to third parties; the mind, though, is observable only to its owner.”<sup>104</sup> Arguably, delivering pictures of what is in one’s mind is what philosophy is good for: this is the fruit of Philosophic thought, introspection which

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<sup>102</sup> *The Mediations*, Book 2.

<sup>103</sup> Although, I have tripped over some philosophers who have tested my perseverance over this paradigm.

<sup>104</sup> Antonio Damasio , “How the Brain Creates the Mind” *Scientific American*, December, 1999, volume 281, number 6, page 112.

makes all the pictures of brains and bodies significant in the first place.<sup>105</sup> But, philosophers take no pictures or use instruments directly, besides stylus and card, voice and box. Philosophers talk. So, maybe it is better to listen, for now. What does philosophy sound like?

Luckily, Socrates had something to say about what he was up to when he was philosophizing. 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 right often leads to bad ends. In other words, philosophy is not some ivory tower mental manipulation, but it matters in a practical sense; thought matters because life matters, because we matter.<sup>106</sup> And the truth sometimes means life, or death.

To ease into the demonstration, Socrates takes up a deceptively simple question: is that a man standing, say, is it Socrates, over there, or is it a scarecrow, put up by farmers to keep the blackbirds from robbing him of his crop?<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> However, philosophy has an equally significant lesson to learn. Consider the following from Kevin Ochsner: "Brains have limited processing capacities because they are part of a biological system. Therefore, there can be no "optimal" or "logically correct" solution to a computational problem without reference to available hardware and resources; each computational step requires metabolic energy and must interact with the resource requirements of other processes. In addition, the brain was not engineered to perform optimally all computations; rather it is the product of thousands years of selection pressures that have added particular functions to those already present ... if such functions enhanced the reproductive capability of the organism (but also sometimes even if they did not...). Thus any theory of the computation, algorithm, or implementation that does not take into account these limitations may make unfounded assumptions about what is possible, and therefore risks biological implausibility." Ochsner and Kosslyn, [www.columbia.edu/~ko2132/pdf/Ochsner\\_CNS\\_App.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/~ko2132/pdf/Ochsner_CNS_App.pdf), page 3. My emphasis.

<sup>106</sup> Matter matters and personal matters matter most. Props to Ruth Chang.

<sup>107</sup> Plato often introduced his dialogues with his interlocutors citing their versions to be second-hand recounts long after the actual dialogue took place.

Well, the answer to that is easy, right? That can't be you, Socrates; you are here with me!

Nope. Socrates' question is, itself, only a façade. Underneath these particular facts, there is a certain *form* of question that concerns the philosopher, a form which fits our needs, now, as we search for the conscience: "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."<sup>108</sup><sup>109</sup> This object, from our last section, is one's self.<sup>110</sup> What do we do when we do not see clearly if this or that form is one's self ahead, in the future? This is a difficult way of asking: Who shall I become?

Feel familiar? So, let's follow in Socrates' footsteps for a bit; here, I will recast some of them the way that I remember the story:

How are we to ascertain better the object of our inquiry, Socrates?

Through a process of interrogation.<sup>111</sup>

How does this work?

Well, in short, one part of us has the sensitivities of a writer of a book, setting out plots and burying intensions, though doing so determinately, pointing out this and that thing and its relations, and 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 between periods and flattened to pages and pressed

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<sup>108</sup> *Philebus*, 1892, 38.

<sup>109</sup> In our case, we want to focus on the dimensions of this seeing – distance is temporal (far future) as well as spatial (far left).

<sup>110</sup> An object, remember, is an obstacle, as well as an aim. Interrogate thusly: What is this thing in the distance, this object? Is it obstacle or is it aim?

<sup>111</sup> 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.

in the binding of a book, the painter works to capture the world in all its dynamic and fluid totality.<sup>112</sup> This one, the sensitive painter, feels out the situation and is sensitive to its curves and colors, the other, the scribe, determines it and sets these in figure and fuge. And these two interrogate each other, until either accounts cohere, and this is inner discourse whereby a philosopher interrogates himself about his situation.

He interrogates himself? What if the philosopher is with friends?

Then, his voice expresses what is disclosed in his inner discourse, articulating the situation from his position in terms which carry both affect and conviction, painter and writer, and we call this expression a proposition. When someone holds his position as the right one, we say that his proposition is taken as “true.” His situation reveals his discoveries to others through the medium of his voice. And this expression is held to account in terms of the inner determinations others have come to in their situations. If these others share his determinations, these others call his expression also true. In determining alike, it is as-if they share situations, as all men should see the same way from the same position in the same world. The trick is getting there.

So, what is proposed is truest if it remains the same for now, and for everyone else at every other place?

Yes, but even this doesn’t guarantee that we will not name “real” what is only illusion, thereby giving voice to untruth. After all, we all agree that voice is infinite in that its tones take forms to fit any situation, and that it is also finite in

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<sup>112</sup> That this parallel specialization holds water to this day is simply an amazing fact and testament to the power of Philosophic introspection

that it expresses only my own determinations, limited by my own experience and sensitivity to all that may be in the space of life. So, to find truth in words, we must seek to express the sense in which these aspects meet, and that means to take up the ends in which they are realized, wherein the truth is disclosed.

But, what ends are those?

Not necessarily pleasant ones, surely, for the objects of pleasure change, do they not?<sup>113</sup>

Yes: the thirsty man seeks water as the good, until his thirst is quenched.

Exactly.

For what then?

For the good as determined through an understanding of the 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 which 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.

Couldn't this go on forever?

It does. That is our condition.

Socrates, you speak as if we had all the time in the universe!

No, in all places and at all times, what is true is that which fits the situation. Some things are true of every situation. In our case, are there not

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<sup>113</sup> One's own, of course.

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 those of my friends, and family, and my city. I wish to move to the ends in which all of these are taken care of.

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 feel pleasure, health when they have health, and wealth when they have wealth. I am also concerned that they should hold me in high esteem as if I had been some great benefit to them.

Yet, you must 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.

Yes.

Then, what you must mean to be concerned about is that yourself, and others, be able to discern what is truly pleasant and good, and what is not? Otherwise, we may move to tragic and not to happy ends, alone, with close friends, or altogether.

Why, yes.

And what is this condition called, this capacity for discernment?

Why, that is what we call practical wisdom...

And how would you suppose we are able to come to such a situation?

Why, by interrogation of self and others with discourse toward the truth!

Exactly, through philosophy...

Let's review: according to this third-hand recounting of one small portion of one Socratic discourse, one aspect of mind feels out the world, the other determines it, and these two aspects carry on in an inner discourse.<sup>114</sup> 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. If we have friends, we express the content of this inner discourse in language, and others like ourselves see if our view checks out with their account. In this way we come closer to seeing the figure for what it is, philosopher or stand-in, without moving our bodies closer, but only through the expression of this essential character of thought, inner discourse.<sup>115</sup> This is the form of every philosophical question, and presents us immediately with the form of a gap, the space between what appears and its reality. This is the form of the space which philosophy explores, and philosophers express. This is also the space which conscience opens within one's self, between a one's present situation and another up ahead.

This space is felt in two essential ways, spatially and temporally. A figure can be spatially distant, or temporally distant. Likewise, some gaps are more compelling than others: those which are spatially near and temporally pressing, demand attention before those more distant in either dimension. Opportunities approach, they meet us, and if not seized depart forever. What is clear is that

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<sup>114</sup> 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.

<sup>115</sup> Voice as vocalized is this same self-reflected space expressed as articulated. This notion will come more clear as the text moves on.

every situation has this structure in common. They differ only in their determinations.<sup>116</sup>

Left to free thought, what seems to grip me most at any given time are those aspects of the past which bear on the immediate future: is it too late to do this or that, to find him or her, where did I put my keys, will it rain? These are the sorts of questions which come to the front of my mind at any given time upon a moment's notice. With these concerns taken care of I am free to open up to more distant possibilities. For instance, personally, I may begin to recount what Hegel means by 'pure intuition,' or what could compel anyone to think that truth is intrinsically valuable, or what does Socrates' famous slogan, that philosophy is learning to die well, mean in terms of my own life, right now. With a chance to rest, I tend to dwell on the latter.

In coming to terms with these uncertainties, I initially take the terms of my current understanding as a measure. I try to make sense of these in terms with which I am already familiar.<sup>117</sup> The painter goes back to old paintings, checking the writer's books on method and recollections of poetry. Where I cannot account for all that the space presents, I can either hold myself open to future determination, and live in some anxiety, or I can pass judgment in terms of my own prior understanding, and so close myself off to any further determination and testing of limits. Thus, again, I can adopt one of two modes; hold the future open to be felt out, interrogated, and taken on its own terms, or close off from

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<sup>116</sup> Frustrated, relieved, reticent, resentful, and more.

<sup>117</sup> In such reflection, I only uncover what I already expect from prior experience.

uncertainty according to prior understanding.<sup>118</sup> The latter case, clearly, is neither conscientious in the common sense, nor philosophical.

But, philosophy and all this introspection seem to go on and on and on. To what end is all this self-examination pointing us?

Often times the situation calls on us to act, without time to reflect, on the question: "WHAT AM I TO DO?" "Find the truth" seems too empty a proclamation. What is the benefit of self-determination if we have no resolution of the proper terms for action? That figure up ahead is one's self after all. This question is especially weighty in adolescence. Short on experience, yet fully capable, this place in life is especially precarious.<sup>119</sup>

Here we find the real treasure in the right example. Each of us only has one opportunity to determine for himself who he shall become. It is in such uniquely irreversible processes that another's example is so valuable. If Socrates went that way, and that way can still be gone, then his way is an opportunity for others alike to follow. In answer to the question "What am I to do?" one may answer "as he did."

Still, examples come with a lot of baggage. One's situation is one's own, and no other's determines completely the space of one's own life. In defending his own way of life, Socrates is famous for saying "The unexamined life is not

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<sup>118</sup> The first is charity, the second prejudice.

<sup>119</sup> As the organism reaches adolescence, the operations which it has taken up from convention and prior example are challenged, tested to see if they are still viable. In taking up a different mode, and then embodying the results, the adolescent is essentially differentiating himself from the others.

worth living.”<sup>120</sup> He didn’t mean that constant reflection is good all on its own; that would be sophistry, and he wasn’t such a big fan of that activity. He meant ‘think for yourself on important things and often because what you come up with determines that for which you live our life.’ Socrates provides a good example of this way of life, but it isn’t a way of life that many fellow Athenians practiced.

Still, it pays to appear wise, even if one isn’t committed to actually becoming so. This is where sophistry came in. One of the more famous sophists of Socrates’ day was Gorgias. Gorgias thought that the best thing about all this examination was the power it added to persuasion; the more you appear to know, the more convincing you can be.<sup>121</sup>

Sophists were primarily interested in selling their services to wealthy families so that they could teach their children to be compelling political agents. Young persons had to know enough to be able to persuade other people that they were right. This way, they could convince other people that they deserved what they wanted, and didn’t deserve what they didn’t want. It was supposed to help a man get where he wanted to go in life, so that when he got there, he could be happy. All too often, of course, this isn’t the case, but that is beside the point. Increased powers of persuasion were what made knowledge valuable for the sophists like Gorgias.

Sophists already knew the way of life they wanted, and it had nothing to do with anything new or anything true. It had to do with power over others. The

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<sup>120</sup> *Apology*, 38a.

<sup>121</sup> As revealed to us in the *Philebus*; lots of these players show up in various places over and over again in the Platonic library. After all, Athens was sort of a small town, on today’s standards. People knew people, and circles were tight.

persons they wanted to be were the powerful persons. Their strategy was to manipulate others into thinking that they knew what they were talking about even when they didn't. So, they would appeal to the terms which the audience was most willing to accept. Sophistical discourse is not directed at coming to terms with the situation, but only at meeting the terms of the audience. Sophists win arguments and gain power by saying what others want to hear in a way which makes one's self look good. Socrates was opposite, both in method and often enough in effect.

In the dialogue named after the pretender to philosophy, *Gorgias*, Socrates meets an impasse with a young man named Callicles. Their discourse circles around the following question, here given in two forms in which it appears: "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?"<sup>122</sup> and "how a man may become best himself, and best govern his family and state...?"<sup>123</sup> These are various ways of asking "what man shall I become?"

Callicles is a product of entitlement and a sophistical education, and is certain that he will get what he wants by doing what is convenient for himself. What he wants is power and influence in his life. This is most telling in that he holds up a certain sort of man as the exemplar of the good man. He praises "the men who feasted the citizens and satisfied their desires..."<sup>124</sup>

Against this opinion, Socrates warns that:

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<sup>122</sup> *Gorgias*, 487d.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 520d.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 518d.

...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.<sup>125</sup>

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 does 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.

Socrates argues that this is not the man one should become. He argues that the good man helps others to become just. He tells Callicles that there is a single art which is like a combination of two others which does this work. This art is a combination of medicine and gymnastics, representing deliberating over and attaining the good, respectively.<sup>126</sup> We are left to presume that this is philosophy.

Socrates argues further that all of the city's industries besides making good men better are at best unnecessary and at worst wasteful luxury. 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. A good man helps others do the right thing, not become fat and rich. He does so not for the other's good, but for the common good. The men whom

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> The conscience is the physician, understanding healthy states and recommending exercise (of practical reason) to attain them.

Callicles had held up as great men were leaders of Athens, but they were leaders of Athens to bad ends for their own power. Socrates has a better man in view.

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 lose it is to offend the politicians. Callicles reminds Socrates that he shall be punished if he continues to speak the way that he does about the powerful men in government of Athens. Finally frustrated, after trying for a good while to meet the boy in honest discourse about what is really good and just and not simply about what is expedient and pleasant for himself at the expense of others, Socrates replies that “no man who is not an utter fool and coward is afraid of death itself, but he is afraid of doing wrong.”<sup>127</sup> For Socrates, it would have been wrong not to do all he could to help a man be the best man he could be. To this end, Socrates has one more thing to say.

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.<sup>128</sup> Socrates tells us that he has chosen to believe a certain myth, a myth that he will be better judged on the planes of the dead than in man’s halls and porticos. He has chosen to live in terms of this myth during his every waking day. In this way, he is the best man he can be.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> *Gorgias*, 522d.

<sup>128</sup> He didn’t wear gloves, likely, but I add this for dramatic effect. What a tragic picture!

<sup>129</sup> Philosophy still is governed by fables. We shall look at one such myth, the rationalist moral fable that is Kant’s moral philosophy in the next section.

Socrates holds that he will be brought before three judges, Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus. These three were known for ruling justly and for having laid the legal grounds which became the model for Athen's own laws.<sup>130</sup> He is to be naked, that is free from the vestiges of social life. These judges shall not judge him on fame and wealth. They will judge him for having been just or unjust throughout his life. Then, he 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 judge in 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. And, in return for your exhortation of me, I exhort you also to take part in the great combat, which is the combat of life, and greater than every other earthly conflict.<sup>131</sup>

“Renouncing the honors at which the world aims,” Socrates takes satisfying universal conditions to be his object. He takes the terms of this myth for true, and we have already seen that this means that he takes them to express what is real. He takes the terms of the story as definitive of his own situation. He exhorts others to take these terms as definitive of their own situations, as well. Why would he do that?

Taking this explanation to be his ultimate situation is a perspective from beyond the end of life. Living conscientiously in terms of this myth means

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<sup>130</sup> I make a good deal of there being three points of view. It takes three points to make a plane, and through this device I see the poets of old painting the picture that justice arranges all things on a single surface together. Socrates, in his story, places himself on that plane, then testifies that it is on these terms that he evaluates his everyday actions.

<sup>131</sup> *Gorgias*, 526d.

holding each moment and their opportunities to a timeless standard.<sup>132</sup> Socrates lives as if these great judges of history were with him then. In so doing, he lives everyday as-if the story were true and thereby holds himself to the standards set out in its terms, and not those of fat and happy commiserates. Instead, Socrates lives as-if he were in a different world, a just world.<sup>133</sup> He speaks to satisfy these terms, not to tell the audience what it wishes to hear. He wishes to satisfy a universal audience, not the whims of some drunken crowd.

In taking this final field of justice to be his ultimate aim, Socrates merely commits himself to do the right thing, the just thing, every day along the way to that end. Actions which do not lead to this same end are to be avoided. Socrates, living this way, provides all persons alike with a striking example of the power of philosophical self-determination.

What we have stumbled on in our seemingly drunken rumble into this new dawn is a basic movement, which I will characterize here in review.

Socrates chooses to do the right thing, but he does not have to do so at every instance, as-if he had the time at every instant to deliberate over the options. And, he isn't simply bound to some given pre-determination, though he confesses that the story he has decided to give is not original to himself. He has set his own bonds, and may unbind himself.<sup>134</sup> He takes this story to be true, moment to moment. In so doing, he takes his freedom with him, deliberately.

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<sup>132</sup> All things appear in the plane of the world at once.

<sup>133</sup> 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." 521a.

<sup>134</sup> This ends up being a great irony. Conscience isn't the opportunity to do the right thing, it is the opportunity to do wrong.

Socrates lived as a just man in an unjust world. I will restate: Socrates acted justly as if he lived in a just world because, so far as he was concerned, he did.<sup>135</sup> This is the only way we can make sense of his character; his situation was different than was everyone else's because he made it that way. He held himself to a different set of terms, as we have just seen. He was open to exposing opportunities in terms of others' situations because this was his moment to help others to become the best men they could be. He always began with the other's determinations, with the other's situation, and he always worked toward resolution of the good. This work was for THE eventual good, if not for HIS eventual good. This is how it is he can come to claim that he is "the only Athenian living who practices the true art of politics."<sup>136</sup> This art is helping men to become just, not fat and drunk. Let's see if we can make a little more sense of this.

Those others whom Callices named as good men were historical leaders and erstwhile benefactors of Athens under whose influence great works were done. The people were fed, and order was kept at home for a while at least. Two in particular, Pericles and Cimon, were rivals whose contest for power caused the people of Athens problems. They each wished to be powerful, and so formed policies and enacted public projects to promote their own reputations and to cement their influence. Yet, what is good for their power – to have a contented public – may not be good for the people of Athens. Socrates argues that it is not, and that these men are not good men, after all. For one, they take

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<sup>135</sup> Which makes the argument for the laws in the *Crito* all the more compelling, and heartbreaking.

<sup>136</sup> *Gorgias*, 521d.

what is good to be what is good for themselves, and use their influence to direct others to ends which serve theirs. For another, they provide an example that others should live similarly, for their own power and influence in life. In either case, others do not become more just by their lives and works. In fact Socrates maintains quite the opposite:

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.<sup>137</sup>

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. The end in sight is justice for all in whose terms all men are equal. He remains oriented to this end, and not to his own fame and reputation, everyday along the way of his life. In this way, he succeeds as a leader where these others fail. The ends to which he directs others are good for all in common.

In living with this end in mind, he does more than remain open to revision. He seeks out new and varied determinations of the world, and in this posture begins in professed ignorance. He is actively open to the terms of others, instead of imposing his own terms on the discourse from the start. Socrates provides an example of the conscience at work. He sets up the common good as his own ultimate end, and starts walking, one moment at a time. Along the

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<sup>137</sup> *Gorgias*, 516a-d

way, he remains open to the terms of others in order to help them orient their lives similarly.<sup>138</sup>

Socrates was able to begin with the terms of the other because he had some sense of the universal significance of these terms. Without this understanding, he could have nothing of their situations to share, and the conversation could not begin. He generates this understanding, I believe, by remaining open to other situations along the walk of his long life. This is the philosophic, conscientious exercise over a life-time which results in what the Greeks called “phronesis.” Socrates exemplified this capacity, and he began by listening. Only in this way could he ever have come to see himself on that plane of all time as if he were any other man, dead or alive. He would do nothing in this world that he would not do there. This was his situation, and the ends to which he would have all others travel.

In many ways, this entire text is built on the Socratic example. Socrates is philosophy’s greatest hero. Some said he was the most just man they had ever known.<sup>139</sup> He did irritate people, maybe on purpose, and he didn’t always do as

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<sup>138</sup> Move.

<sup>139</sup> Before I start getting letters, there is no evidence that Socrates took part in any physical relationship with any young man, as was the custom amongst some of the very elite Athenians during his lifetime. Socrates, for one thing, was not of this class, though he did have a suit of armor which indicates a certain self-sufficiency. For another thing, there is at least circumstantial evidence to the contrary. During his time with Alcibiades, Socrates failed to satisfy Alcibiades’ expectations that Socrates would, well, make a move on him, so to speak. Alcibiades was, by all accounts, desirable in this regard. Therefore, no need for concern; and all the more reason to count Socrates a hero for not satisfying yet another convention.

the legal authorities commanded; but, he was a sentimental man, and certainly a man motivated by conscience to do the right thing.<sup>140</sup>

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 to his objective self. In inner discourse, the feeling of being in a space is that function of the painter. The coming to terms with that space is the function of the writer. Together, one comes to terms with the situation. Others proceed in the same process. In discourse with others, one interprets the expressed determinations of the other by taking up his position as-if, and checking to see if these determinations hold at this position. In reaching for that situation which is one's object, conscience opens a perspective as-if from this end. All action along the way can be held to the determinations of this situation. In his example, Socrates shows how he comes to terms with his situation in a way which guarantees that he will act justly. In doing as he does, Socrates stitches himself into a just world instead of into the world of corrupt men. As this inner discourse is the condition of a man's life, Socrates lives as-if he were in a just world. He lives in terms of the just world, reaching out and meeting those terms.

Holding himself 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 his life is shared with others universally. Socrates is as-if open, coming to terms with open, and he is in this mode habitually. He begins discourse from the determinations of the

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<sup>140</sup> His motivating *daimon* is essentially what we mean by conscience when we use the term in our everyday.

other's situation, as-if the other. He moves from this starting place toward the situation which is good for all. He is open to others, and seeks their own ends as-if these were his own. 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 this other were himself, philosophizing toward that other's realization of the good life even as he does his own.

Let's quickly contrast this situation with that of Socrates' old foil, the musician. The musician does not begin with the terms of the other, but with her own terms. She is able to express what appear to be the terms of the other, but she does so without any necessary discovery of a universal truth. Her expression is of her own subjective experience. Moreover, the musician does not strive for an understanding of the universal, per se. She seeks inter-subjective recognition of a subjective expression and takes this to be objective. This may happen through an appeal to the universal human condition – i.e. broken hearts hurt, being on the road is lonely, that sort of thing – but it only seeks to have her subjective determinations reinforced through the applause of the persons present and hearing her plea. This has nothing to do with objectivity, it has to do with ego. The musician does not seek to meet the objective terms of her situation, but with inter-subjective terms instead.<sup>141</sup>

Finally, the musician does not provide an example of a life lived in terms of just ends shared by all. She does, however, provide a powerful example. This

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<sup>141</sup> This does not draw into question musicality as a virtue, or music as a thing to do. It only makes suspicious the character who fails in hearing what he wants from musical audiences, and seeks reinforcement instead in the halls of philosophy. This points to the methods of the failed guitar player turned philosopher, for example.

goes with the territory. To be a good performer is to appeal to others. She must be sensitive to the other. But if the other cannot come to her terms, he is free to see another show.<sup>142</sup> If the musician is taken as an example way of life, then the city is in real trouble. There may be lots of loud parties, but Athens still needs the philosopher to see where the whole thing's headed. Otherwise, everyone is open to others only insofar as these reinforce one's own situation. This is a city of vice.

To be clear, though the musician is the subject, here, other 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. Both are motivated to the subjective reinforcement of others and mistake this for an objective realization of their own situation and that of the audience. Instead, the situation the terms of which the sophist must meet is determined by the selfish desires of the audience, itself. That said, it is obvious that in this mode of life there is no view from the "outside" in, there is only the view from the inside upon one another.

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. They are not concerned with citizens to come, and less with citizens past. What goes for leaders does not necessarily apply to musicians. It is not that musicians are

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<sup>142</sup> I am thinking o/c here.

necessarily bad. They make for a good party. It is simply that they do no good in healing the sick society.

In fact, their example, when lauded, makes things much worse. The real trouble comes when persons aspire to be leaders and do so in this mode. Musicians, thus, do not train leaders, anymore than do sophists. This is a deep issue in Socratic philosophy. I will say more to say on this particular point later. First, I want to clear up the role of conscience in moral theory since Socrates. In so doing, we will shed some more light on the mechanisms at work in its operations. However, we will stick with the theme that is Socrates' most important question throughout the rest of this text: who am I to become? We will eventuate to asking "in terms of what objective situation does anyone become that person?" We shall find this question laid out, instead of in terms of Greek mythology, full of gods and daimons, in terms of a more modern fable.

The next section will find limits to conscientiousness in Kant's later writings. The section after will apply these limits to the universal human situation through a thought experiment. The section following that will confront further pressures universal to the human situation. In this way, our thinking about the role of conscience in living life will be enriched and will become more realistic. Conscience, we will see more clearly, has as much to do with living the right life as it does with doing the right thing.

## 8. Conscience, and the way we live.

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 Ahab<sup>143</sup>

Nothing fills me with greater awe than the natural order, and nothing troubles me more than man's practical abstinence from it. Even as Kant looked to the perfect movements of the newly relativized heavens for a guiding moral principle, his time was not ready to receive a truly relativized ethic.

Kant famously claimed his moral theory to be a Copernican revolution of sorts. Copernicus, rejecting the Aristotelian model wherein our imperfect planet is circled by increasingly perfect things, maintained that Earth is not the center of the universe. Kant, rejecting the imperfect model that "man is the measure of all things," manufactured a moral theory wherein man is not the center of the universe. Pure reason is.

Kant assumed that all men live together in an absolute space, a rational universe. Kant's ethical theory rests in man's rationality. A person has a moral "rational" will which must administer the moral law over the "empirical" will. The crux of the relationship rests in autonomy. All animals have an empirical will. They are driven by their senses and desires to do certain things, and there is no sense blaming them for it. Lions kill Christians, snakes kill rats, and squid kill krill. We do not call this murder. These are simply animals following the laws of

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<sup>143</sup> 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." Ahab relents.

their natures. People are different, however. They have a rational will which may rule over their sensual drives. Kant presumes that man not only follows universal laws, just like rocks and squirrels do, but he also makes them. When he makes rules for himself, he governs himself. This is how Kant accounts for man's autonomy.

The trouble is that, in so doing, he still takes man to be the measure of all things. This is still an Aristotelian universe. Man is the rational animal. Reason makes rules. All men have rules. All rules have contradictions. This much is universal but the rules themselves are not. This is a problem for Kant's ethics in at least two ways.

For example, consider the rule "do not kill." This is a universal law which appears given by a rational man to himself. Its application is evidenced while restraining one's impulse to kill someone. This involves a rational will overcoming a bodily desire to end someone's life. So far, Kant's system seems to fly.

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? How does the rational will rule, now?

The other problem is that the rules of some men conflict with those of others. For example, there is nothing necessarily irrational about eating the dead. Healthy, undiseased meats are perfectly nutritious. Likewise, there is nothing necessarily irrational about a convention which requires that some

segments of a population wear certain uniforms. 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 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?

Even Einstein's relativity 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. In fact, it all revolves much as it always appeared to, perfectly, only we have come to realize the terms of the trajectories in ever finer significance. There is no contradiction in the movements of the stars. But stars have been known to collide, and while standing on one it is sometimes difficult telling up from down.

Consider this 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 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 a 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. For now, at least, the capacity of traditional methods to direct our way through the so-called objective world is in doubt.

Even more primitive than the magnetic compass in finding one's way is the conscience. Much as the poles of the material globe are diffusing, so are the poles of the ethical globe. Neither judgments most men had ever figured to have to make twice. Once such rules are established, there is no provision for their revision. North is north, there can be no contradiction in that! Few anticipate a day when a compass does not work. In fact, however, the reasoning behind the Boy Scouts' compass will simply stop working, altogether, and many honest men with a bad recipe for direction in a crisis may come to very bad ends.

Reasoning is important but it fails. Rules are important, but they fail. Their original purpose is to express ways of being which lead reliably to certain ends. When the situations change, however, so will the rules need to change. It is the conscience which directs such change.

Let's look at this through the Kantian lens. The compass point of Kantian ethics is Kant's categorical imperative. The categorical imperative is the form of the voice of conscience for Kant. The most commonly discussed form of the categorical imperative is: "Act according to that maxim which thou couldst at the

same time will an universal law.”<sup>144</sup> The maxims in question are rules for action which would motivate all rational beings in all situations. Thus, the maxim of any moral action is an imperative, or a command, which is not context specific. The only specificity is that the agent be rational so that the maxim is rational. It is in the autonomy of rationality, after all, whereby the maxim is universalized to all other moral agents.

The categorical imperative is a method for coming to terms with the objective implications of one’s own 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. For example, I wish 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 in that situation is doing it. But, this result contradicts my original wish to be seen in a grand chariot; in this situation, everyone has a HUMMER.<sup>145</sup>

The compass point of Kantian ethics directs me to ends of action. It directs to ends the attainment of which can be universally prescribed. It directs away from those which can not. The general form of prescription is: do x. The universal laws which are tested are the reasons for doing that action as opposed to others. The test is a rational one in that it tests reasons. Because of the prior

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<sup>144</sup> Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, page 43.

<sup>145</sup> Besides that, it’s getting very warm. This is not the universe I wanted to be in, originally. This is not the happy ending for a rationalist’s moral fable.

resident wish, the categorical imperative, through the voice of conscience, simply tells me to stop.

This view gels with that of David Velleman. 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...”<sup>146</sup> Wanting to be seen in a grand chariot is not a moral reason to buy a HUMMER. If everyone acted on the same rationale, that reasoning fails: no more grand chariot. Thereby, on this 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.

Herein lies the rub. Consider the following example. At position A, a person looks at end B and conscientiously determines that B is moral. 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.

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

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<sup>146</sup> 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 rational ends. See Velleman, page 75, especially. In either case, still limited to the notion that conscience is only a punctuating voice.

we had for doing something couldn't be reasons for doing it..." unless conscience 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 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?

It is important to note 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."<sup>147</sup> We may make sense of the demands of the categorical imperative by understanding that its conditions are those of all moral agents. On Velleman's reading this universal condition is rationality. A moral agent for Kant is a rational agent; he must have a capacity to realize the immorality of an action and to do otherwise, else there is nothing right or wrong about the action, it is just the way it is done.

Most reviews of the demands of the categorical imperative tend to rest in an essay of rationality and its demands. I think that this is a mistake. I think that the conscience, and so the categorical imperative, has nothing necessarily to do with rationality at all.

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<sup>147</sup> Velleman, page 68.

Kant's illustrations do appear to place emphasis on the role of reason on the formation of maxims which represent that motivation for action. 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 ok to break a promise. If everyone acted on this by this reasoning, there would not 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 to fail to keep his promise. In this analysis, 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 in the immorality of the action.

This result seems to ignore a fundamental aspect of conscientious human beings. Agents of conscience are not simply moral agents; they are learning agents, as well. There is no correction without error, and the question of the right thing to do with perfect information never arises in making actual decisions. The categorical imperative as commonly understood does not capture this fact of the matter. As has been presented, here, it assumes an agent with perfect information and no investment in the outcome of his actions besides the coherency of this perfect information. In other words, under this understanding the categorical imperative is a moral principle not for a man, but for (a) god(s). Thus, for clarity, I would amend this 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 agent who has come to terms with every possible end.

What the categorical imperative demands is nothing less than a explanation for an action prior to undertaking that action, and prior to coming to terms with the results of that action.<sup>148</sup> It demands that whatever terms by which that end is to be evaluated must be open to the view of the agent before he undertakes the action to achieve it. This is a very conservative demand. Typically, when deliberating over the right thing to do, that some end or other is ever realized, is yet a question. Yet, the categorical imperative takes these to be exhaustive. This is unrealistic.<sup>149</sup><sup>150</sup>

It appears than any action whose ends are not pre-determined is to be denied by this principle. This could be what conscience does, consistent with Velleman's interpretation. This constraint does exhibit the conservative essence of rationality. One acts morally when one acts rationally, and this is a matter of reasoned determination of ends. Yet, persons do not act rationally, and if the present analyses is correct, this is a very good thing. Otherwise, noone would do

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<sup>148</sup> By explanation here I mean exhaustive account.

<sup>149</sup> Here, I am reminded of the Kant who, in *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason, Alone*, asserts that one should not do any thing of whose ends he is not certain. There is one possible interpretation of this assertion, one which denies – realistically speaking – *any* action at all, and that is: only act towards ends whose reasons are grounded in terms whose values are themselves certain even as the action is undertaken. This appears to make moral action impossible.

<sup>150</sup> To some degree, however, this view holds water. For the most part, the way things have been done are presumed to be the right way to do things. Mill makes explicit recourse to this fact of life, quite famously, in meeting objections to his *Utilitarianism*. 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 a divided and co-dependent form of the same, Mill reminds us that though we have no time to calculate, we begin with what practices we are given, and conscience is the final judge.

anything new, or novel, or creative, or for that matter would ever learn anything, ever.

Kant should have understood this problem, and we can assume charitably that he did. I think that the focus should lie in the terms of the maxim, and less on the form of the categorical imperative itself. If an end is evaluated in universal terms, then the maxim which results will also hold universally. Moreover, such an interpretation permits new and novel actions whose ends are not completely certain, and so actions for which one has no reasons per se. A person should seek ends which are universally determined to be worthy, and not to act on the basis of rules no matter how well construed.

What terms are these which should enter into the moral evaluation of actions before they are undertaken? To my mind, these are natural terms. These are terms of natural necessity. These are needs universal to all human beings at every place and time whose satisfactions are universally good. Every other will always be constrained by these terms. Every other will always be bound by these terms. Every other aspires to meet these terms. Every other needs these terms to be met in order to live and to secure the leisure for genuine deliberative autonomy.<sup>151</sup> These are universal terms and those essential to the balance that is Kant's conscience. If these are the terms of moral sensibility, 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

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<sup>151</sup> For democracy and the American way of life!

mature view of the conscience. For the Kant of his later years, conscience has to do with doing, with acting, and clearly less with evaluating. By this account, conscience is the “spring” of practical reason in at least two senses. Conscience is one’s self ahead and one’s self here, tied together at both ends by a spring. In one sense, conscience is the best of all possible worlds, under whose lights each step along the way is evaluated. In this sense, the spring is an oasis in a desert of despair, those ends in whose realization one feels “peace.” Conscience directs to reach this end, rather than provide directives which limit ends reached. Conscience is motivational, and also prohibitional.

Conscience is a negative force. Conscience restrains from other ends whose realization is a loss of “worth as a person.”<sup>152</sup> Kant details in various places throughout the *Metaphysics of Ethics* the emotive mechanism which disqualifies given actions, one’s own or another’s. Kant asserts that the grounds for all actions whatsoever depend on feelings about the way of life evidenced in the action. These appear, everyday, as reverence or disgust. For these, there is no necessary rationale: this is conscience caught cold.

For Kant, as the preceding discussion revealed, the moral law is the categorical imperative: “Act according to that maxim which thou couldst at the same time will a universal law.”<sup>153</sup> Willingness to submit to this imperative, Kant calls “good will.” Now, good will, in our everyday contemporary talk, equates to something like beneficence or benevolence. Good will, in Kantian ethics, implies more than being nice, however. Good will implies wanting to endorse the terms

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<sup>152</sup> Kant, *Metaphysics of Ethics*, page 92.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, page 43.

of those ends which are realized in action. Thus, the sentiment underwriting “I wish you well” is “I hope you achieve your ends.” And, for Kant, this way of life – only wishing for endorsed ends - holds up to affective scrutiny. A good will is to be revered; selfishness, falsity, dishonor, these are sources of disgust. Let me clarify.

Doing the right thing doesn’t feel like a rule, though it is nice to remember how to do it in case the opportunity arises again. 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 may have little to do with reasons, at all.

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, the imperative itself evaluates at a fundamentally affective level on other formulations than the one given above. The good will in question is a feeling: “THAT, we now know, IS A GOOD WILL WHOSE MAXIM, IF MADE LAW UNIVERSAL, WOULD NOT BE REPUGNANT TO ITSELF.”<sup>154</sup>

Though the test of the categorical imperative is often enough represented 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 our own hearts. The test is not a rational one, at all, that is unless rationality has to do with self-esteem, as Kant makes the connection explicitly.

For Kant, conscience is the ‘spring’ of practical reason as it directs

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<sup>154</sup> Kant, *Metaphysics of Ethics*, page 43. Kant’s emphasis.

positively toward a morally ideal situation and against selfishness and solipsism<sup>155</sup>, self-conceit and self-love.<sup>156</sup> Conscience pulls one's self to the peaceful reward of a worthy life, without complaint upon doing the right thing, which comes with feeling at one with one's self.<sup>157</sup> In deliberating on this end, one must discount immediate sufferings and attractions. Conscience allows, instead, the free person to act – instead of according to “the solicitations of the sensory”<sup>158</sup> – out of reverence for what Kant calls the “moral law.”

The test which constitutes Kant's moral law, and the spring of practical reason, is that of disgust. Let me restate Kant's imperative in more direct terms: Do not become, through action, a person in whom you are disgusted. This to which I will add: by leading yourself or others to bad ends.

The basis for this common mode of evaluation is the shared constitution of individual persons that is not limited to rationality. It extends to all persons similarly:

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...<sup>159</sup>

Good will has a deep significance in Kant's ethics. It is good will for another equally with one's self which grounds good feelings about one's self. In the passage below, Kant equates benevolence with good will, and does so in

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, page 81.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, page 82.

<sup>157</sup> On this picture, voice of conscience is more like the screeching of tires than a scary ghost in the machine where the wild things are!

<sup>158</sup> Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, page 35.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, pages 178-179. And the reader will notice that the long sentence begins by noting the author's constitution, which by its nature forces him to desire. These are not the terms of a rationalist, though the tone changes, there is an identity drawn between his constitution and the right thing to do, it is simply that the transformation involved is difficult to follow.

terms of their common affective ground for duties to one another. Further it is the example at this affective level which he then gives as the sole arbiter of the right thing to do:

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.<sup>160</sup>

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. In fact after reading this passage and in thinking about Kant's categorical imperative in any form, it is obvious that an foundational identity between one's self and others is, at least in the back of Kant's mind, assumed.<sup>161</sup> I mean here phenomenally, "what it is like": his pain is my pain. His pleasure is my pleasure.<sup>162</sup> The terms of a shared nature are those universal terms which are the focus of the imperative properly understood, not limited to rationality or to reason. The flower is not leaf and petals alone. It has roots, and turns to the sun:

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 in his concern. However, I ought to do nothing which I

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid, page 180. Recalling Smith's introductory quotation to chapter 1 of this text.

<sup>161</sup> 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.

<sup>162</sup> Further, in ACTWith terms, it is this openness of affect which grounds the openness to the situations, and relevant determination, of others directly as a product of mirroring, generally.

know may, from the constitution of our nature, become a temptation, seducing others to deeds which conscience may afterwards condemn them for.<sup>163</sup>

In acting, one evidences a certain way of life that is directed to ends. One turns to the sun, so to speak. Even though all persons have the same nature, and are led to the satisfaction of similar needs, one must do nothing to satisfy his own needs which leads to a situation whose embodiment cannot be conscientiously endorsed for all others alike. My own actions signify to others alike “this way to the good.” If I turn only towards what benefits me, then I am providing an example to others to do the same.<sup>164</sup>

It is, in reverence for the law, the ends of all things in common, deliberated on; this is morality conceived as a spring. Springs seek rest as thirsty persons seek wells. So, with the categorical imperative in mind: do what you must to be at rest, but do so as if one’s self were all others, alike. With this view from these ends, one’s esteem 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.<sup>165</sup>

It is an embodied moral exemplar which is the object of reverence, and the

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<sup>163</sup> Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, page 141.

<sup>164</sup> It is difficult to imagine a universe in which all flowers turned towards individual suns, but it is easier to imagine desperate flowers searching the skies with the sun blotted out.

<sup>165</sup> *Metaphysics of Morals*, 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.”

form of his life itself exhibits the situation to which one is drawn by moral interest. These are the terms to which one holds himself in comparison. To be alike with this person, this is an end to be sought, and likewise embodied. Further, this person is as much one's self as any other; the logic is the same.

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, we have missed the point.<sup>166</sup>

Reverence is to want to become someone, when caught in the reflection of that which one aspires to in the demonstrated being of another. It is a special sense, more than admiration, more than mere recognition:

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.<sup>167</sup>

Reverence is to want to take certain ends as one's own and to live a certain way of life. Hereby, Kant's ethical theory provides that bridging notion between subjective and objective which its more common interpretations fail to deliver in a robust and realistic way. His later view is grounded in similarity of constitution and way of being in the world, grounds which will suffer the plow of every moral philosopher since his time, present share included:

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

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<sup>166</sup> To the objection that there is a place for rules which I am neglecting, I must respond thusly. There is no use in a rule past its revision. Anyone who thinks otherwise has missed the point of the rule.

<sup>167</sup> *Metaphysics of Morals*, pages 83-84.

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 exhibitiv 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.<sup>168</sup>

Reverence is no ordinary attitude, as it attaches only to a way of life, an way of being in the world. “REVERENCE is bestowed on Persons only, never on Things.”<sup>169</sup>

What is explicit in this picture of conscience is an aspect of our topic which only arose implicitly in our look at Socrates. Conscience, the spring of practical reason, 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, and me. This aspect of the mechanism is clear on Kant’s mature view. Conscience carries the sense of this inward reflection: how would/should/could/do I feel about my self, reverence or disgust, upon realizing the end of some action? One may be practically capable of some action, having reasoned out the means of its execution, “But so long as man lives, he cannot endure to be in his own eyes unworthy of life.”<sup>170</sup> Conscience opens the space between this end and that, and however I get there, I take myself with me. This is a universal situation.

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, page 84.

<sup>169</sup> *Metaphysics of Morals*, page 83. Echoing this distinction is Heidegger’s caring for and caring about.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

So far so good. Sounds familiar, in fact, and we shall make a great deal of this aspect of conscience when Diogenes takes a bath. A spring, after all, is more than a metal coil.

In this section, we have seen how certain emotions ground moral thinking. The feelings of disgust and reverence motivate persons to seek or to avoid certain situations. We have also seen how conscience motivates to ends by disclosing ends, as ends, altogether. Most importantly, we have seen how conscience is a universal mechanism in determining what is moral and immoral.

In the following section, we shall look more deeply at the universal conditions of being in the world. In it, I will introduce a thought experiment which illustrates the universality of our condition as situated beings. Through this illustration, I hope to begin to show the critical role of conscience in opening up the space of the future, and what this means for how we live the rest of our lives.

## 9. 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 Wittgenstein<sup>171</sup>

In this section I will introduce a thought experiment. The basic idea is to exercise conscience by feeling as-if in some other situation, and then come to terms with it. I use the bath because it is a space of relaxation and reflection, as well as for other reasons to come clear momentarily.

In the everyday way, conscience brings one from space of need to satisfaction 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.<sup>172</sup>

Remember, the spring of conscience both ties to ends and motivates to their realization. A spring has a work function, and we can see the conscientious agent sort of like an inchworm, at either end himself. Persons stretch out and pull up to ends, reaching 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 at that place, at that time. He is simply ahead of most of himself most of the time he is on his way, and when he rests he may be in two places at once. Even at rest, he reaches out for this or that, whatever it is he

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<sup>171</sup> Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, 2.0121

<sup>172</sup> Lost is an especially unpleasant end.

needs, at least in mind or as a matter of fact.

Earlier, we saw that conscience opens the space between a thirsty man and a needed drink of water. Some men have taken this to mean that the good life is one lived with his drink in his 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. This is a situation to which all must confess being bound.

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 inconveniencies 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."<sup>173</sup>

Diogenes' example makes explicit a universal condition. Everyone will thirst, and not simply for fluids. Diogenes exemplifies this condition by living in his tub. Understand that in renouncing worldly attachments, Diogenes had few needs. With so few needs, he can live happily in his tub. He needs nothing, so he can refuse Alexander's offer of help.

Imagine that Diogenes' tub is filled with water. He is laying in the sun, bathing.<sup>174</sup> His situation is a good one because though he will still thirst, his thirst

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<sup>173</sup> 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.

<sup>174</sup> Though Diogenes may have not been an avid bather in reality, I am hoping the reader can overlook his suspicions and enjoy the illustration.

shall with the least effort be reliably satisfied. He has thrown away his cup, but he doesn't need it. It is this aspect of his situation which permits him to refuse any offer from Alexander. He needs nothing done from him. He lives in the space of his own necessity. Because he is situated in the space of his own needs, when he thirsts again all that Diogenes must do is to dip his hand in his bathwater, and drink.<sup>175</sup>

To have thirst satiated once is not a guarantee of never being in need of water again. Diogenes answered as he did because the space in which his needs arise is that very same space through which his needs are filled. His needs like the water come to meet his own determinations. There is no anxiety about how and where his needs might or might not be filled. Diogenes 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.

He put himself in this situation deliberately. It is a situation with very little tension. This is a comfortable situation. Minimizing the tension between where one is and where one needs to be was something Diogenes did, but it is more than that. It is something that all people do. When I know that I will need lots of printer ink, I try to have an extra 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

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<sup>175</sup> To the objection that Diogenes may not have had water in his tub, as it was a wine cask, I must respond as follows. This is beside the point. Diogenes motivates the illustration in this section. I do not spell Diogenes' own views out, however, because to do so will be to detract from the value of the exercise.

on the fact that there is an extra printer cartridge there, right next to me. I can relax in the space with my coming needs met.

A similar dynamic is at work in the space of every situation. Persons feel good when their needs are met. They also feel good when their situation is such that their coming needs will be met. That's why I have an extra cartridge of printer ink. It is as-if I were bathing in it. There is a similar dynamic at work in every situation. This demonstration is the power of Diogenes' example, the timeless power of a philosophic life. The image of this man in this tub on display 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, he was practically wise enough, that he was able to demonstrate our own universal condition, as well.

Most of us are unwilling to follow Diogenes' example. Other people rely on us not to spend our days in a tub. Other people rely on us not to forsake every need. Diogenes, however, lived in his tub alone. We will get other people in the tub in the next section, and make more of the following illustration in the final section. For now, we will imagine what it is like to sit in a bathtub alone in order to better understand what Diogenes, the way I have painted him, may have been up to. It is in this light that I offer the following illustration.

Imagine that you are, like Diogenes, reflecting in the space of your own needs. Imagine that all of the things you think you need are in the tub with you. Imagine that all of these needs are met. The kids are cared for, the clothes are

clean, the work is done. Imagining this situation is the work of conscience. Conscience holds out another situation as-if one were so situated. The difference is motivational. In this case, we are imagining that anything that may be a motivation is not.<sup>176</sup> Imagine Diogenes' bathtub, but with **everything** you need in it, not just water.

This is where I wish to begin our thought experiment. Imagine you are in a bathtub which describes the space of the perfect situation.<sup>177</sup> The perfect bath is everything outside the bath, too. It is the rest of the world. The perfect bath involves letting one's self drift away in peaceful reflection because there is no felt weight of need compelling distraction. Your every need is met. There are no external constraints, no kids to pick up, no dinner to cook, no bills to pay, no love to miss. Take this to be true.

Take advantage of the feeling of what it is to take a bath and imagine this space. It is like being in a situation without tension. We will modify this feeling in a moment. Once we release tension, we will try to account for every dimension

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<sup>176</sup> Hegel has written that conscience is "...this deepest inward solitude with one's self where everything external and every restriction has disappeared." Cited in Ricoeur, 1992, page 344, fn.51, from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* page 254. What I think Hegel means by this in simple terms 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 work in the illustration to follow. My efforts at motivating the thought experiment take precedence over keeping Hegel clear on this count, though I believe that my use of Hegel is not contrary to his own designs.

<sup>177</sup> I like to start with the bath because the feeling of being in the bath is of the loss of external restrictions and this is what I want to emphasize. Also, not simply coincidentally, bathtubs look like gravity wells, and represent low energy states wherein external demands are relaxed and internal demands take over.

and boundary condition of this bathtub and all the rest of the world order which may have been a source of tension. The idea here is to remove all sources of tension, and then to be aware of the feeling of tension as its concern is reintroduced.<sup>178</sup>

To begin with, imagine being in a bathtub, with tensions wholly relaxed. This is the space of an ideal situation. It is yours. 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 where 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..."

What is conscience doing here? Remember the characterization of conscience as con-science. 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. When the order of the array is less an issue, I call them "scenes." In the first scene to be compared, that feeling of being in the world before the bath, all of the determinations of one's 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 is how one's situation is determined, by the tensions between one's self and the next scene for comparison. In this second scene, all of these same everyday tensions are met. The kids are cared for, the girl moves back in, the bartender

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<sup>178</sup> Instead of beginning by rationally disbelieving all beliefs, as Descartes did, I am offering an affective method. We begin by feeling.

buys the next round. In this scene, all the terms of one's own situation which are normally strained are relaxed. In this scene, you are happy.

The difference between the two scenes is the tension between this situation and that. This tension is motivational. People want to be happy. Conscience motivates us to reach a situation "where everything external and every restriction has disappeared."<sup>179</sup> This is a space of rest, a space in which our needs are met.

This is the space which we created when we imagined the "perfect bath." In the perfect bath, there is no tension because conscience holds one's own terms as-if they are met. In the perfect bath, one lives as-if his situation leaves no need unsatisfied. In ACTWith terms, this is the *c/o* mode: as-if one's self coming to terms with another (ideal) situation. In this case, all prior determinations are held up to a situation in which these terms are met by the situation. In the perfect bath, there is no space between them, no distance to travel to get there. There are no terms to be come to in this new situation because the terms are already met. This is a low energy state, one of utter relaxation. Life in such a situation, when all that one wishes is affirmed, is good.

Let's modify this illustration. In this case, there is all the tension of everyday life. In my case, there is a great deal of tension attached to finishing this dissertation. This is a great deal of tension. Writing a dissertation is what is called a "weighty situation." My entire life hangs on the balance.

I can imagine myself in another situation, the situation in which my

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<sup>179</sup> See footnote 6 this section.

dissertation is done. This is ACTWith c/o: as-if my self in coming to terms with another situation. The situation is one in which this dissertation is done, and done well. The difference between them is the tension releasing as I let myself come to terms with the new situation. This difference is that of which I am aware as tensions relax. I am aware of the determinations behind these tensions only after the fact, as they already release.<sup>180</sup> But, I can imagine, based on prior experience, a state in which this need, the need to complete the dissertation and to do well, is met. To do well and get done is the best situation I can imagine. If I were in a bathtub, however perfect, this may be one need I could not forget.

Let's return to the basic model, that of a bather with a growing thirst. Imagine now that you are in the perfect bath with all needs met and begin getting thirsty. Unlike the illustration with Diogenes, in this case you are not resting in the space whereby this need can be filled. Drinking the bathwater is no longer an option. Recollect the discussion on thirstiness and the orientation to the good. Recall what thirst requires. An end needs to be reached. In the case you must imagine, now, this is not the place in which you are presently situated. The drink is outside of this space. Hereby, a difference opens up between where you are, and where you need to be. You see a space ahead with a drink in it.

To be thirsty is to need a drink. To get a drink, in some places and at some time, requires walking to the well. Think of having to walk 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

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<sup>180</sup> And equally in other contexts insofar as they tighten.

necessary to get that drink of water. Things could be worse. If there were obstacles, things would be harder. Luckily, the walk to the well has been cleared for us by prior generations. Others have gotten thirsty, needed a drink, and gone to the well for one before we have gotten thirsty and have been in need of a drink. Prior generations have given us wells, though we continue to dig more. And, prior generations have done more than give us wells; now, we have sinks, and pipes, and sewer lines. Walking to the well requires a lot of energy compared to what most people do now. 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 energy, now.

Even our situation is more energetically expensive than was Diogenes' when it comes to getting a drink of water, however. The present process - getting up, walking to the sink, pulling a clean glass of water - still requires a great deal of energy. For Diogenes the energy necessary to satiate his thirst is a minimum. It is difficult to imagine an easier situation for the thirsty man than comfortably drinking his own bath water. This is a perfect space of rest. In such conditions, there is no place to go because one is already there.<sup>181</sup> Now, that is taking it easy.

Let's return to a more common scenario. Imagine standing over the well after taking a drink, as-if without a need. In this situation, the situation punctuated with thirst is safely behind. The future is open; no need ties us to any

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<sup>181</sup> It is practical reason which lowers energetic requirements in cases when paths from beginnings to ends must be found. I say little about this, however, beyond pointing out that it is practical wisdom which provides the building blocks for all of practical reason's bridges.

end not of our own determination. Momentary thirst now past, standing over the well is no longer necessarily the right place to be. Drinking water is no longer the right thing at the right time. Water is no longer needed. This is an opportunity for deliberation, for tying one's self to some end of one's choosing, even some end which answers to no need. It is a moment of leisure. This is an opportunity for luxury. It is also an opportunity for philosophy. It is at a moment like this that a man is free.<sup>182</sup>

At this point, there is an option. One may continue on in one's practices, slaking thirst at the same old wells and live out a life of utter routine. In it, one may look around the well for distractions, and busy one's self with certain aspects of the world until he grows thirsty again. Conscience is at work here in these mundane instances, keeping track of changing situations and opening to some things and not to others. But, there is a greater capacity untapped here. This mirrors the theme of the last few sections: what is the character of a man to be? This is an especially compelling question when that man up ahead is one's self. Am I to be a man who hovers around at the old watering hole, or am I to be a man who does great things?

In order to demonstrate what I am getting to, let's recall Socrates' question: is that me ahead or some scarecrow? We will imagine each situation in turn.

As I relax in the bath, I feel the tension slip away. I can attend to some aspect or other of the situation, but this introduces external restrictions. Where

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<sup>182</sup> We found Socrates championing this position in section 6.

external restrictions do not meet internal requirements, this difference causes strain. This introduces tension. It is the difference between the two which is the motivational force of conscience. In the perfect bath, there is no difference between where you are and where you want to be. It is the perfect situation, as if the world were a bathtub molded to meet your every need. Primary amongst these needs is that of being revered.

Recall Kant's stipulation that "what is called a moral interest, is based solely on this emotion" reverence. Let us return to the perfect bath for a moment. The perfect bath certainly involves being revered. What I want you to do is to imagine that your perfect bathing situation is an object of reverence. Imagine that all the tensions are released, but pay attention to the feeling of having this tension, in particular released. Begin by imagining how others regard those whom they revere, because in this case this is you. Others want to be in a situation exactly like yours and to fit with that situation they want to be exactly like you. This is the significance of reverence. It is more than admiration. They wish they were you, and are actively engaged in becoming more like you. They are adopting your practices because yours seem to fit the situation where others' fail. This is more than fame or passing fancy. You are setting the standard.

In prior discussions, we have focused on particular aspects of given situations. Where is the furniture? Where is the one you 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. It is not some aspect of one's self which is the object of reverence, it is the entire self.

Wanting to be revered is universal because selfhood is universal. Reverence does not mean “admire for some trait or quality.” Reverence is for persons only, whole persons. Reverence is for a life. To my mind, that Diogenes could capture something universal in such a simple expression as living in a tub is to be revered. Everyone wishes to be in a situation with needs met and turned toward the sun.<sup>183</sup>

Of course, every tub is different in detail. Each person has unique needs. These details are relative because selves essentially differ from one another. And this points to the 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 one is drawn in reverence. In being different from the object of reverence, one is conscientiously motivated to become otherwise than he is.

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.<sup>184</sup> This aims at others taking one’s own situation as the ruler of theirs. At the very least, wanting to be revered 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 like one’s self. If one is revered, unlike the men named by

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<sup>183</sup> Perhaps this explains Alexander’s remark, that if he could not have been Alexander, he would have been Diogenes.

<sup>184</sup> I am not prepared to go into details here but I think that this good feeling stems from the fact that others in moments of reverence are o/o to one’s self, and one mirrors their state (love) for one’s self as one mirrors that other’s expressions normally. I am presuming nothing controversial here. But, the simple four-square ACTWith matrix is here revealed to be a four square with each square embedded with another full matrix mirroring others, at the very least.

Callicles in the 6th section, this sentiment continues long after the party is over. Reverence is more than a fat belly and a happy face. Like Diogenes, to be revered is to be situated with no place to go because one is already there. In fact, one is the there to which others come in reverence. Can any of us say that this is where he is now?

Imagine that you revere yourself. That man, up ahead, is already you. In the perfect bath, it is as if one had come to terms with his world and all needs are met. This includes coming needs. Imagine that you have lived such a worthy life that all needs are met, including being revered. You already are that man ahead. Imagine, for instance, that you have provided for the security off yourself and all others through hard work and dedication. You are in the situation of having this work behind you. You are successful. Relaxed. That feels good. No tension.

Real life is seldom this way, however. Is who you are the person you wish you were? How far are you from this ideal situation? We will look at how far you might be in the discussion to follow. Let's take the perfect bath and invert it. Let's turn the tub upside down. You are cast out on the muddy floor covered in filth and soot. Imagine that you are the object of disgust. Imagine that everything has gone horribly wrong.

This is a terrifying difference. First, in the space of the perfect bath, all felt needs are met. These include fame, fortune, and other worldly things. These needs also include health, hope, and happiness. Now, none of these needs are met. In fact, these are lacking. You are sick, infamous, and miserable. This

situation is not a place anyone wants to be. It is the opposite of being revered. This situation differs in that you are disgusting. No one wants to be you. Especially, you don't want to be you.

We can begin by imagining particular things. In the perfect bath, one is clean and healthy. In this inversion, one is slimy, sick, and likely even contagious. In the perfect bath, one is revered by others. In this inversion, one is despised. In the perfect bath, the one you love comes to you in your time of need, she does not go off to drink beer with a hippy to live in a van for a month on the road. After all, the love expressed by those others to whom you are open is what makes the bath perfect. To open to another in love, only to have her lie, and reject you in disgust, is the opposite of a perfect situation. In this inversion, the one you love abandons you in your time of need. In her eyes, you see the disgust behind the rejection. "Yours is no longer the place I wish to be. I wish instead to be away from you."<sup>185</sup> In self-disgust, this evaluation is internalized. One mirrors the rejection, and it is complete. It is not that some aspect of one's situation is wrong, it is that everything about one's situation is wrong. What is wrong is one's entire self. It is disgusting. One's self is the situation one cannot be.

Becoming an object of self-disgust is a very real possibility. Without good examples to follow, and the good-will of others, and with an opportunity to do otherwise here and there, one already is this situation. This is as-if one were already the scarecrow, and not Socrates up ahead. This is most terrifying.

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<sup>185</sup> I am picturing disgust as this internalized holistic self-rejection felt as self-disgust.

There is nothing more terrifying by my imagination. This is why Socrates' question is, as he maintains, the most important question of all. When we have the opportunity to do the right thing, it is a valuable opportunity. It means a life worth living, or not.

This thought experiment is meant to capture the sense of conscience as that capacity to open spaces which respond to need and correspond to satisfaction. Conscience presents us with a gap which must be bridged in order to find satisfaction. Conscience motivates one to bridge this gap by holding out that situation as that in which one may be happy.

This illustration also captures an opportunity for reflection. In sitting in the bath, oscillating from reverence to disgust as we just have, we have caught a glimpse of two poles which bind the whole of one's life. We aim for doing the right thing at the right time. If we succeed, we are revered for this way of life. We avoid doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. If we fail, we are an object of disgust. Conscience motivates us to the former, and away from the latter. This marks the search for the meaning of life. When we wonder which ends are worthy, and which are not, we wonder about what it is that makes the right thing to do the right thing to do at the right time to do it. This is the work of the conscience.

The sections to follow mark a change of pace. I will leave the talk for the ACTWith model, and of bathtubs and potato games until the final section, when we will take what we have learned and apply it to a pressing situation requiring conscientious attention. I do this for two reasons. Primarily, I leave this

language behind in order to meet the thinkers to come on their own terms. The relationships between the material to come and the materials already covered are obvious enough. Secondly, I leave this language behind so that the reader may begin putting these basic concepts to use in interpreting the material to come. In this way, I hope that what follows is productive of an understanding which then, as this text closes, we are ready to apply to real problems in real life. We are here to draw a circle of words around the world. It sounds like hard work but, this way to the good.

## 10. Conscience, and the appearance of the good.

In a receptive, attentive observer, intuitive images of the characteristic aspects of the things that interest him come to exist; afterward he knows no more about how these images arose than a child knows about the examples from which he learned the meanings of words. 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. Helmholtz<sup>186</sup>

We saw Diogenes take a bath 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 some things revealed in the prior sections. One is the significance of others in how we come to see ourselves. Another is the role of conscience in motivating one to realize his highest potentials. Together, these constraints will give insight into what is universal about man's condition, trying to make the most of mortality.

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 with supporting notions. Herein, we are asking: what is the relationship between conscience, death, and other

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<sup>186</sup> *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 dimensia. This is the picture of conscience at work, artistry, the workhorse of philosophy.

people? Even this simple question unlocks a floodgate. So, we must tread lightly and skip on through to more solid ground.

For Heidegger, conscience is universal among human beings. Conscience is a “universally established and ascertainable fact.”<sup>187</sup> Conscience shows up as a call. It “summons” one’s self away from everyday entanglements and forward to one’s highest potentials.<sup>188</sup> Consistent with its characterization as a call, it “gives us something to understand, it *discloses*.”<sup>189</sup> What it discloses, and what it calls one toward, is one’s self.

In some traditional phenomenological terms, the movement of disclosure, “clearing” in the sense of a verb, is one of exstasis. “Ex-stasis” comes from root words: *-sta*, meaning “staying in place,” and *ex-*, “out of,” implying moving from, standing up, no longer staying in place.<sup>190</sup>

Only living things are ex-static. As their situations in the world change, they experience new things, or old things in different ways; they “disclose” the

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<sup>187</sup> 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.

<sup>188</sup> I use the word “highest” to describe what Heidegger is translated to refer to as one’s “ownmost” potential. I clarify what this potential is – discovery toward understanding – as the text continues. Though “ownmost” captures the sense in which one’s understanding is unique, and so the possibilities stemming from this potential are always one’s own highest possibilities, I simply use the term “highest” as it captures this sense for all persons equally.

<sup>189</sup> *B&T*, page 249(270)

<sup>190</sup> This movement need not be understood spatially, though this picture is easy 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.

world in their ex-static movement from a resting place, as the phenomenological tradition has maintained since the Greeks.<sup>191</sup>

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. And by the clearing of being, we are really 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."<sup>192</sup>

Let me clarify. "Clearing" is both a noun, as in "already that place where things show up" and like "the cleared space of a dark forest wherein one dwells." It is also a verb, as in "clearing up the darkness for the building of a dwelling." Heidegger means both, as in "being in the clear."

These two together lead to the possibility for another sense of clearing. A clearing is a space in which things arise. A clearing is an open space in which things can be constructed, ordered, arranged. A clearing is a place where work is done. A clearing is a site of synthesis.<sup>193</sup>

The word that Heidegger uses to indicate beings like human beings is "Dasein." Dasein is German, and literally signifies "being there."<sup>194</sup> "Being there" is not quite complete, though; what Heidegger has in mind is more like "the being

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<sup>191</sup> The locus classicus for Western Philosophy's role this disclosure resides in Plato's *Myth of the Cave*.

<sup>192</sup> 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.

<sup>193</sup> "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)

<sup>194</sup> 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.

of the there” than simply “being in a spot at a time,” like other things, like rocks and sticks. Dasein is where any *there* happens. Dasein is where things come to matter.

“Da-sein is a being which is concerned in its being about that being.”<sup>195</sup> That explains why we surround ourselves with the things we do. “Clearing” mirrors “caring.” It is only in terms of this clearing that things matter at all. “One *is*, after all, *what* one takes care of.”<sup>196</sup> One’s situation is defined in terms of the objects which occupy his attention. This aspect of one’s self, that it always is understood as situated in terms of objects, Heidegger calls “existential spatiality.” Whenever one says that “I am here,” one is remarking on the “existential spatiality” of one’s self. Thus, one can feel “spread thin” when the objects which demand his attention are far removed and still important. “Here” is always understood in terms of “the things at hand which [one] initially takes care of in the surrounding world.”<sup>197</sup> Here is thus understood in terms of the things one cares about. If these things are not “here,” this is a source of anxiety. Dasein cares, and in caring things come to matter. Here matters. Mattering, Dasein brings its here with it. This view carries important consequences.

In a later essay, 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.”<sup>198</sup> Being there is being the place

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<sup>195</sup> *B&T*, 179(192)

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, 296(322)

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, 114(???) I have substituted “one” for “it” for readability.

<sup>198</sup> Heidegger, *The Way Back to the Grounds of Metaphysics*, appearing in Kaufmann, page 213.

where things are found to matter, to still matter, or not. Being there is being the place where things are found to matter in this way, or that, or otherwise.

By truth, Heidegger means *aletheia*: disclosure, discovery. Its actuality lies in the experience of the being whose function is disclosure, whose function is truth as such, Dasein. Heidegger points out that, for the Greeks, “the essence of truth” is a privative expression, *a-letheia*, and signifies a “robbery,” or a taking for one’s own. This is not some passive waiting for the world to present itself. This is a sequestering away on one’s own turf. This is pushing back the darkness to see for one’s self. This is what Heidegger calls “making space for things.” In disclosing, our worlds, ourselves, are opened up. This is how one comes to the truth.

For instance, 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 rocks; in this mode, it is the soil which is the obstacle. In either case, it is the purposeful movement which evaluates rocks as good or bad. The rock itself suffers either determination without complaint. It will find rest where it is let lay.

The mode of discovery influences what Dasein takes to be true. The way in which things come to matter becomes an aspect of what that thing is understood to be. 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 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 discovered the space, in the first place. So, again, clearing farmland means taking out rocks, which, in the end, means clearing a space suitable for farming. Geology means taking out dirt and studying the rest. If the farmer pointed to a rock and said “obstacle,” the geologist will say “false.”

This returns us to the expansive sense of clearing. A clearing can be pushed outward. The clearing, the ordered and ordering space in which orders are ordered, can be made bigger. Disorder is pushed back, and Dasein makes the unknown known. But you always have to begin at your own boundaries, and the shovel only turns the soil in the shape of its own blade. “As the understanding discovery of what is unintelligible, all explanation is rooted in the primary understanding of Dasein.”<sup>199</sup> Let me clarify.

One way in which the clearing of being is always expanding is in time. Dasein is temporal. In discovering the objects of the world he clears the way for himself. He doesn’t clear the way just anyway, he clears the way ahead.<sup>200</sup> This is the meaning of being as clearing in the sense of both noun and verb taken all at once. The future is what the clearing is all about. “Its primary meaning is the future.”<sup>201</sup>

In one’s ecstatic discovery of the world one comes to understand it. It is on this basis that one looks ahead for possibilities. What one sees ahead is dependent on one’s present understanding.

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<sup>199</sup> *B&T*, 309(336)

<sup>200</sup> 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.

<sup>201</sup> *B&T*, 301(328).

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.<sup>202</sup>

After all, the farmer does not clear rocks in order to have a good last season, but for the next. Whatever came of this year's harvest, the possibilities for the next can at least come with fewer obstacles. "Dasein has always already compared itself, in its being, with a possibility of itself."<sup>203</sup> "Dasein comes toward itself in terms of what is taken care of."<sup>204</sup> Heidegger calls this a "project."<sup>205</sup>

Understanding is unique to individual Dasein. Everyone has their own "projection." This unique understanding which is projected is based in the understanding one has of one's own situation. One's self is always situated, whether explicitly or not. Thus, Dasein in discovery comes to understand its situation. And, as one's self is the situation, this is where one finds one's self. "Saying I means the being that I always am as "I-am-in-a-world."<sup>206</sup>

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."<sup>207</sup>

For the most part, people live in a world already cleared. Let's face it; we always find ourselves in terms of which we are not the authors. One's own clearing of being is essentially a shared one. More strongly than that, being with others is an essential aspect of our constitutions. Heidegger finds proof for this

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<sup>202</sup> *B&T*, 309(336)

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid* 179(192)

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid* 310(337)

<sup>205</sup> Again in two senses, but I will let this go.

<sup>206</sup> *B&T*, 295(321)

<sup>207</sup> There is a note to this phrase: "Clarifying more precisely: *saying-I* and being a self." *B&T*, 293(318)

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, its possibility is a proof for the latter.”<sup>208</sup>

This is proof that *Mitdasein* – being with others - is a structural aspect of Dasein. Heidegger does not start with an isolated “I” from which must be construed bridges post hoc. He starts with a being for whom being *essentially is* being-with-others:

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.<sup>209</sup>

We are with other people, fundamentally, before there is ever the possibility of being alone. Heidegger is explicit in the passage below that Dasein is simply that sort of animal.<sup>210</sup>

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.<sup>211</sup>

This mirroring carries consequences. Already being with others, persons come to understand themselves insofar as they deviate from the norm, from the average everydayness that is the public understanding. A mirror of others from

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<sup>208</sup> *B&T*, 113(120). Not limited to people.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid* 111(118). See appendices for insight into how this position differs from that of the modern tradition.

<sup>210</sup> Mohanty is correct to criticize other approaches which seek to bridge isolated selves though some force or other, like empathy, and he notes that Heidegger’s great gift is this insight.

<sup>211</sup> *B&T*, 117(124) This picture gels nicely with that of contemporary neurology. See the bibliography.

the beginning, one sees one's self and others in terms of differences. "Existentially expressed, being-with-one-another has the character of *distanciality*."<sup>212</sup> This deviance is constantly discouraged as the average understanding "prescribes the nearest interpretation of the world and being-in-the-world."<sup>213</sup> Thus, persons understand themselves in terms of how they differ from others, and there is pressure to conform:

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.<sup>214</sup>

The anonymous others 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, and so must we to be one of them.<sup>215</sup> Yet it can be said that "no one" did it, for no one is this standard, and the standard for one's self becomes doing nothing at all.<sup>216</sup> To deviate is to risk deviance, to no longer belong to the average and to do as expected. Anonymously, the they exerts a positive pressure on us all to remain safely within the body of the group.

Thus the they maintains itself factically 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 prescribe what can and cannot be ventured, watches over every exception which thrusts itself to the fore. Every priority is noiselessly squashed.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> *B&T*, 118(126)

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid* 121(129)

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid* 118(126)

<sup>215</sup> Every "them" is an "us."

<sup>216</sup> Who do we hold to account if the standard goes wrong? We shall see in a "moment."

<sup>217</sup> *B&T*, 119(127)

On Heidegger's essay, because of a natural inclination to "taking things easily", there is an attraction to giving one's self over to the they, "to averageness..."<sup>218</sup> Being in the norm is comforting. Being in with the group carries with it a sense that one is where he 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.

In holding one's self to the examples of others nearby, the they "disburdens" the self of responsibility.<sup>219</sup> Taking the public understanding as the standard for truth, "the they presents every judgment and decision as its own." We begin with this public understanding as the benchmark for our own, and we are held to account when we become other than. So, it is not surprising that many remain in this understanding, and in fact seek to close their own gap with its average ideal. There is a lot of anxiety involved in taking responsibility for one's self.

When understood primarily as that indifferent system of anonymous others which surrounds and judges every action and activity, the they is deconstructed as countless numbers from countless generations who all cannot at once be

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<sup>218</sup> *B&T*, 121(130)

<sup>219</sup> This criticism 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, it is vicious people who 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 condition.(1166b11-13)

wrong. It is simply the way things are done. It is this faceless collective which, taken for granted, “can most easily be responsible for everything because no one has to vouch for anything.”<sup>220</sup> This is critical to understanding the role of others in Heidegger’s philosophy. Most critical to understanding the role of the “they” in Heidegger’s account of conscience is the way in which they take “the responsibility of Dasein away from it.”<sup>221</sup>

Most persons stay within the fenced range of everyday expectations, living as they always have, letting “them” do it and doing their own part to meet the average expectation. This way of being is essentially closed off from the world.<sup>222</sup> Closedness is that condition to which Heraclitus points in the following fragment. “The waking have one common world, but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own.”<sup>223</sup> Just imagine the sense of relaxation in the phrase “they will take care of it.” This is taking it easy, like taking a life-long nap.

Awake, there is another option. Through moods, one may keep himself open to the world. “The moodedness of attunement constitutes existentially the openness to the world of Dasein.”<sup>224</sup> To be open is to let things come to matter, as in making room for them in the clearing of one’s life. There is anxiety in letting things come to matter, because this means that one cares about them because one cares about one’s self. 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,

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<sup>220</sup> *B&T*, 119(127)

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid* 119(127)

<sup>222</sup> Thanks to Professor Alexander VonSchoenborn for articulating this insight as a mere passing moment in a past seminar. World, here, means the “how of the world” and its order, or “kosmos” which is the term of the original.

<sup>223</sup> Fragment 95. <http://classicpersuasion.org/pw/burnet/egp.htm?chapter=3#65>

<sup>224</sup> *B&T*,129(137)

then it doesn't matter. 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."

In this attraction lies the implicit opportunity for escape; but, it won't come easily. It is not as if there is some magic key. If there is escape, 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, like crawling out of a depression, "Dasein can, should, and must master its mood with knowledge and will."<sup>225</sup> It may be easier to go with what "they" said, but it may not be right.<sup>226</sup> Only by keeping open to the world is Dasein free to become himself.<sup>227</sup>

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. Instead, one's self makes all the things of the world relevant. It does so in terms of its highest aspirations, in terms of the man one wishes himself to be:

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.<sup>228</sup>

Here is where Angst becomes so important. Angst is the fundamental mood of being in the world for Heidegger. When someone says they are

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<sup>225</sup> *B&T*, 128(136)

<sup>226</sup> Although inter-subjectively confirmed, they may prescribe actions indifferent to the objective world, for example. "They" sell SUV's. "They" say that SUV's are the best vehicle to buy. "They" may not be right.

<sup>227</sup> 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."

<sup>228</sup> *B&T*, 115(???)

“struggling under the weight of the world,” this is angst. Angst is about life itself; if it is about something in particular, it is not angst. “Being-in-the-world is both what Angst is anxious in the face of and what it is anxious about.”<sup>229</sup>

Angst is characterized by a feeling of uncanniness; “uncanniness means ... not being at home” in the world.<sup>230</sup> Uncanniness is the feeling that something doesn’t fit, like something isn’t right about the situation. It is uncanny that one’s girlfriend should utter some particular phrase at some particular instance, for example, or that one’s own garden gnome shows up in a flea market in Florence. What is uncanny is one’s situation relative some particular thing. In the case of angst, however, what doesn’t fit the situation is not some thing in particular, but everything altogether:

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.<sup>231</sup>

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 appear, when all things are no longer relevant, one’s self is equally no longer relevant. If nothing is relevant, and what is relevant is relevant only in terms of my own life, then how is my life relevant? Angst confronts us with the fact that given what we’ve got, there is nothing ahead. With nothing ahead, and nothing relevant, it is a feeling that one’s own life does not matter.

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<sup>229</sup> *B&T*, 315(343)

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid* 176(189)

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid* 315(344)

The feeling of having nothing ahead is the feeling of being confronted with death. Through angst, "Dasein is thus essentially individualized down to its ownmost potentiality of death as the *nonrelational* possibility."<sup>232</sup>

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.<sup>233</sup>

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."<sup>234</sup> It feels as-if being in a non-place, a netherworld.<sup>235</sup> Because one's self as the clearing of being is that place, death confronts Dasein with non-being, and with the fact that non-being is its certain end. Everyone dies. Who and when are the only real questions, but there is no getting around it. Angst confronts us with death, with not-being, and with the fact that there is no escaping it. This is scary, but also an 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.<sup>236</sup>

"Angst reveals in Dasein its being toward its ownmost potentiality of being, that is being free for the freedom of choosing and grasping itself."<sup>237</sup> Angst strips

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<sup>232</sup> *B&T*, 283-284(307)

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid* 285(308)

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid* 176(189)

<sup>235</sup> We will break with Heidegger on this point, as will come clear as this text draws to a close.

<sup>236</sup> *B&T*, 315(343)

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid* 176(189)

away all worldly objects and so calls into question the very meaning of existence. All that is left is to answer. Yet, without anything relevant, what constitutes the “possibility of an authentic potentiality of being” which Heidegger paints as the upshot of Angst?

It is freedom. Without significance predetermined, Dasein is free to determine what is significant for itself. This potentiality is disclosed to Dasein by the conscience, even though in Angst the world and life itself has lost all relevance. The beacon of freedom is the call of conscience. “The call of conscience passes over all “worldly” status and abilities of Dasein in its summons.”<sup>238</sup> In getting one’s self back from “everybody’s” standard one opens oneself to the possibility of self-determination<sup>239</sup> in the face of angst. Dasein understands uniquely, and he can choose to test his understanding or rest in that of others who have understood for and before him. “In choosing to make this choice, Da-sein makes possible, first and foremost, its authentic potentiality-of-being.”<sup>240</sup>

The conscience offers an opportunity to keep one’s highest potentials open and not to close off into a given way of life. “This potentiality is that for the sake of which any Dasein is as it is.”<sup>241</sup> This makes a person different from “the others.” Keeping one’s self open to possibilities, which are not those of the

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<sup>238</sup> *B&T*, 283-284(307) he continues: “Disregarding those, it individualizes Dasein down to is potentiality for being guilty which it expects to be authentically.”

<sup>239</sup> Discovery.

<sup>240</sup> To which there is a note: “\*a taking place of being – philosophy, freedom.” *B&T*, 248(269) Man’s highest potential, discovery.

<sup>241</sup> *B&T*, 179(192)

average understanding, is the mode in which a person is most himself. But, it isn't easy:

Dasein is authentically itself in the mode of primordial individuation of reticent resoluteness that expects *Angst*\* of itself.<sup>242</sup>

Keeping one's self open to possibilities invites angst. Reticent resoluteness means confronting death by taking responsibility for one's life, past present and future. When confronted with a situation in which something doesn't fit, it is one's responsibility to figure out what it is and only then to fix it. Think of Martin Luther King Jr. Inequality does not fit in a free society, and he worked to understand that. It was part of the situation shared by himself and others alike, so he took the responsibility to work at fixing it. "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."<sup>243</sup>

Conscience discloses something for us to understand. It discloses something about ourselves. Though we begin with others and live according to a public standard, conscience shows us that our lives are our own. Conscience discloses by calling "Dasein forth to its own unique possibilities."<sup>244</sup> This has two dimensions. His life is his object and his project, his limit and his aim. Death is his limit, and understanding is his limit, but his object is to make the most of his understanding in the space of life before he dies. In doing so, he keeps the clearing open for others to come. This is not easy, for to spend one's life-time in study; answering the call of conscience, is not going to the library. It takes

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<sup>242</sup> \*"That is, the clearing of being as being." *B&T*, 297(323)

<sup>243</sup> Olafson, page 47.

<sup>244</sup> *B&T*, 252(273)

courage.

The mood through which one masters angst and the anxieties of loneliness and deviance is “resoluteness.” “Resoluteness means letting one’s self be summoned out of one’s lostness in the they.”<sup>245</sup> In resolve, one holds one’s self open, “authentically “there” for the disclosed situation in the “Moment.”<sup>246</sup> Instead of doing as has always been done, or as expected, or according to convention, Dasein has the potential to discover otherwise. Dasein has the potential to live otherwise.

In being called to his “own-most”<sup>247</sup> possibilities, Dasein is not called away from the world and from others. For instance, renouncing the material world of man and going off into a cave may seem enlightened, but it is a way of closing off from the world. After all, being with others is part of one’s own constitution. We mirror one another. Resoluteness “pushes” one’s self “toward concerned being-with with others.”<sup>248</sup>

Recall the talk of Dasein as the “clearing” of being. A clearing is an open space. A clearing is shared.<sup>249</sup> In resolve Dasein is openly “clearing” in anticipating discovery for himself and others. In resolve Dasein is open to the future as an aspect of the clearing in the first place, one’s own and others. Instead of bowing to fears and to angst in the face of individuation and death, Dasein is open to the opportunities which living together and dying together

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<sup>245</sup> *B&T*, 275(300)

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid* 301-2(328)

<sup>247</sup> Highest and unique.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid* 274(299)

<sup>249</sup> Always shared. When apparently not shared, one is lonely, which indicates a deficient mode of sharing.

present. His discovery is tomorrow's understanding. He doesn't have to go search somewhere "out there" for this or that opportunity to be a hero. Real opportunities happen here at home:

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.<sup>250</sup>

Once one has recovered himself from others and become his own unique project of discovery, he still must go home. What one in resoluteness discovers and takes home with him is the truth. Though one treks out and robs the world of some discovery alone, its value is for everyone. It is in resoluteness that conscience is related to being with others.

Resoluteness is the 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."<sup>251</sup> Resolute, Dasein is open to discovery of the situation as it presents itself.

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.<sup>252</sup>

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."<sup>253</sup> Dasein's

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<sup>250</sup> *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.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid* 276(301)

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid* 284(308)

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid* 301-2(328)

highest potential is discovery, being the being whereby things come to matter. “The Moment brings existence to the situation and discloses the authentic “There.”<sup>254255</sup>

As *mitdasein* is a foundational aspect of being, the situation is being with and for other persons. Many of these others will outlive one’s self; yet they share the situation. It is authentic as it is one’s own, and not simply the product of an anonymous other’s understanding. It is “there” because one is already and always with others.

Moreover, this is not a one-time thing.

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*.<sup>256</sup>

Wanting to have a conscience is a way of life. The character of being open to potential is called “resolve” and involves being open to angst and so to the voice of conscience. The mood which qualifies this openness is “anticipatory resoluteness.” This is preparedness for the opportunities of the moment understood in terms of self and others. This means actively discovering every moment of every day for 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

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid 319(347)

<sup>255</sup> For insight into what Heidegger means by “moment” see the discussion on *kairos* this text. Though I do not make this tie any more explicit, Heidegger’s notion of moment is *kairological*. In fact, this earlier discussion on *kairos* is in this text in order to prepare for an understanding of Heidegger’s thought.

<sup>256</sup> My interpretation of the discussion at *B&T*, 284(308)

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.<sup>257</sup>

In resoluteness, 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. "Situation is the there disclosed in resoluteness... situation is only through and in resoluteness."<sup>258</sup> If not coming to terms with the world, Dasein is "closed off" from it.<sup>259</sup> Where the latter maintains some prior truth to hold, the former is open to other determinations and further discovery.

"For the they, however, situation is essentially closed off."<sup>260</sup> Instead of coming to terms with the situation, staying open for the opportunities which each moment presents, they know only the "general situation." In this way, they take themselves as given, and fail to take responsibility for themselves. The they finds meaning in life by "calculating the accidents which it fails to recognize, deems its own achievement and passes off as such."<sup>261</sup>

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

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<sup>257</sup> *B&T*, 299-300(326)

<sup>258</sup> *B&T*, 276(301)

<sup>259</sup> 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.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid* 276(301)

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid* 276(301) For example, consider the assistant who gets all the posh side jobs. He discovers the opportunities and succeeds in winning them only because of the office in which he serves. If the man is resolute, he will understand that his success is not of his own doing but is an extension of the position he occupies. He may open his opportunities to others. If the man is irresolute, he will see nothing unfair in his winning these opportunities. By Heidegger's analyses, he will make sense of things by asserting both that his success was a happy accident and that he is the best man for the job because he has them both, after all.

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 is one's self up ahead. If we stick with what everyone else is doing, and remain in the common clearing of the they, then we don't need to worry about these things. But, that doesn't mean that these things do not matter. Leisure isn't everything, after all; you have to do something with it.

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. Angst also confronts one with the worst possibility, a possibility which cannot be avoided.<sup>262</sup> the certainty that is death. Being open to angst and to the possibilities that understanding brings is called resolve. Through the openness that is resolve, new things arise with previously unthought significance. They are significant in terms of the life lived in the authentic situation. For Heidegger, this is man's highest calling. In answering the call of conscience a man answers not only to his 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 with 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

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<sup>262</sup> Heidegger calls death the possibility not to be bypassed; there is simply no getting around it. It is certain but for its time and mode.

already discovered, and yet they are still distorted.<sup>263</sup>

Heidegger tells us that our highest potential is to understand, to discover, and to make sure that others always have the opportunity to seek the same. What more can we do, what other freedom do we have, than to hold out for the truth? As this text draws to a close, we will see that this is always the right thing to do and that it is always the right time to do it. What we must provide for, along the way, is a better understanding of our own limited freedom to do so. This is where we will turn in the next sections.

The material which led up to this section presumed Heidegger's philosophy. Much of what we saw in this section, thus, is familiar. It is simply given herein in Heideggerian language. What has been reinforced is the sense that staying open to meet the terms of the situation is not easy business. There is angst. Conscience motivates a person to make the most out of life in the face of angst by confronting him with a "call" to his highest potential. One stays available to the call of conscience only in the mode of resolve. Anticipating death, one who is open to the situation works to ensure that the terms of the situation are disclosed, and not that some prior understanding stands in for the way things are. This means not doing what everyone else is doing simply because it is expected. This leads to ostracism, loneliness, and alienation.

Against this strain, the conscientious man discovers for others who are, and who shall be, born into the situation even as it comes to be determined through his life-time of discovery. He is responsible for keeping the clearing of being clear and free of obstacles of convention which stymie open discovery.

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<sup>263</sup> *B&T*, 204(222)

Heidegger, hereby, shows us that the conscientious man is a powerful force in culture. Open to the turmoil surrounding the seeming quiet of conventional life, the conscientious man serves a crucial role in maintaining the conventional order's viability. He reaches the fringes of chaos and orders it, coming to terms with it, and expresses that order to others so that they are aware of the changing world around them. Ironically, however, this defender of the clearing of being suffers by way of the very persons for whom he cares.

Bittersweet as it may be, we are starting to see more clearly the shape of a life worth living. It turns out that doing the right thing at the right time has little to do with what is the right thing at the right time for one's self, alone. Living to do the right thing is a life lived for the sake of the only thing worth dying for, the best possible situation. And, as one may not live to see it, doing the right thing means doing so for others. Tragically, as others may not recognize the value in such sacrifice, the conscientious man is often targeted, and his life made more difficult for caring in the first place.

In the next section, we will continue our push to understand conscience's role in doing the right thing at the right time. I will focus on doing the right thing in terms of one's situation. A distinction will emerge between inter-subjective and objective contextual constraints. This will return us to our discussions of *kairos*, King, and practical wisdom as the limiting factor in doing the right thing at the right time.

We will begin by investigating contemporary phenomenological methods for finding common ground between seemingly incommensurate inter-subjective

perspectives on the objective world. These perspectives are natural to diverse cultures. The common ground will be found in the objects of the world. We will find that the objects of the world mediate differences between competing perspectives. We will also discover a silent player in this process, one's own body.

In every case, there is the body as the subject and object of change. The human body is both subject to difference and object of change when that difference is annulled. This result opens the potential to see one's self in objective terms, and not merely in terms of others like or different from one's self. In the end, we will see that it is the body which provides the grounds for radical change in persons, and that the objects of the world gain their significance in terms of these changes.

On the view that I am presenting, human freedom is grounded in the capacity to open one's self to the world and to others. In opening to the world, one experiences what otherwise he would not. These experiences have an effect. A person becomes different because of them. His unique experiences alter the structure of his unique body. It is on the basis of this body that he then moves into his next situation. And the cycle repeats itself.<sup>264</sup>

This is self-determination though of a limited sort. Habitually applied, one quickly builds a burgeoning store of practical experience which, when applied to moments as they arise, is wisdom in action. One may not have perfect control

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<sup>264</sup> This asymmetry is reflected in the ACTWith model: as-if represents embodied experience, coming to terms with represents being open to new determinations thereby generating new understanding which is in process embodied, and taken into the next situation represented by the as-if. And repeat.

over that to which he opens, but he can open and try to come to terms with whatever presents itself. Though it is equally self-determining to remain closed to the world, closing off invites no such diversity of experience. This mode of being eventuates in a dearth of understanding, a condition known as ignorance. In either case, one becomes the person he becomes by way of his way of being in the world. In both cases, one's self is the embodied result of experience.

There is only so much time for discovery, however. 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 felt, and points to the relevance of things to which one's livelihood is attached. 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 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. No matter how the world changes, how the body changes from birth to death, life is the ongoing exercise of one's own mortal coil.

## 11. Conscience, and the fact of matter.

Life is a local countercurrent to entropy.  
-- Rolston<sup>265</sup>

There is an essential difference between persons and non-living things like rocks and 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.<sup>266</sup>

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 sections to follow, I will try to clarify how freedom of change through self-determination is possible. Next section, I will focus on which sorts of acts within our power to determine are most effective in self-determined self-change.

As we begin life, and aim for the person we want to be, the body is there at every step along the way.<sup>267</sup> One’s body is there before and after one opens himself to the opportunity of a basketball game, for example. In pursuing this opportunity, one subjects himself to change.

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<sup>265</sup> Rolston, page 97.

<sup>266</sup> Ballard, 1976, page 111.

<sup>267</sup> Properly speaking, the -science of con-science is a total system state of situated being. Conscience holds system states against one another.

There appear to be two different types of change. In one case it is that of a subject opening to change through a basketball game. In the other, it is that of an object getting crushed by a bus. Even as the body is there before and after the bus crushes it, the body is there before and after the basketball game. The difference between the two is that the subject opened himself to the latter, and was merely overcome by the former.

We have seen how conscience works at opening the spaces between one's self and his ends. 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. This was not the situation he thought he was going to find himself in. He may have been motivated to move toward a hot dog cart. He stepped from a curb and found himself in no situation at all. Not a happy ending. In both cases, however, we see the conscience in action.

Conscience has to do with self-change in two ways. In one, wanting to have a conscience means being open to a situation. In being open, things arise which had otherwise not appeared to be significant, for example when someone says "that book changed my world." In such cases, conscience calls one to come to terms with the world, and not to close off from it into one's own understanding. 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 through the exercise of his own unique understanding. Conscience calls one's self to his own unique future situation. Thus, being open to the world is being open to one's own future self.

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" one must understand the differences between himself and others and this depends on one understanding his situation.

In a recent article, William McKenna offers an analysis of inter-cultural objectivity to this end. His discussion begins with the notion that members of diverse cultures have an accordingly diverse understanding of the world. He notes that when an understanding is naively appropriated by individuals the differences lead to "bias." In order to overcome such biases, McKenna offers a notion, "situated objectivity," which "requires the participation in different cultures in order to be achieved."<sup>268</sup> 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."<sup>269</sup> 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 a part of a whole and biased. "Partial," in other words, can be employed both as adjective and as adverb. Thus, persons raised in the 20<sup>th</sup> century United States are "partial" to

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<sup>268</sup> McKenna, page 117.

<sup>269</sup> McKenna, page 115.

baseball and apple pie. It is natural to adopt these attitudes. “You do not question your perspective...”<sup>270</sup> This implies both that they have experience of baseball and apple pie rather than other things, like cricket and baklava, *and* that they favor these aspects of the world coincident with their experience over other things. 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 waking lives. This is the world seen subjectively.

The subject begins in the clearing of his culture. One begins hopeful about a future understood in terms his relations with those nearby, those he loves and who care for him. One 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. Raised in a given culture and measuring personal success in terms of its practices, a person naturally comes to value his partial understanding of the world. Partiality is not necessarily bigotry. Partiality is what one needs to know to get ahead.<sup>271</sup> One does what his partial understanding dictates to be the right thing to do at the right time to do it. McKenna calls this attitude “naïve.”

Just because one is partial to apple pie doesn’t mean that either partiality or apple pie are good things. Partiality may not be good at all, and some apple pie is bad. He must begin with what is given, and may live his entire life without

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<sup>270</sup> McKenna, page 112. This uncritical attitude over one’s inherited way of life which in translations of Husserl is called the “natural attitude.”

<sup>271</sup> Likewise, one often looks to his leaders in order to see success in the flesh. I shirk from speculating further on this point.

discovering more. However naively taken up, McKenna calls originally given ways of being in the world “cultural natural attitudes.”<sup>272</sup>

Partiality, so constituted, contributes to bias, the second, stronger sense of partiality pointed to above. McKenna reminds us that, naively, members of cultures take theirs not as *one* way of doing things, but as *the* way of doing things:

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 ...<sup>273</sup>

It is toward reconciling the bias between perspectives which see each other not merely as “different” but as “wrong” that McKenna develops his notion of “situated objectivity.” However, McKenna’s object, bridging biased positions through philosophy, is not new. Writing in 1919 for the veteran French of the First World War on the conflicts between men, Emile Boutroux notes that resolution 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.”<sup>274</sup> This substratum of beliefs is that clearing which must be discovered and defended. It is also the grounds through which contrary positions can be reconciled. How, though, is this substratum to be discovered?

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<sup>272</sup> 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.

<sup>273</sup> 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.

<sup>274</sup> Boutroux, page 67.

In McKenna's terms, bias, taking another's way of life to be "wrong," is tantamount to "scorn." On this basis, let me restate the problem. If the naïve natural attitude is the attitude through which everyone approaches difference, then there is no hope for the peaceful reconciliation between 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.<sup>275</sup>

McKenna's effort stands as a clear advance on Boutroux's in the 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,"<sup>276</sup> McKenna offers a method for overcoming the partiality and bias that make this impossible.<sup>277</sup> This is a phenomenological method.

Reconciling seemingly incommensurate perspectives is a basic problem in phenomenology. To reconcile differences seems to require that a single person take on two perspectives at once. But, where does this other perspective come from? What is there besides the naïve, natural attitude? How can anyone take

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<sup>275</sup> Boutroux, page 67. I will make a good deal of this sentiment as this section concludes, holding forth that the tradition is mistaken to presume subjectivity prior to objectivity, as if atoms to be bridged, instead of reading conscience as objective, with subjectivity a deviance from right, and so secondary to objectivity. I will lead us through some recent neurological research in order to cement this conviction, and so to provide a stable platform from which to launch the final sections of this text.

<sup>276</sup> Boutroux, page 65.

<sup>277</sup> 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.

another perspective than the one he has? What avenue of access is there to reach such a state? No matter the phenomenon under my purview, the view is from *where* if not from here? J.N. Mohanty writes: “Accordingly, a phenomenological philosopher has to face a paradox, a paradox that is involved in his very method.”<sup>278</sup> The phenomenologist has to take up one attitude, the natural attitude, only to transcend it, “to suspend belief” in order to “describe.” The goal 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 which is fundamentally subjectively understood.

For Mohanty, the answer seems 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.<sup>279</sup>

Mohanty sets out the role for the phenomenologist. His job is to report on the situation for an outside perspective as-if from the inside. He need not endorse any given situation in order to put himself in it, but he must communicate what it is to be in a situation to those who are not so situated. He need only put himself in any given situation, and report objectively on it. His job is to objectively tell the tale that is being subject to that situation. This is the phenomenological science of subjectivity.

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<sup>278</sup> Mohanty, 1970, page 102.

<sup>279</sup> Mohanty, 1970, page 102.

The idea here is that one phenomenological tale hooks up with all the others. In fact, we can state this even more strongly: the idea is that it is phenomenology which binds the 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.<sup>280</sup> So, it is ‘back to the presents 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 in which anyone can engage.

This is important because, though everyone is partial, most persons are not phenomenological philosophers. Mohanty’s suspension of the naïve attitude is impossible with the presumption that one’s partial understanding constitutes *the only* way of doing things. From this naïve starting point, it may seem that there is nothing more 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.)<sup>281</sup>

Here, McKenna makes obvious the limit experience imposes on what one takes to be the objective world. Note that the focus here is not culture. It is

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<sup>280</sup> And that means being open to the present and to the opportunities of the moment, as we saw in Heidegger.

<sup>281</sup> McKenna, page 112.

experience which hardens partiality into bias, whether this is reinforced in cultural terms or in terms of some other experience. The power of experience in shaping bias is most evident when one's experiences are extreme.

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. 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 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.<sup>282</sup>

It resists analyses because this world is the product of his 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 in which one has come to terms, the world in which one has come to live.

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<sup>282</sup> Feuer, page 389.

Everyone has a partial understanding, but Feuer is pointing to the force of experience in forming the attitude that one's own partiality is all there is to know. 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." This attitude is one which resists change and scorns its opposite. Where there is no such opposite, this attitude will find one. For instance, in every situation, whether there is good or evil present, the concentrationary understanding will look for it, and find it. It is the bipolarity of his experience which "puts" evil into a situation, at all. Here is partiality's claim to universality, and a perfect example of the active bias of partial understanding. What we see here is bias taken to be determinative of the objective world.<sup>283</sup>

The concentrationary man did not have to be raised in a polarized situation. 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 a naïve cultural attitude, Feuer points to the fact that bigotry can arise through polarizing experiences alone. It is anything but naïve. It is learned. The fruit of this education is that there is no space for the reconciliation of the poles of 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. If it can be learned, however, perhaps it can be unlearned. Let's find out how we may go about doing this.

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<sup>283</sup> We will look at life stories in the next section, wherein this polarizing attitude is extra dangerous.

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."<sup>284</sup> Each party of the world is the obstacle to each other party's aims. Each party thinks his is right, and the other's 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. "Our life world is the "objective world"; theirs is some subjective interpretation of it."<sup>285</sup>

The naïve 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 old laws in whose paternal wisdom others are better "subjectively" dead than "objectively" wrong.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> And two from Ariel Sharon, first in 1956: "I don't know something called International Principles. I vow that I'll burn every Palestinian child (that) will be born in this area. The Palestinian woman and child is more dangerous than the man, because the Palestinian child's existence infers that generations will go on, but the man causes limited danger. I vow that if I was just an Israeli civilian and I met a Palestinian I would burn him and I would make him suffer before killing him. With one strike I've killed 750 Palestinians... I wanted to encourage my soldiers by raping Arabic girls as the Palestinian woman is a slave for Jews, and we do whatever we want to her - and nobody tells us what we shall do - but we tell others what they shall do." And then this, in 2003: "As soon as Iraq is dealt with, I will push for Iran to be at the top of the 'to do' list." Posted April 26, 2006, at <http://planetmove.blogspot.com/>

<sup>285</sup> McKenna, page 117.

<sup>286</sup> Granted, this is an extreme attitude, but it begins as a natural byproduct of the partiality of one's own unique experiences. One's experiences begin in the clearing of his culture. He naturally wants to be successful in terms of this way of life. It is what one needs to know to get

McKenna's method in overcoming bias is "situated objectivity." Situated objectivity is a method of overcoming subjective bias by *requiring* the "participation" in "different perspectives in order to be achieved."<sup>287</sup> 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.

Consider the following brief example. Imagine that you are in a passenger plane and it crashes. You find yourself 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.

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. 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,

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ahead. Likewise, one often looks to the appointed leaders of his culture in order to see success in the flesh. I shirk from speculating further on this point.

<sup>287</sup> McKenna, page 117.

without an 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 just that. One must take up the situation of the other for himself, and not merely look on in curiosity. This means that one must engage with the objects of the other’s world in the ways in which the significance which the other attaches to these objects is revealed. This requires that an object is not seen to be either this or not, but that it may be many things. By way of this openness, one’s own experience is compared with that of others. In this way, one can check with the other to see that one is seeing things from the other’s point of view. Thereby, otherwise hidden aspects of the world are revealed.

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.<sup>288</sup>

What “situated objectivity” amounts to is putting one’s self in the other’s position, and then engaging the world as-if one were that other. The experience of this engagement leads to an understanding of the other’s situation. In opening to the other’s perspective, one is then able to come to terms with his situation as if it were one’s own. In this way, what is revealed is what the other sees in the objects of the world that oneself otherwise does not. This is more than just a field trip of the mind. This is not the mode of the tourist. This practice reveals

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<sup>288</sup> McKenna, page 118.

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 object in providing the grounds for the understanding. It is as if there are two sides to the object as the object reveals two sides to one's situation. One comes to see the world as-if the other through the medium of the object. This is possible because either party is situated in terms of the objective world. Thus, McKenna calls it "situated objectivity."

The object allows one to move from a perspective "outside" into 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, one comes to terms with the other's situation. 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, 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 the "inside" position of the other. The understanding that such an exercise generates clearly works toward overcoming bias by discovering the substratum of truth underlying differences. This substratum is found in common engagements with the objective world. With this in mind, McKenna's "situated objectivity" can be equally labeled "situated subjectivity."

What is explicitly shared in McKenna's method is the situation relative to some object. Something is left out of this account, however. Because human

beings are essentially the same, sharing a situation is being as-if another person. Implicitly, McKenna's view requires that each individual have a similar capacity to engage with objects before they ever come to see this or that engagement as the right thing to do and the right time to do it. This requires that a subject experience his engagement with the objects in the situation as the *right* one, not simply as a different one, or as a strange one. The value in the experience is that a subject comes to understand that his old way of doing things is not necessarily the *right* way. From this point of view, it is equally subjective.

What McKenna has shown us is a method for reconciling differences between persons of different, often conflicted naïve perspectives. Different persons come to terms with rocks differently from one another, and this reveals their differences. 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 positions 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 and inexperience.<sup>289</sup> Rocks simply stay the same. Through the sameness of the rock, what had appeared contradictory is now two sides of the same stone. One side up, one side down, one side mine, one side yours, one side discovered, one side covered over.

This 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

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<sup>289</sup> Conscience holds one system state of engagement against the other, and the difference is what it feels like to be in another culture.

world when these are exhibited by different persons relative the same objects. 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?

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 to others is one way in which persons appear to differ from rocks. Stones do not fall in love or take new jobs in Korea, for example. The living body is both the subject and object of change. It is subject to the experiences of which it is the object of change.

People appear to be different than rocks. 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. In order to be a good fullback, with leisure and opportunity a man will train himself to be a good fullback. Rocks do not change purposefully. 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?)<sup>290</sup>

How complete was the change from Saul and Paul? Let us review the story of Saul's conversion. Saul was a tentmaker and a thug employed by the Jewish authorities to round up or murder Jews who were converting to the

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<sup>290</sup> Ballard, page 111.

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.”<sup>291</sup>

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.”<sup>292</sup> Just prior to his departure, he had been a major proponent in the death of a Christian sympathizer named Stephen. This is a radical change. Was it self-determined self-change?

Recent information suggests that Saul may have been different than others. By this view, Saul didn’t change so much as demonstrate a difference which others did not. Saul may have been born sensitive to the effects of magnetic fields which are known to induce the same symptoms Saul reported. Saul was likely affected by a magnetic wave which propagated along the fault-line of an earthquake. In this case, his change is not an example of freedom through self-determination. He had this sensitivity long before he was caught by

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<sup>291</sup> *Acts*, 9.1 (New International).

<sup>292</sup> *Acts*, 9.3 (New International).

one on his road to Damascus.<sup>293</sup> In fact, the best evidence for this is that his companions were also affected, just not so much. Let me explain.

Religious experience is something that we human beings share. Commenting on the ubiquity of the experience, William James writes 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."<sup>294</sup> Neuroscientists have before and since worked towards understanding the universal physiological grounds for the human experience of God.<sup>295</sup> 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, is just one extreme.<sup>296</sup>

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 predictively and reliably reached through prepared mental exercise, such as meditation and

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<sup>293</sup> 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](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/features/stpaul/st_paul_script.html)

<sup>294</sup> James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, page 42.

<sup>295</sup> Descartes speculated that the pineal gland was structurally significant to the experience of God; and, although everyone has a pineal gland, he was wrong. In fact, there is now a branch of work dedicated to this task called "Neurotheology." Much of what follows is this field's fruit.

<sup>296</sup> 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.

prayer.<sup>297</sup> 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 and world, experiences which the subjects share, that they have in common.<sup>298</sup> The research reveals that the experience is not all that they share; 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.

Most importantly, the activation patterns of religious experience can be reliably induced through the controlled application of powerful magnetic fields.<sup>299</sup> The results when applied to different persons vary, however. Persons who are physiologically predisposed to religious experience have religious experiences induced via magnetic fields in the laboratory. This means that persons who have religious experiences in the everyday life have religious experiences in the laboratory. Others, less so.

Saul appears to have been physiologically prone to religious experience. Though there is no brain imaging data on Saul's experiences, there is other information which confirms this picture. V.S. Ramachandran explains that there is a certain personality which is consistent with a sensitivity to magnetic stimulus of religious experience:

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<sup>297</sup> Newberg, 2001, page 147

<sup>298</sup> 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.

<sup>299</sup> An interesting starting place with much research: <http://www.innerworlds.50megs.com/>

...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.<sup>300</sup>

After his experience, his closed mindedness to those he had persecuted ended. He stopped excluding people through the biases of old laws, and discovered an absolute openness to others. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."<sup>301</sup> 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 tolerance instead of an equally rigid champion of intolerance. His change is evidenced in his relationship with the objects of his world before and after his experience.

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 objective world for Saul before his experience. He lived by the terms of the law as-if it were the way the world were supposed to be, and imposed those terms on others, forcing them to do the same or to suffer. These others were not simply different, they were wrong by these standards. Where before Saul enforced the law, after his experience he denied it. "Now that faith

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<sup>300</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/paul\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/paul_1.shtml) (last accessed September, 2006.)

<sup>301</sup> *Galatians*, 3.28 (New International Version).

has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”<sup>302</sup> In the space of Saul’s life, he embodied two positions which are 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. This is a radical change.

Saul did not change, completely. He still understood himself as-if he had a lock on what the objective world “really is.” What had changed is that *this* objective world is opposite the one he began with. One is a world of rigid law and retribution, one is a world of tolerance and love. Saul’s objective world is not the real world for Paul. Saul’s world is closed to the new situation, the new Way that is Christianity, while Paul’s is open. Saul and Paul both, however, take their characteristic modes to be those which suit the objective world by one of the determinations. Saul did not change, completely. Saul was intolerant of tolerance. Paul was intolerant of intolerance. Some things about Saul remained the same.<sup>303</sup>

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 reject. That way was not the right way to live. 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. In the following passage, Paul identifies with a religious persecutor

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<sup>302</sup> *Galatians*, 3.25 (New International Version).

<sup>303</sup> I am thinking of Saul’s conversion as a concentrationary experience which blinds Saul with a o/o state which itself relaxes back to an habitual c/o and then c/c state through the course of Saul’s life, though 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 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."<sup>304</sup>

It appears that McKenna's situated objectivity does hold as a method for understanding changes in one's self. Saul took the other to be in his own situation.<sup>305</sup> 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 reported a "sound." The animals may not have been affected. Neither were the persons far away from the event. Saul's change was unique, and uniquely mediated by his own unique body. His body is the object which mediated the difference between the two positions.

Saul's relationship with himself changed, but everyone else stayed pretty much the same. For instance, the Jewish authorities in Damascus went from waiting for his help to wanting to have him killed. They did not change. What did change was that Saul all of a sudden exemplified the power of conversion to the new Way of Christianity. This is the objective significance of his subjective experience. He who was once a violent authoritarian was all of a sudden

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<sup>304</sup> *Acts*, 13.9 (New International Version).

<sup>305</sup> o/c.

preaching tolerance and forgiveness with equal authority. This is 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 laws, two sides to the same rock. 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 was the change from Saul to Paul?

If the science is right, 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.<sup>306</sup> 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, 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 on 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

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<sup>306</sup> If magnetic pulses propagate from earthquakes and some populations have member 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.

be objectively the wrong way of life after his experience. This is an expression of radical change.

Was it self-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. Did Saul change himself on the basis of this evidence? It may appear as-if he discovered the kingdom of heaven, and through his dramatic change in perspective he merely pointed to it. Yet, this is already what he was doing, he merely began pointing to a radically different kingdom of heaven. 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 underbelly 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 the issue out.

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 there is room for a person to change radically. In situations different enough, one's very identity comes into question. Oedipus went from King to madman in an afternoon. The physical position of his body did not change, but his situation did, and his life was turned upside down. Even with his eyes torn out, his body was the same. 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. Oedipus, subject to the blind mechanisms of the objective world, object of self-change, appears to be two men at once. It is the difference between these two perspectives which drives him mad. His irony is that he lives, from the subjective versus the objective perspectives, two incommensurate life stories.<sup>307</sup>

In tragedy, however, there is hope. On the basis of the body, it is possible to live 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 man's freedom through self-determination. But, it isn't easy; there is no pill for freedom. Freedom for self-determination is limited by understanding, and we have seen that gaining understanding is hard work, stressful, and even risky.

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<sup>307</sup> I will remind the reader of the first section, wherein conscience is defined as that capacity which opens the space between situations, and point to the relevance in this context as capturing the sense of one's entire life.

Self-determination is nothing other than discovering for one's self the meaning of life, and only then doing something about it.

## 12. Conscience, and freedom.

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 James<sup>308</sup>

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. Every person begins life subject to the world, and makes his own life his own object. Every person begins life in subjective uncertainty, and moves through life in discovery of himself 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. As this text winds up, we will come to understand the limits of our powers to affect what we take to be the right thing to do and the right time to do it.

In life, one wishes to see better and to plot his course toward that man ahead he wishes to become. I held this possibility out as a special capacity of conscience many pages ago. We have come across pieces of advice on how to reach this goal through our discussions since. Socrates taught us about

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<sup>308</sup> *Energies of Men*, page 331.

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 our own deaths. 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 came to live in terms of another world, altogether. He is still esteemed as a singular example of the Christian object, a rock converted to a mode of tolerance. Through his change, Saul demonstrates a way of life whose object is that conversion even though he is not responsible for this change himself. 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. His example does show that our bodies make it possible to be situated in two seemingly contrary objective worlds. His example thus shows that conversion is possible. The trick now is in figuring out how it is that we have some freedom to choose our own. We will find it in another object of the meaningful life, the life story. Our freedom lies in our determination of what makes for a happy ending.

All the discourse and drama as one seeks one's highest calling is 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 story from that perspective, he would not have chosen to write the story he actually lived out. 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 possible for others. His example just doesn't show that this man determined these changes for himself.

What we shall come to in this section is a possibility for writing the story of one's own radical conversion. I will present a view which locates the freedom of self-determination in the choice of ends towards which one strives in his life time. For example, one is able to live for ends which he will never in his life time realize. The silent heroes in every story are those who lived and died for the ends of the story, not to be the hero at the story's end. This does not mean that happy endings do 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. It means that a man is free to live, in love, for another's happy ending if not for his own. But this freedom is difficult to see clearly, and requires some convincing for most to take as ends worthy of serious consideration.

In this section and the next, we will come to terms with the role of conscience in providing for a special human freedom, the power of self-

determination.<sup>309</sup> In the end, the capacity to determine for one's self those ends in terms of which he lives his life is a freedom to live as-if in another world. This power to become a member of a just world as opposed to an unjust one I will call a power of *redemption*. In opening one's self to the world to meet the terms of the moment, one can be redeemed. One can live as-if a citizen bound by the terms of a just world, as if justice were his cultural attitude and his way of life a demonstration in how to engage with common objects justly.<sup>310</sup>

Granted that this world is not a just world, to live as if it is imposes radical changes in the course of a man's life. In aspiring to meet the terms of the just situation, one invites self-change which suits that end. Slowly, as these changes take effect, one's course in life changes. In order to change courses, however, one must first have an end in sight. Let's begin with how this first point comes to be established.

Plotting one's course is a component of writing a life's story. Writing a life story is emplotting one's self in terms of the objects of the world.<sup>311</sup> "Emplotting" is a process of making the intelligible out of the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary from the episodic."<sup>312</sup> Having a life's story is the difference between meaningful life and a series of random disjunctions. "The

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<sup>309</sup> The trouble, for most people, will be that this power is only effective through the lived life. There is no pill one can take to be a just man, a good man, or whatever man he wants to be. Freedom doesn't come in a bottle.

<sup>310</sup> Yes, there is a difference as we shall see. Acts which get rewarded in a just world get you crucified in this one, for example, but there are other costs as well.

<sup>311</sup> See Christoff 2005 for research to the effect that persons are bound by experience in what directs spontaneous thought. That is, even "free" movements proceed on the basis of prior determinations. Even at rest, it is hard to see a happy ending if you've never seen a happy ending before.

<sup>312</sup> Mann, xvi.

function of narrative is to artificially order discordant experience by emplotting it.”<sup>313</sup>

It is through narrative that individual experiences hang together. Unless they are arranged by way of some global structure like a strand of narrative, there is merely a series of causes and effects, either without any necessarily significant relationship with one another.<sup>314</sup> 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.<sup>315</sup> 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.<sup>316</sup> One’s cultural attitudes prescribe what is the right thing to do and the right time to

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<sup>313</sup> Mann, 12. If the reader expects that this makes emplotment sound like living a life of fiction, I wish to refer him 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.

<sup>314</sup> I am thinking of the *Sound and the Fury*.

<sup>315</sup> Consider the classic experiment wherein kittens are raised in rooms wallpapered solely in a parallel bar pattern. Once the visual system prunes for optimal performance in that limited environment, the kittens fail to recognize parallel bar patterns perpendicular to the original. They literally bump their heads on objects arranged in such patterns, literally unable to see them there to avoid them at all.

<sup>316</sup> At no time in life is the pressure greater to discover one’s own story for one’s self than in youth. Especially in adolescence. See A. White, forthcoming. Herein, one takes his situation for his own, for the first time. It is not merely the objects of the world which are his or not, it is the world itself. It is one’s own life. It is no longer “ours.” And it is never too late to change. I remember. Imagine a boy in a room 20 years ago, and then recount how he got here. That is the story of my life. But it is not yet my life’s story. Not yet. I have not seen many happy endings. Still, let’s see if we can’t whip one up, anyways.

do it. Emplotted accordingly, a life story is, if nothing else, 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 reductionist story iterating some series of events. I mean myth, drama, comedy and tragedy. These are all products 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 their shared situation. To be enculturated is to have one's own story interwoven with others', and all of these together form one broad-cloth spun out over generations.<sup>317</sup>

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 life story, as "who one is and what one will do will be determined by the story one sees oneself a part of."<sup>318</sup> 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.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> The strength of a nation, thus, is the strength of this flag. The material thing has no significance of its own if it does not represent this fact of lives lived in and for one another, lives lived in common.

<sup>318</sup> Mann, 84

<sup>319</sup> Mann, Introduction, vii.

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 life 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 wishes to live even before he begins to live it.

Mann's problem with traditional narratives is structural. If one assumes a certain life story type, one assumes a way of life which makes that story type work. This goes for any narrative structure so long as a certain structure is presumed to be sufficient for the employment of all pro-social ways of life. Mann's primary concern is that much of life is undervalued by the presumptions of traditional narrative structures. This structure pressures against certain ways of life 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.<sup>320</sup>

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. This encourages certain modes of engagement with the world and discourages others. What this means is that how one thinks about stories imposes terms on how one thinks about his own life story. What this

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<sup>320</sup> Mann, 55.

means is that how one thinks about stories influences how one lives his life. This implies that how one thinks about life stories imposes terms on what one takes to be the right thing to do and the right times to do it. This leads to the biggest problem, that how one thinks about stories imposes terms on what one takes to be the right life to live, and the right ends to live for.

Mann's concern is of the latter scope. The problem is that certain happy endings are selected against by way of the traditional narrative standard. This means that, not just any ways of life, but ways of life which are *good* are denied value by this old standard. 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."<sup>321</sup>

Traditionally, 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 his life's projects. My favorite example is *The Count of Monte Cristo*.<sup>322</sup> 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 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's own life story. In *the Count of Monte Cristo*, Edmund Dantes' ultimate end is the restoration of the situation in

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<sup>321</sup> Mann, 59.

<sup>322</sup> Thanks to Eddie Adelstein for the suggestion.

life which was unjustly stolen from him. He begins a newly appointed ship's captain and on the basis 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 a 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. It is still his story, and its tale is the transition from loss to redemption.

The tale is told in terms of Dante's distance from his ultimate aim. His love, his home, his life. It is 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. Gratefully, so the story goes, he succeeds in living it happily.

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.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Though I use fairy tale examples, this presumption of the traditional narrative structure exerts forces in an everyday way. The sentiment encouraging this life story is 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, just as one's self never does. Whether or not this is deserved is beside the point. That there is evil in the world is a given on this perspective, and that is a dangerous presumption.

The structure of the story prescribes what is the right thing to do and the right time to do it. To live this life story requires that one find evil, that one seek gold, and that one rescue a woman who, it is presumed, is cruelly mistreated in a hostile world already full of evil men and monsters. This is the traditional story of a hero with a happy ending. It tells us to find evil, destroy it, and to take what we want for ourselves.

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 evaluated as already good or bad by a narrative structure which is not freely self-determined?

This is where others become so integral in exerting the formal narrative pressure which Mann warns about. If one fails to find and kill the evil man, 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 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 does not follow the rules, his capacity to live a coherent life story is brought into question.

Subjects are intelligible according to narrative structures in which they and others reside. That is to say that "intelligible" persons live consistently in terms already routinely socially significant. "Intelligible" subjects are the effects of rule

based signifying practices and these rules operate through repetition.”<sup>324</sup> Think of the traditional narrative structure. Within the given narrative, 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 when he says “ogre” and runs. He is unintelligible when he says “ogre” and then tries to reason with the “ogre.”<sup>325</sup> This engagement is not only unconventional. It is essentially impossible. Ogres, after all, do not reason. Trying to talk with an ogre is simply the wrong thing to do, and while he is alive it is the wrong time to do it.

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 pressures 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 man’s life.<sup>326</sup>

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. For example, if there were no such

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<sup>324</sup> Mann, 27.

<sup>325</sup> As a rule, ogres are incapable of reason.

<sup>326</sup> Fairy tales have become 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!

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. I will leave it as a given that no one wishes to identify himself as a "failure."

The pressure which 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, one is successful if he saves the damsel, a failure if he lives the lonely life of a selfless philosopher. This is all well and good if the narrative structure in place 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 when the damsel needs saving. It is not clear, however, that traditional narratives sufficiently provide for all contexts in which the question of the right thing to do arises.

Mann's criticism is that this 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 one 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.<sup>327</sup> There need to be other lives lived for other things, too. Many times life is peaceful and filled with family and community. What then?

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? What narrative structure provides for doing the right thing when that doesn't mean finding an evil man with gold and damsels to kill, steal, and rescue? Mann faults the traditional structure for failing to account for those narratives. 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.<sup>328</sup> In fact, such a narrative may not come in

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<sup>327</sup> Her criticism is that it is insufficient to accommodate typically feminine stories. She argues that traditional structures are "psychologically repressive." I agree. I have dropped the qualifier "feminist" as I see no reason why the point doesn't hold, generally. Although, if one must be essentialist, there is good evidence for physiological grounds for generalized differences in storyboard preference, though I shall not review this research here.

<sup>328</sup> A term of opportunity with which this text shall close.

terms of a single thread at all, but may consist in multiple narratives, and altogether by some narrative standards not consist as a “story.”

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.

The scope of this analyses 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 place toward only what all present could consign 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.<sup>329</sup> 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 the focus of which 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

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<sup>329</sup> For instance, at a local level, to read the story of a selfless mother is to read the story of her children and home.

the stories of men off on their own. These are the stories of communities, told by way of its members.

By Mann's thesis, one's life narrative is not necessarily bound within the horizons of one's own personal projects. One's life narrative is bound within the horizons of one's society. "[The] emphasis is less on individuality and more on community; that is to say, there is identification through relationship rather than through individuation."<sup>330</sup> On Mann's view, I do not live my life story, we 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 there is no evil it is not that things are good, it is that something is missing!<sup>331</sup>

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 pressure to kill ogres, to sleep on peas, and seek the grail. Not literally.

That does not mean that these narrative expectations are inactive. The critical issue here is that there is pressure to think of one's life in a way which finds ogres, and peas, 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.

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<sup>330</sup> Mann, 59.

<sup>331</sup> I cannot stress this point enough. Recall the discussion on the concentrationary universe last section.

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 one will do the same. The others exert pressure through the presumption that the common tale of life will be in every man repeated. Some may meet the terms of the happy ending, others will fail, but this is beside the point. Each man is held to this standard. Each life story, thus, is a repeat of the last at least in terms of its structure. To deviate is to risk unintelligibility. To deviate is to risk membership in the community. This is to risk isolation, alienation, loneliness, and the anxiety of self-responsibility. Deviation is still an option, however uncomfortable. At best, the pressures to conform are inter-subjective. These intersubjective pressures are not objective forces. There is still room in the world to do otherwise. 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.

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 man's life.

For Socrates, as discussed in depth earlier, his end, his aim, is a just world. He lives as-if on 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. Talking innocently as if in a just world, Socrates is targeted by power hungry sophists, professors of wisdom and would be leaders of Athens. 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 way of life while he lived it. He may yet be able, however, to fulfill this 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.

### 13. Conscience, and the just life.

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."<sup>332</sup>

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 embodied situation.<sup>333</sup>

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, 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 the same things in the same ways at similar times. On top of this, one and another can try to talk out their differences.

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<sup>332</sup> *Philebus*, 48d.

<sup>333</sup> 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 object 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.

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, traditional hero or not, in every situation the body is common:

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.<sup>334</sup>

Our bodies show up every place we go. No matter who we care for, whose terms we try to meet, whose lives we place above our own, how radically we change or what object we fumble over, it is our bodies which appear at either end of change.<sup>335</sup> One's narrative, no matter how diverse, threads through the single body. 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.

The body is situated in terms of objects, aims and obstacles. 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 some traditional narrative structure: "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."<sup>336</sup> It is in this choice that one comes to see himself the way that he does. It is in this choice that one comes to see actions as right or

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<sup>334</sup> Mann, 59.

<sup>335</sup> Again, as hers is a feminist critique, this speaks of the cultural dominance of the male embodiment even in terms of what one expects of their own life stories.

<sup>336</sup> Mann, 16.

wrong. It is in this choice wherein one is free to become otherwise than he is.

Earlier, we saw how one's self arises in terms of differences from others.<sup>337</sup> We have also seen how objects serve to mediate these differences. We have seen how one's life story is such an object. What we are beginning to see here is the direct influence of language on this process. 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 it. Repetitive signification is what makes language more than a bunch of random sounds. Accordingly, repetition also grounds narrative. Repetition thus grounds any talk of writing a life's story.

Though there is no life story in a random series of words, one need not merely repeat whatever terms to which one has come through enculturation. One may open himself to previously unthought determinations by opening himself to a world outside of repetition. One may open himself to new evaluations of the significance of objects in his world. This includes opening one's self to the significance of his own body as a vehicle for change. One can do otherwise. One can become otherwise. One need not merely repeat in talk and in life the evaluations of the objects of the world which had been handed down to him, or given over by others, or to which he had come in prior experience. This result opens a view on a special human freedom: "agency," then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition... it is

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<sup>337</sup> Most recently in the section on Heidegger.

only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible.”<sup>338</sup>

One can determine for himself the situation by way of which his everyday actions are evaluated. If one opens to the world, he will change. He will have done so of his own initiative. Instead of going with what is given, with what they say or with what they say that God says, one can open himself to alternatives. Instead of closing off into one’s own 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. If one opens to the world, he can rediscover his place in it rather than going through life on the basis of a map to a magic end drawn by generations past.

What then does stand for a good life story? Once we have freed ourselves from pressures implicit in prior determinations, it is up to us. Our story is ours to write. Its ends our terms to meet, ourselves at every end to meet again and again, in every new moment, so determined as we move into the future. “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.”<sup>339</sup>

As we have seen, our bodies allow for radical change in the course of a single life. We have seen that this radical change is within our power to initiate. All that is left now 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

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<sup>338</sup> Mann, quoting Judith Butler, 27.

<sup>339</sup> Mann, page 28.

those of the body. Freed from the inter-subjective constraints of conventional determinations of the good life, one is free to live life by other terms. One is free to seek other ends, but here again is a limit. This limit is one's understanding of the objective situation. This limit is one's understanding of what is universally good. This is a short limit. If one goes out on a limb, with a partial understanding of the way the world works, he risks his life. At least in the old narratives there is some record of success. If not in terms of the tradition, where does one look for orientation toward the right ends?

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).<sup>340</sup>

What differs between persons is the understanding which is brought to bear from either perspective.

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. 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 situations that one comes to understand his place in the world. If one comes to terms solely with the determinations of other persons, then one's situation is determined inter-subjectively. This situation is

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<sup>340</sup> Atkins, 2004, page 345

defined by partiality, and even bias. The understanding which such sensitivity produces is a 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. The problem is: how does one come to understand that this is the case?

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. Hereby, it is clear that the second step to doing the right thing at the right time is recognizing the opportunity to do so when it arises. The first step is to maximize one's capacity to recognize opportunities before they arise by becoming practically wise. To this end, 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. As one accumulates this experience over the course of a life, one comes to see what is universal in all human 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.<sup>341</sup>

In being open to the terms of the moment, one lets things be seen rather than to see what prior understanding reveals.<sup>342</sup> One lets what he engages in action stand for itself, rather than stand as some extension of some prior understanding.<sup>343</sup> For example, imagine walking over a steaming grate on a big city sidewalk in the winter. Homeless men huddle over garbage cans. The heat from the grate is comforting, even for a lonely philosopher on a short walk between strange pubs. Subjectively, this brief bath is mere color of the world reminding him of the cozy stool inside. Objectively, heat is life or death for an even lonelier man. Objectively, this heat is what it takes to see another dawn

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<sup>341</sup>For all appearances otherwise, the human situation is always nestled inside an envelope of natural order. We shall make much of this in the next section. For now, it is important to understand that the mode of being open which is 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.

<sup>342</sup>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." This text, pages 154-5.

<sup>343</sup>"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.

whether the night is spent inside or out. 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 a street grate, one understands something objectively new about his own situation. He may also understand something subjectively new about the other's situation. Experiencing this difference, a man's world comes to hold others within it. Experiencing this difference, a man comes to be concerned. His situation comes to include others, and 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 universal to all human beings. This understanding is practical for 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 its standard. Whether there is a heaven or a hell is secondary. What is important is that this situation is that toward which one aims in life. Meeting these terms is the motivation for actions as a man moves from moment to moment. With an understanding of what it is to be all men in all places and at all times, the practically wise man is able to hold himself to life as if in another world and to aspire to meet its terms. This is the work of the conscience.

Even as conscience works at disclosing the situation, conscience motivates according to one's capacities to meet the terms of the situations held up for comparison. In the practical experience of having come to terms with

many situations, one is able to recognize opportunities in situations as they arise. But there is still more to it than that. With an understanding of what is universal to all human beings comes an understanding of what is necessary in every situation so that any man may live a life with opportunity in it.<sup>344</sup> With an understanding of what is universal in every situation comes the picture of a world wherein all persons are held to universal standards of evaluation of action. Conscience motivates toward the realization of this common end. In terms of this end, a man may live a just life. Otherwise, his life is lived for the sake of less.

Being open to the world is not a passive mode of being. It actively seeks indications of disorder in the world. 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.”

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 of the issue.<sup>345</sup> In opening to both

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<sup>344</sup> The good life.

<sup>345</sup> 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

sides at once, he came to new determinations of the shared situation. These new determinations he expressed in new uses for old words. 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 the space of a jail cell. Through his understanding, he opened this end as an end, a “promised land,” even though he would never come to stand in it.

In the next section, we shall put the tools of conscience which we have collected to the test in creating for ourselves the vision of a better world towards which to aim in life. We will put the potato game, and Diogenes’ bathtub, and the ACTWith model all to use in the conscientious construction of a promised land of our own. For the moment, I wish to remark briefly on the Socratic example of conscience, and the role of irony in the development of practical wisdom.

In the final movement of Socrates’ life as detailed in Plato’s dialogue *the Crito*, we also find Socrates in a cell. He too is forced to reconcile a certain tension. He is the most just man in Athens, but he is to be executed for corruption.

As he waits for his death, Socrates puts forward a certain challenge. He awaits execution, and his 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

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untenable and to at once provide an alternative interpretation without such conflict. This is basic reconciliation, by my view.

right for a man to break the laws of Athens 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. Crito cannot tell.

According to Socrates' analyses, in escaping he would offend Athens in three ways. For one, 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. To disobey the laws of Athens at the end of his life would be to disrespect his parents, and their way of life. In fact, Socrates' life speaks against such an option. He was "the most constant resident in the city," leaving Athens only once in his life besides those times he had been sent away on military service.

For another thing, Socrates owes Athens the debt of his own education. This is the culture into which his own life story is threaded, and he has made no moves to unthread himself from its history. In fact, his life speaks against this option. He has lived his life in discourse with the people of Athens, purposefully integrating his own story into the unfolding story of the city. It is in fact this work which lands him in jail. To escape would be to begin a thread of life anew, apart from his prior integration, and at his age this narrative promises to be very short. There will be no rethreading of his narrative into those of another city. For Socrates to escape is for Socrates to die alone, and for nothing but a momentary freedom from the very social responsibility for which he had always already lived.

Finally, in all of this, he failed to convince the people of Athens that the laws should be changed before his sentence. He had a lifetime to do so, and had stood up for the laws at other times in his life. Socrates was a champion of and not an enemy to a justly ordered city, and laws play a critical role in these constructions. Socrates does not take the lawful order of the city lightly, and failed to alter this order before his hour of need. So, he lived as he always had, by the law.<sup>346</sup>

It is in terms of this order which he finally judges himself as he speaks to Crito. Taking up the perspective of the laws he would be breaking, Socrates finds no motivation for escape. Taking up the third-person perspective, he sees himself as any other citizen, and judges his escape accordingly. He takes the laws of Athens for his own, even as these mean his death. Though he understands that his situation is an unjust one, these are the laws. Though he would like to be convinced that escape is the right thing to do, he reconciles these competing points of view. Holding this objective perspective on par with Crito's own subjective perspective, Socrates cannot escape. Working to ensure that Athens was a just city was the purpose of Socrates' life. 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. That the laws themselves have led 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.

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<sup>346</sup> Though, he did not always do as authorities directed.

Socrates is the vehicle for this realization. He is the object by way of which Athens' perspective will change.<sup>347</sup>

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" and "wrapped in a goatskin or some other disguise, and metamorphosed as the fashion of runaways is."<sup>348</sup> 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."<sup>349</sup> By Socrates' treatment, even the laws of Athens recognize their own failure to serve justice on Earth, and recommend a higher court. Even at the end, Socrates sees himself in terms of a just world, and lives to its standards, not those of the world of corrupt Athens.

For Socrates, it is his 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. It is this sense which also denies a confession of wrongdoing which would have spared his life. It is also his integrity which denies the use of his children as a tool to gain sympathy from the jurors. It is this same sense of integrity which he then finds deficient in the city, and especially in its judges. He does not beg for his life. He does not offer to quit philosophy. 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

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<sup>347</sup> And, it does.

<sup>348</sup> *Crito*, 53d.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong - acting the part of a good man or of a bad.”<sup>350</sup>

Finally, the Socratic example can be seen clearly as a mode of conscience. 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 worshipping false gods, charges brought against him by Anytus and Meletus and others. In the Platonic dialogue, *the Apology*, his trial is detailed.

Socrates understands 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.<sup>351</sup>

Socrates is the kind of man who turns over rocks, discovers new things, and shows others how to do the same. He finds a man who professes to wisdom, and he “interrogate[s] and examine[s] and cross-examine[s] him.”<sup>352</sup> If the 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. To those professors of wisdom who are in fact not wise, Socrates confesses to reproaching “him with undervaluing the greater, and overvaluing the less.”<sup>353</sup> Socrates is the kind of man who shows others that their understanding of the world is partial, prejudicial, or biased. He pursues this work actively. Socrates takes this to be the

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<sup>350</sup> *Apology*, 28d.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid*, 19c.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid*, 29d.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid*, 29d-30a.

“philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men.”<sup>354</sup> He does this not in order to corrupt men, but to lead them to become the best men they can be.

This means searching out practical wisdom, and the testing of the professed wisdom of others. This is the philosopher's mission, on Socrates' understanding. This is how he understands his own experience, from his own point of view:

...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!<sup>355</sup>

Against this characterization, Socrates does not so much offer a defense as he does an explanation 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 just, each shall consider his words on the basis of common experience and he shall be acquitted.<sup>356</sup>

Socrates 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

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<sup>354</sup> *Apology*, 28d-29a.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid*, 23c-d.

<sup>356</sup> 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?

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.<sup>357</sup>

Instead of seeking influence through persuasive rhetoric and politics, Socrates confronts “pretenders to wisdom” and compels others to speak constantly of virtue and justice. He does not charge for his philosophic work, and greets everyone equally. He takes this to be his role as dictated by the guiding inner voice which motivates him to seek his highest potential, wisdom. His philosophy is not, as was that of the sophists, intended to corrupt persons to seek their own wealth and luxury over that of others. In fact, he rejects these things as any kind of real wealth at all. For Socrates, the health of the city is measured by the justice of its members. Tragically, for all his efforts, it is a city in denial of its injustice which puts him to death. It is the men of the jury who fear a Socratic interview by Socrates’ estimation. It is this fear of being brought before themselves which leads them to Socrates’ death penalty, not the charges against Socrates, themselves.

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 men 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,

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<sup>357</sup> *Apology*, 31d.

but to be improving yourselves.<sup>358</sup>

Tragically, being open to their potential, understanding and living justly, is the last thing these judges wished. Socrates has his life stolen for being a conscientious man. He was murdered for the vices of these men, that they should keep them hidden. These men would rather sleep in their own worlds alone than bear the burden of caring for a shared world awake. Let us not become these men, but become like Socrates instead:

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.<sup>359</sup>

In the next section, 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.

There is still one more aspect of the Socratic example which deserves mention, however. Socrates is famous for many things, one of which is "Socratic irony." Often, Socratic irony is taken to be merely that the wisest man in Athens confesses to knowing nothing. However, there is much more than this to irony by the Socratic example.

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<sup>358</sup> *Apology*, 39d.

<sup>359</sup> King, *Letter...*, page 3.

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. Objectively, the world is ordered such that, from this perspective, for all of the subject's efforts, he will be led only to fail. From the objective perspective, with enough distance, the turn of events is comical. From the subject's perspective, it is tragic. Irony is these two together, bound in the same person.

Socratic irony is of the greatest possible scope. For example, it is ironic that a man's girlfriend ends up sleeping in a van with a listless hippy just when that man needs her support most. It approaches Socratic irony when that man provides for her vacation, outfitting her with necessary equipment so that her life may be a success, only to have his own fail because of a taste or listless hippies, something which had lain hidden to this point. With enough distance, it is funny that these things happen. For at least one of the persons involved, the picture is less pleasant. Something is very wrong, here.

Socratic irony, on the other hand, captures the sense that *everything* about one's situation is out of place. It is not simply that one's lover isn't where she is supposed to be. It is that nothing about the subjective and the objective perspectives match up. Socrates is not on trial for some aspect of his life. He is not confronted by the loss of his left arm. He is confronted with the loss of his life. He is not confronted with lost time. He is confronted with lost significance.

He is confronted with a meaningless, fruitless life. He confronted with the possibility that his life may be null. Nothing is what will come of him.

Where does Socrates find room to understand the contradictions between the third-person and the first-person perspective on himself? He finds room in the just world, where he looks forward to meeting just judges of character, and not corrupt judges as those of Athens' juries. He does not fall to meaninglessness but dies with meaning. He is able to take a perspective which makes sense of his own subjective understanding of his life's work and that of the others in Athens. It is this perspective which makes sense of the irony he suffers: the most just man executed for corruption. It is from this perspective that we will approach the final section of this text.

Socrates and Plato provide clues that irony plays a very special role in the development of wisdom. Famously, as the Platonic dialogue *the Symposium* closes, Socrates is telling his half-sleeping friends that the artist who appreciates comedy must also tragedy and vice versa. He does not tell us why, but in irony it is obvious. It is in the reconciliation of the subjective and objective perspectives that either arise to consciousness at all. It is in the reconciliation of these two aspects of one's self that he comes to understand the situation, his own and others. It is in the reconciliation of the greatest scope of these two aspects of one's self that he comes to the greatest understanding of the differences between the way persons think of the world, and the way that the world objectively has proven. Irony, thus, is productive of wisdom.

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 which happens when a subject does his best and 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?<sup>360</sup> It seems as senseless as a man asking the heavens why he must suffer so, while at once expecting a man to answer him. 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.

One last note. I have spoken off and again about turbulence, chaos, disorder. Irony is of this family, its disorder existing in the fact that two irreconcilable poles are brought together in a single human being. It is superimposition 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 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.

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<sup>360</sup> I am thinking of the farmer's plot in *Emil*.

Remember Oedipus. Irony calls into question his entire being. Irony is 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.

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 with a chosen end. Choosing well is hard work. It is the work of conscience, work which will open our next and final section. 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.

## 14. Conscience, and the end of the world.

That, if one truly wants to succeed in leading a person to a certain place, one should first and foremost take care to find him where he is, and start there.

-- Kierkegaard<sup>361</sup>

He who possesses virtue in abundance may be compared to an infant.

-- Lao Tzu<sup>362</sup>

Did any obstacle oppose you in your effort towards an object? If indeed you were making this effort without any reservation, this obstacle is at once injurious to you as a reasonable being. But if you take into consideration the common lot, you are not yet hurt nor humiliated.

-- Marcus Aurelius<sup>363</sup>

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, on's and off's, true's and false's. 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.

Persons do not type 1's and 0's into computers to get them to do these things, however. Persons do not speak machine language. 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.<sup>364</sup> 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 it would take way too long to enter the information in this way.

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<sup>361</sup> Quoted in Lovlie, page 339.

<sup>362</sup> Lao Tzu, *The Book of the Way*, passage 55, sentence 1.

<sup>363</sup> As translated in Samburskey, page 115.

<sup>364</sup> That is, until things quit working.

The 1's and 0's are electrical pulses, or the lack thereof. Where the natural languages of humans consist of waves of sound and gestures and postures of body in complex contexts, computers speak in terms of switches opening and closing, thereby permitting or denying the movement of electricity through a circuit. A computer is a set of switches arranged in ways which turn input electrical pulses into output electrical pulses. The input is given in human terms, converted to electrical pulses which are represented as 1's and 0's (computer terms), operated on, then output again in human terms. The circuit begins and ends with a person. What happens inside the box is only a means to these ends.

A person does not see the logic at work in the 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 billions and billions of openings and closings, billions and billions of little electrons, for any human sense that anything has happened, at all. It takes this much opening and closing to make a set of switches into information significant to the human being. This makes communication between persons and computers difficult. This is where computer programming becomes so important. This is where logic becomes so important. Logicians and programmers order pulses of electrons in ways that do work for people. They make the computer meet the terms of the person. They make 1's and 0's get things done.

The computer processes a series of 1's and 0's as a series of open's and closed's. A switch is either open or closed; there is electricity in the circuit or there is not. With enough circuits arranged in the right ways, opening and closing rapidly enough, computers output virtual environments. Virtual environments are full of representations of everyday objects which are maintained in patterns of electrical pulses. These patterns of pulses, when either on or off, indicate that there is some thing in the virtual environment, or there is not. The patterns of pulses are insignificant to humans, directly, but the computer turns these into the objects of the virtual environment.

Persons increasingly live their lives in terms of virtual worlds which are designed by computer programmers. For the most part, programmers recreate natural environments. For example, when the virtual basketball floats to the virtual basket in the virtual world, the trajectory which the virtual basketball follows is designed to mirror that trajectory which a real basketball follows. The evidence for this is the realism imparted to the image as it flashes across the screen.

This realism is evident to everyone within the virtual environment, whether that person is Chinese or Spanish. Real basketballs behave the same in every culture because everyone is bound by the same laws of nature. Virtual environments reflect this fact. In the natural environment, human metabolism projects the ball and gravity and friction pull it down. In the virtual environment, there are series of switches opening and closing in ways which lead to pixels firing and falling dim. Millions upon millions light up and irradiate the optic nerve

of the person in the game. This turns patterns of electrical pulses into sight. Virtual environments are realistic when what the player sees in that world matches what the player comes to expect of the other.

Moreover, because of the realism, persons from across the globe can share in these environments. A Chinese man in Hong Kong can play basketball with a Spanish man in New York. There is no potential for this to happen in the natural world. Because of the realism, coupled with the freedom persons have in determining the environments in which they engage, they spend an increasing amount of their lives engaged in virtual activities. These environments become the spaces in terms of which they live their lives. Where success often means killing the other guy, some professional computer game players make their living *living* in a virtual environment. Computer programmers are the intelligent designers of this virtual world.

This is how they do it. Computer programs are like 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. All human languages find common ground in the language of machines. Computer programmers are responsible for ordering the mechanisms which do this work.

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 which are constructed in order to recognize and to operate on some patterns of electrical pulses as opposed to others. The pulses

from person to processor and in between are themselves products of switches opening and closing, letting current in or letting current out. The human brain works in much the same way, with the essential difference being that the pulses in question are produced electrochemically, and not electronically.<sup>365</sup>

A computer is a network of processors which work to translate certain input into desired output. The human brain is also a network of switches arranged in ways to process 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. The sub-processors of either computer or human being coordinate with one another to produce a particular output given input, or not. If these are not coordinated, sense cannot be made of the output. This result is thought to be the product of a 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 with this picture. Persons expect these operations to come together in the output in ways which preserve their everyday experience. Persons take the coordination between the sub-units, both in their heads and in computers, for granted. When it is not in place, the system is broken.

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<sup>365</sup> Another essential difference had been that the human brain can learn. It is plastic, at least in the beginning. Baby brains quickly embody operations in terms of the objects of their particular situations. This is something that computers are only beginning to do. I believe that this realization in computers awaits that same realization in the human programmer. This text is an effort to close this gap, between the programmer and his understanding of himself.

Network coordination is taken for granted in much of the rest of life, too. Persons coordinate with other persons, through computers as mediators, as in the virtual basketball game, and the old fashioned way, face to face. Computers coordinate with other computers, and computers with persons and vice versa. 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 computer games and the internet. Thus, persons and computers work together to network between human brains and computer processors, and back again. It is this networking which is responsible for the increasing unification of the human globe under one language, machine language.

It is the coordination of persons which is the great promise of the virtual world. Persons are positional. Sometimes, persons are distant from each other. Networked together, virtual environments seem to help to close these distances. Computers, are also positional. Just as every computer in a network of computers has a uniquely identifying position within that system of relations, so does a person have a similar place in his family, society, and civilization. Some positions are critical for the integrity of the system. Consider the preacher in the church, the leader of a cult, the professor in the classroom, or the tyrant in a tyranny. If one of these are missing from their places, the systems of relations as wholes may fail, so critical are these positions for the networks in which their positions arise.

In many ways, as the world is unified in the language of machines, the person's position relative to some computer's position also constitutes that person's position relative another person's position. The essential difference is that, so far, computers have no stake in their positions. One IP address is as good as is any other for the computer. What makes any given place unique is that there is a person at either end of a computer. Thus, so critical are the positions of each computer that, if a computer is missing from its place, or breaks, the network of personal relations which depends on it may fail.

These environments increasingly provide a crucial avenue to meaningful socialization. This is what it feels like to be globalized. The increasingly unified world appears more than ever dis-unified. Computer mediated personal networks become especially important as globalization motivates increasing isolation from friends and family. For instance, MySpace is a global phenomenon which facilitates networking through common interests without regard for geographical constraints.<sup>366</sup> These are networks of unique persons fulfilling unique roles in unique human lives. This virtual world is a network of persons built on the bedrock of networked silicon processors. Insofar as these networks of persons depend on the technologies which keep computers going, however, their integrity is difficult to ensure.

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<sup>366</sup> In general, I am skeptical of the MySpace phenomenon. Insofar as computer mediated socialization stands in for direct care for another human being, I even 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 moderate their lives in terms of MySpace mediated relationships, much of that most effective capacity to care for persons near at hand is underutilized, undervalued, and unpracticed. Meanwhile, much of MySpace is devoted to the collection of friends, not necessarily toward any particular purpose, which draws into question the value of these networks.

Computer networks are fragile, complicated, and expensive to maintain. These networks themselves depend on other, hidden, networks. These networks also depend on networks of people. They require systems of industry which make silicon – the stuff of beaches – into chips. These industries are networked with others which provide heavy equipment, high temperature furnaces, lasers and, perhaps most importantly, highly specialized 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 these, of course, require networks of human beings.

There are networks of persons at either end of a network of computers. These persons work to turn the objects of the natural into objects of the virtual world. The production of the virtual world depletes the resources of the natural world. The fact that the planet is on the cusp of a global environmental crisis is well known, and shall receive some attention later on in this section. The point here is merely that, should the resources fail, their delivery fail, or any other link in the networks which support the production of the virtual world fail, then the virtual world, and all of the personal networks which depend on it, will fail. Thus, that world in terms of which persons increasingly order their lives truly is a castle made of sand.

For the moment, instead of looking directly at the impact of computer mediated networks on the felt lives of persons around the natural world, let's look for a moment at the logic in terms of which these networks work. Let's look at

the mechanism of information processing which underwrites this global virtual sand castle. Let's see what it is we call the truth.

Consider the Law of the Excluded Middle (L.E.M). This is a fundamental notion in binary logic, that sort taught exclusively at most schools and universities.<sup>367</sup> Taking the L.E.M. to be a law is the hallmark of classical logic. 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  $p$ , a thing at any time is either  $p$  or *not*  $p$ . It cannot be both; this is the middle that gets excluded in the L.E.M..

Everything is a dilemma according to the L.E.M. Everything is either some way or not some way, 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 good, or it is not. A person is either evil, or she is not. This seems to be more than a law of logic; it seems to be a law of nature.

What is a law? What does a law do? Laws, themselves, are supposed to hold things together. Consider the practical instance of a law, a law of nature. A law of nature is a law because it seems that all natural processes taken together are bound to its terms. If the natural world is an ordered whole, 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. A natural law represents

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<sup>367</sup> There are other sorts of logic, like fuzzy and multi-valent logics, the discussion of which I will also neglect here.

the order of the natural world, and puts in human terms how the apparent objects of the natural world are related.

Consider the Law of Gravity. It is not as if some cannonball follows the letter of some law. It does not tell objects how to relate with one another. This law tells people how objects of the natural world are related. Moreover, it applies not merely to some objects as opposed to others, but to all objects in the field of gravity. That is what makes it a law.

Laws are supposed to explain things. That is, a law is supposed to put all things under its scope in terms of their common relations, like gravity. This goes for a law of nature as well as for any other law. Whatever does not fall within its scope, and so outside of nature, is not a relationship which is supposed to arise in the natural world according to the law. If it does, either the law is wrong, and so not a law, or there are unnatural things which perhaps behave according to some law or other, but not according to any law of nature.

A law tells us what is necessary, and what is necessarily not. In terms of a natural law, unnatural things are impossibilities. They are not given as possibilities in terms of a law of nature. They are *necessarily not* natural. This goes for any other sort of law as well. Logical laws indicate that illogical things are logical impossibilities, for instance. They are *necessarily not* logical. Thus, no matter the context, a law tells us not only what is possible, but what is impossible. What a law gives as an impossibility is necessarily not possible, otherwise it is not a law covering the field at hand.

What makes logicians think the L.E.M. is a law is that, classically, logicians presume what the Law gives as impossibilities are necessarily not possible. L.E.M. is taken to be universally binding. 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 anything else is not a possibility.

Let's test this presumption. Does the Law 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 Law to qualify as a universal law of nature, 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 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 Law presumes this to be impossible. Could it be that we spend much of our lives doing the impossible? Doing the unnatural? Or, is the Law still the law, and we are merely thought criminals, breaking the Law?

I will assume that a law of nature cannot be broken. This is an analytic impossibility. If a law of nature is broken, it is not a law of nature. All naturally

occurring things are part of the natural order.<sup>368</sup> I am assuming that 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 thoughts. Therefore, a law of nature cannot be broken, at least not by any naturally occurring thing. This does not mean that thought is 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.

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, but we will get to that in a moment. 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. In the case of an exception, the law has excluded a clear possibility. Thus, doing the impossible is

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<sup>368</sup> This makes me a naturalist, but I say go with what's given.

an exception to the 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. Yet, we are left with one further question. Is it unnatural to break the L.E.M.?

Let's think of a practical 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 deaths on the other side are good, and that deaths on his own side are bad. This attitude, naturally, excludes any middle ground. Examples of this attitude are easy to come by. An especially militant man recently told me, regarding this very conflict: "Even pacifists can believe in pest control."<sup>369</sup> What could he have meant by this? Is this attitude really natural, or could he merely be misinformed? What about children who have no prejudice one way or the other? What would they say?

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. Let's take a look at the pacifist's position. This is the position which the man claimed as his own. Pacifists may hold to two ways of thinking about pests. Consistent with the L.E.M., a pacifist is either a pest,  $p$ , or not a pest,  $not-p$ .

If a pacifist is a pest,  $p$ , then controlling the pest is a special case. We will look at this in a moment, after we clear away the more everyday way of looking

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<sup>369</sup> 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.

at things. If a pacifist is essentially different than a pest, then he may attempt to control them as if they were any other objects in the world like tables and chairs. For example, a person controls a chair by pulling it up to a table and resting on it. When a chair meets one's needs, one uses the chair for his own resting state. The chair, hereby, is no pest. When the chair fails to meet the terms of one's needs, one declares it broken. This chair is now a pest. It gets in the way of one's search for a resting place; it does not provide for it. The broken chair is an obstacle.

Pests are special sorts of obstacles. In the case of the militant man at hand, the obstacles to his rest are other human beings. Here, the logic which excludes pests overcomes him. There is no such thing as a good pest. There is really only one way to control a pest. Controlling pests means ridding the environment of them. Pests are merely a special kind of obstacle. From this perspective, "*not p is good*" means that "*an absence of pests is good.*" This means that those other human beings must disappear.

This attitude is prefigured in his use of language. Pests of every sort are typically treated according to the option most conducive to the rest of the one in control. There is no fixing a pest. They are removed, or are overcome. Typically, pests are destroyed. Thus, the expression "even pacifists can believe in pest control" is nonsense. What happened to the pacifism?

Considering the context of his expression, the violent conflict raging across the Middle East, the absence of pests involves killing them, torturing them, killing their families, and bulldozing their homes. Hereby, the militant isn't

merely making a mistake. He hasn't mistaken himself for a pacifist. He advocates violence and maintains that he is a pacifist. What he says, and what he does, are two different things. Some parts of his network of mental processors are not coordinated. He points one way, and moves another. Sadly, his own discontinuity is actively coordinated with others like himself and of them there appear to be many. The advocates of violence are many, and are very well organized.

Such dissemblance, however, is contrary to what people come to expect of things of the natural world. The Law of Gravity and falling are perfectly consistent, expression and action. The militant's expression and his actions are not. What the militant man's expression hides is something unnatural. He claims pacifism and advocates violence. Pacifism and violence, however, are practically exclusive of one another. They do not appear together in nature. Logic only reflects this fact of matter.

Let's follow this line of reasoning where it leads. There is another option for the militant pacifist besides the dishonest one. He may remain consistent with his claim to pacifism. He may maintain "even pacifists can believe in pest control." Consistent with his pacifism, and seemingly contrary to the L.E.M., he may hold that he is a *pest* as well as a *pacifist*. He may maintain that he is both *p* and *not p*. In this case, the expression "even pacifists can believe in pest control" makes sense. If the pacifist is the pest, then this expression may be rewritten: "even pacifists can believe in self control." To this, I will add a further revision: "especially pacifists can believe in self control."

That is, especially pacifists do not believe in the L.E.M.. In terms of the militant's expression, L.E.M. presumes an essential difference between persons: one is a pest, the other not. Considering the treatment which eventuates from this presumption, at least in practice, this essentially means: one is a person, the other not. Needless to say, the L.E.M. is of limited utility when the object is to keep persons open to one another in sharing an increasingly overburdened natural world. It works if the idea 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. *P* is either *good* or *bad*, both, neither, or a non-issue. *P* is *not p*; *not p* is merely the absence of *p*. *Not p* is the logic which merely reflects the fact that somebody missing.

Practically speaking, the L.E.M. should be renamed the Law of the Included Extremes (L.I.E.). On this logic, there are two positions around any polarized field of positions which presume a world wherein their opposites are necessarily not. This is a logic of exclusion. On this logic of exclusion, there is simply not enough world to go around. There is the world for one, and that means not for the other. Practically speaking, there is no shared global situation on this way of thinking. It is always mine and not yours. Meanwhile, L.I.E. presumes the fact of a unified "it" in the first place, otherwise there is no distinction to be made. For the L.I.E. to be a law of nature, a world with both of us in it is necessarily not possible. Meanwhile, here we are.

By the L.I.E., some men hold themselves essentially different from others. These men see the value in guns and tanks, prejudices and arbitrary distinctions. These things are necessary in order to keep other men away, and to get them out of the world. This is what the militant man meant by pest control. His expression is one weapon in an arsenal of exclusion. His expression is a violent one. It says there is one world, and it is not theirs. So long as they don't object<sup>370</sup>, he has no reason not to be a pacifist. Once they do, he finds his reason: so that he can again be a pacifist. This way of thinking hides a deep contradiction, not to mention a lack of integrity. This way of thinking fails to cover all the possibilities open to the natural world. It excludes some which are clear possibilities. Thus, the L.I.E. cannot be a law of nature. The question remains, then, how does such a logic increasingly unify a world?

It cannot, unless that unification is one of mutual exclusion and global conflict. It is not that this is altogether a surprise, or that it is altogether unwelcome. Some myths endorse this end of the world as that necessary end resulting from an edict of god, on some accounts the exclusive designer of natural law. In terms of the myths of the west, the end of the world is revealed in the Christian New Testament book of Revelations. The inclusion of this extreme text in the New Testament is controversial, but that is beside the point. The end-time it describes has been called the "apocalypse."

Consider the word "apocalypse." "Apocalypse" is a word ominous in Christian theology because of its association with the destruction which marks

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<sup>370</sup> That is, become an obstacle. See earlier passages wherein these two meanings of "object" are explored, circa pages 139, 170, and 200.

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. This has nothing necessarily to do with the end of the world. All that is destroyed in an apocalypse is ignorance. All that is necessarily not is the impossible.

All that apocalypse is is the not not possible. What we discover depends on what we understand. Discovery makes the impossible possible. Consider this illustration. Imagine that you live in a primitive society in a desert. Imagine that the desert had not always been a desert. It had once been an opulent forest. Life was everywhere. Life was easy. Resources were plentiful, and your society has a history which reflects this change.

When the weather changed, and drought set in, life got more difficult. People went without, expectations went unsatisfied, needs went unmet, many starved. The variability of the environment made some ways of life untenable. For instance, living on the water, shellfish are a relatively safe food source also easily secured from the shallows. To live on shellfish is a possibility in this situation. Living in a desert (without refrigeration), however, shellfish are deadly. Living in a desert (without refrigeration), shellfish kill. This happened with enough regularity that to not eat shellfish became a rule. To live on shellfish is

not a possibility in this situation; it is a practical impossibility. It was simply the terms of the situation, and the injunction “do not eat shellfish” became the law of the land.

Without an understanding of the mechanisms at work, and without a perspective from outside this environment, “do not eat shellfish” became the law of god. This is stronger than the practical reality. The law says that one either not eat shellfish or die. Practically speaking, however, sometimes people just get really sick. The divine injunction neither reflects this fact nor invites further inquiry into the mechanisms which drive the matter at hand. One either does not eat shellfish, or violates the law of god. There is no middle ground, here. This version of the law fails to represent the natural order. It is as if religion describes an unrealistic virtual world.

In any event, we find ourselves in a different situation. It is no longer impossible to safely eat shellfish in the desert. In fact, it is difficult to understand the attitude that holds that “do not eat shellfish” remains a law of god, let alone a law of nature, today. We know about bacteria. We have refrigeration. Shellfish are no longer necessarily deadly. They might be deadly. Some persons are allergic to shellfish. They may become ill from its consumption, and even die. Some shellfish does go bad, and some people do get sick on it. But this is now the exception, and not the rule. It is simply not the case that shellfish is either deadly, or it is not.

The L.E.M. does not hold for the divine injunction. This command could be changed: do not eat shellfish (which are far from the water and which have

not been adequately refrigerated given that you have no allergy and they come from clean waters free of heavy metals, especially if you are pregnant, and other things as well some of which we may not as yet be aware). This is not an all or nothing rule. This line is fuzzy. There is a lot going on in the middle, but it is closer to representing the natural state of affairs. We are still in the process of coming to terms with our places in the changing world. There is, as yet, no one or the other. The L.E.M. fails to provide for this fact. Thus, it is not a law of nature. In fact, to adhere to it as a law at all appears to be quite the opposite, unnatural.

To unify the world under one set of laws, either side to conflict must see themselves as part of a larger system of which the other pole is an essential part. If the pacifist endorses the neglected option extended by the L.E.M., then he is both a pacifist and a pest to be controlled. Thus, he is unified, and the world with himself. By the Law, this is supposed to be impossible. It is either me, or you. How can we make sense of this middle position?

Let's consider some thing which all possible parties to conflict share. For one thing, all parties to all conflicts live in terms of the same planet Earth. Let's consider the current state of this shared situation. Through the lens of technology, with the help of computers and their supporting industries, men have a view of the world as a whole as if the world were an object, and the scientist were outside of it. Where before people could investigate one such system or another, the whole world can be seen as a network of coordinated ecosystems which exist only together. They do not arise on their own. The view from outside

shows that the global environmental network is faltering. Good evidence for this is that individual ecosystems are failing. Reefs are dying, wetlands are growing over, and ice caps are melting.

None of these on their own necessarily indicate the failure of the entire natural environment. The best evidence for this is the growing instability of global weather patterns. This instability has been linked with higher temperatures. Heat affects all ecosystems together. This instability is caused by, among other things, the warming of sea water. For example, hotter water has a lower capacity for dissolved oxygen, and other gases, than does cooler water. This stresses the animals and plants which constitute ecosystems like reefs and fisheries. Sea water warming, especially at the surface, evaporates more rapidly, and adds water vapor to the atmosphere. This makes the air heavier, and causes stronger winds which lead to more violent hurricanes, larger tornadoes, and extremes in rain and drought. Everyone on Earth, and everyone to come, is subject to the resulting violence.

The warming is due to gases in the atmosphere which insulate the Earth, keeping heat from escaping into the vast cold vacuum of space. Everyone on Earth, and everyone to come, shares this atmosphere. The heat comes largely from the sun's radiation, but some also comes from car engines and electric motors and blast furnaces and power plants and the like. A car, if one looks at it in the right way, is simply a big heater with benefits and produces a lot of water vapor. Water vapor, itself, captures and retains thermal energy with incredible efficiency, especially in the form of infrared radiation. Thus, the globe is

warming. This view of the world is made possible only in virtue of the technology which is itself responsible for the state of the global system under study.

This fact presents us all with a great irony. The irony is that the industries responsible for the technology, and so responsible for this view of the failing global environment, are themselves responsible for the failure of that global environment. It is only because of the technology through which we view the environmental crisis that we have a crisis, at all. Thus, we are presented with a great irony.

Technology presents us with an objective view of the world. Meanwhile, the subjective view does not match up. Technology works to increasingly meet the terms of individual persons. Technology works to offset the tensions imposed by the global industrial way of life. By many subjective appearances, the situation seems a good one. For instance, as I write this text, gasoline is still less than \$2.00/gallon in the U.S. It seems that, subjectively speaking, things have never been easier.

This is a tragic view. The objective view reveals that the subjective view is mistaken. With so many lives lived and died in the name of progress, we have come only to the edge of self-destruction. The Earth will warm, flood, and drown much of the land on which our current civilization is built. Science delivers a view, as it were, on the promised land. It is a world in ruin. If we continue on our current path, science promises a tragedy. This means more than driving a smaller car. This means rethinking the global economy. This means reordering

the world. This means living to different ends, one life, one day, one action at a time.

Technology has shown that it takes too much from the rest of the world's environmental system to keep the current industrial infrastructure going. It is not sustainable. This same technology and its supporting industries are dependent on one another; without the technology, there is no industry and vice versa. These, in turn, are dependent on persons cooperatively living in certain ways towards common ends while in different positions within the system of relations on which these industries are built. Thus, technology shows that the current social structure is not sustainable.

These results draw the increasing unification of the human world under into question. Much of the motivation behind the unification is economic. People are getting rich on it. Without the technological infrastructure required to account for the economics, however, globalization could not get off the ground. The industrial base required to produce the machines into which the logic of the economy is embedded is expensive. Without the economics, especially without the scale of the globalized economy, the technological infrastructure could also not get off the ground. These two aspects of the situation are inauspiciously bound. Together, they wind around one another trading advances, stair steps of progress from past to present. This progress unifies the world, at least in the end. The lives we lead, along the way, make this all possible. The Earth's natural environment will collapse. The industries which provide for technologies

will collapse. The global economy will collapse. Our ways of life will collapse. High tide approaches, and the human world is a castle made of sand.

Many mythologies hold that human beings are essentially not bound by the laws of nature. Some hold that there is a supernatural realm which is the actual otherworldly resting place to which humans are essentially bound, and that the Earth's natural environment is merely a stopover point. One consequence of this way of thought is that human beings are not necessarily bound by the laws of nature. On this way of thinking, laws of nature are obstacles to be overcome and not guidelines for environmentally responsible, sustainable, ethical ways of life. These guidelines come from above, or below, but assuredly not from the ground around us. So long as we live on Earth, and our children are born on Earth, this is not a vantage we can afford to maintain. This point of view takes mankind out of the natural circuit, altogether.

In the dialogue between man and nature, we are at a crux. Either we return to living in terms of the natural environment, meet nature in the middle, and save the world from our own mistaken selves, or we continue on in unnatural terms living as if we are exempt from the constraints of the global environmental system. We are either natural, or unnatural. The poles are already given. We are responsible for the end we seek, either way.

The current environmental crisis brings the following point to the fore: man and nature are inseparable. Human beings are part of the natural order, not separate from it. Though we struggle against it, and may sometimes wish otherwise, we live within this natural order. Humans are simply one node in the

global network. Humans may become absent, but that does not mean that the global system is necessarily not human. It means that people are missing. This is the nature of the world.

There is no excluded middle in a natural system. The appearance of everyday objects like chairs and tables in fact presumes the unity from which they are abstracted. The global order is not an object like a chair or a table. It is not even a collection of such things. The world is primarily a whole, and we are merely passing parts of it. The world is not exclusive of us, and vice versa. It is not man versus nature. To think otherwise is unnatural, as in contrary to nature, and has led in practice to a gap between human organizations and their sustainability. This is the crux of the current crisis. Can technology help to bridge this gap, even as it is responsible for it?

Science presents us with a view on a land of its own promise, and it looks familiar. Warmer, without refrigeration, with heavy metals and pesticides, shellfish again become deadly. But, no single rule against eating shrimp will save the world; it would take billions and billions of such rules to affect such a change. It is not practical to compile such a list of commandments, let alone to follow them.

However, science also presents us with a view on our own promise. The preceding text presents this view. We are free to do otherwise than we have done. We may determine that situation in which we seek rest.

If not to the preordained apocalyptic end of the world, if not to an economically fueled exhaustion of world resources, to which end should we aim?

We may begin by conceiving of alternatives to the ends determined by Christian mythology, and by global consumerism, and by past habits. We may begin by saying that such ends are impossible, not because they cannot happen but because we will not allow them. They are impossible because we will not pursue them as possibilities. These are simply not ends consistent with the persons we wish to become.

If not the preordained soldier in the army of the Apocalypse, which person should one become? This challenge does not require that one conceive of some other end to the world. One need not conceive of an alternative world as a whole and make the world that certain way. It merely requires that one think of himself in ways in which he will not find rest in that tragic end of the world. To forbid environmental catastrophe requires that he conceive of himself as a person who is repulsed by the thought of being at home in such a situation. He merely needs to become the person who denies it as an end, at all. Naturally, he, as all things in nature, shall seek rest in terms of another situation.

This is not an all or nothing affair. Collectively, we may save the world, or not, but this end is far off and along the way change is gradual. Let's now briefly look in turn at two approaches to getting there. These come from two preceding sections of this text. The first addresses which sort of person one must become if he is to deliver the world to some other than a catastrophic end. With this in mind, the second addresses what an appropriate end should feel like should anyone have the opportunity to be so situated. There should be no surprises, here.

Let's return to the potato game introduced in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of this text. Think of the whole planet as if it were one big potato, the world-potato. The world-potato isn't simply what we eat, it is where we live, and where future persons will continue to live. It is where we all seek rest in terms of the shared environment.

In this rendition of the potato game, there are billions of hungry mouths to consider, not simply one's own and that of the hungry guy across the table. If we think about the game in a certain way, most of the persons most worthy of consideration – babies – are yet to be born. If we do the wrong things, the world will become a place where no one will rest. If we do the right thing, future generations will eat, sleep, and play forever.

In the original version of the potato game, there are two players with two essentially different sets of experiences. Let's not retain these personalities in the current rendition. Let's take advantage of what we have learned since then. Think of one person on the planet. Think of yourself.

Think of your self as having sole access to all the resources of the world. You have it all to your self. Now, consider this. There are billions of hungry persons in front of you. All of them expect a piece of that potato. 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 potato. What will you do with it?

In this version of the potato game, to adopt an open or a closed mode of being with others is not temporary. You will not learn from this experience, and

gain another opportunity to do otherwise. This is not an opportunity to develop habits towards becoming a person up ahead. This is the person you will have become. This one action marks you for all time. What person will you become? How will you be seen? Who will you be? Socrates or scarecrow?

Imagine that you close off to all of them. What could you expect to happen next? Ask yourself: if I were hungry, and my children hungry, and my pregnant wife hungry, and someone else denies me food while he has everything, how long would it take for me to do something to secure the resources necessary to keep them healthy? They use guns to keep me away from what I need to secure my children's future. What would it take for me to bring guns of my own in order to secure the resources necessary to keep them alive? I say, not long. No one wants to become that person who did not do all that he could to keep his loved ones alive and healthy. This is not an end to be revered. It is repulsive. This is simply an end to which no person willingly moves. I say, resist.

Imagine, instead, that you open to these others. You are sensitive to their suffering. You take their situations as if your own. You have sole access to all the resources of the world, and these others are in need of them. Moreover, most of the others in need have yet to be born. These will become persons who will also seek ends to be revered. These unborn children will take up models of others who have shown revered ways of life in the past. Imagine that you open to them all. What life will you demonstrate?

You have the option to share. Open, you do share. You open the opportunity for others to keep their own loved ones healthy and even happy. What should happen next? Ask yourself: if I were hungry, and my children hungry, and my pregnant wife hungry, and someone else opened the opportunity to feed them, what is this worth? How will you be remembered, for having done this? Ask yourself, with this example in mind, will others be likely to live similarly? In which world would you rather live? Who would you rather share it with?

Let's imagine being in these situations for a moment. Let's return to the bathtub experiment from section 9. Let's imagine either of these two situations in turn, from both perspectives. This version of the bathtub experiment is more complicated than the basic experiment. The tensions in this version of the bathtub experiment are still felt between one's own current and one's own ideal situation. The ideal situation is still that in which one is revered. The tensions in this experiment are also between one's own situation and another's, ideal or not. In this version of the experiment, the bathtub is the whole world.

Imagine at first that all of the tensions of life disappear. This is the ideal space of rest, the ideal situation. You have sole access to all the resources of the world. Your every need is met, but they are met for your self, alone. Others also are in situations, but their situations are otherwise. Their every need is not met. If we presume a limit to the resources in the world, this means that you have, and others have not. Your position is to be revered, and theirs are not.

Imagine that you are closed to the needs of others. This takes care of the tensions. There is no other situation with which to feel the differences. Already revered, with no contrary determination, you are at rest. In fact, to open to the difference between yours and another's situation is to invite an obstacle to your own object of being revered. To become open to the other is to invite responsibility for his suffering. This is not to be revered, but to be despised. This is the greatest potential difference between one's current and ideal situations. It is the greatest obstacle to realizing one's own ends, or so it would seem. How are we to offset this tension?

As we have seen above, one avenue is to continue to deny the other, including his unborn children. "They are not me." This attitude is that behind genocide, slavery, and prejudice. This way, though one may be responsible for suffering, it is not that of another human being whose suffering states are essentially mirrored in one's own experience. These are not persons; they are objects or they are obstacles. In denying the other, one saves one's self from sharing the other's suffering. One may remove the other from the situation, as if a broken chair blocking a place at the table.

This seems to work if there is more than one situation, or more than one place at the table. If this is the case, one can have his, and the others theirs. There is no tension because these two situations are not necessarily related, at all. One may note a difference and feel nothing for it. Insofar as the situation is the world as a whole, however, this is untenable. There is no other situation. We have to share this place. This is where the differences between the relative

situations come to be so significant. If the situation is shared, their tensions are one's own tensions. In either case, one's own situation is the only situation which matters, and the other's is no situation at all.

Consider the other option. Imagine again that all the tensions of life disappear. Again, you have access to all of the resources of the world. Your every need is met, but it is met for your self, alone. Others also are in situations, and their situations are otherwise. Their every need is not met. The difference causes tensions. They need what you have, and may stop at nothing to get it.

Imagine being open to the needs of others. This introduces all of their tensions as if they were your own. There is no other situation but this one, and it is shared. Open to the suffering of other persons, one may only rest when they do. This means especially providing for their hungry children as well as for one's own. After all, who can rest when their children cannot rest?

Imagine being open to the needs of others and providing for them. Imagine being situated in terms of this end. Imagine that all those around are healthy, and happy, and that they are so because of your own way of life. You could have kept it all for yourself and fought those who opposed you. You could have excluded them. You did not. You could have been despised. You were not. You are revered, and for your generosity remembered. This is the person you will have become. Is this the sort of person you wish to become? Or is this the sort of person you wish you would have become? One with the world, each other, and free.

## Appendix 1) Phenomenology and the Modern Tradition:

Only living things are ex-static. Though rocks and water come to terms with their environment, seeking equilibrium, taking on heat and losing it to the environment, they do not move from the equilibrium states of their own accord. Water does not boil when its boyfriend comes home late. In other words, non-living things do not choose the terms to which they do come to equilibrium, whereas people,<sup>371</sup> do.<sup>372</sup> Moreover, as people move, they experience new things, or old things in different ways, and so, as the phenomenological tradition has maintained since the Greeks, they “disclose” the world in their ex-static movement from a resting place.<sup>373</sup>

This is the “clearing” which in turn reveals things in the world as the things that they are. The things which are discovered are understood in terms of the purposes which motivate the action, in the first place.<sup>374</sup> Thus, things in the world are discovered according to the mode of their disclosure, which turns out to be the purposes behind the “clearing” [verb] in the first place. For instance, 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 rocks; in this mode, it is the soil which is the obstacle.

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<sup>371</sup> Or, at least free people, philosophers, can, and sometimes do, more or less. As demonstrated by Socrates’ fable at the conclusion of the *Gorgias*.

<sup>372</sup> Glynn (2002) makes this point nicely.

<sup>373</sup> The locus classicus for Western Philosophy’s role this disclosure resides in Plato’s *Myth of the Cave*.

<sup>374</sup> After all, to plow is not to remain in place; that is, effective plowing is not static. All good ploughing proceeds to the end of the row, and then back again.

This leads us back to the sense of “clearing” as a noun; after all, the work in clearing [verb] is for the sake of a clearing [noun] which is suited for, from the beginning, the purposes which discovered the space, in the first place. So, again, clearing farmland means taking out rocks, which, in the end, means clearing a space suitable for farming. Clearings which are rendered suitable for farming are called “plots,” or “acreage,” but good farmland is good farmland - the same thing under different names. The purpose in discovery is always for the sake of one’s self, on Heidegger’s account; Dasein is “clearing” as both noun and verb.

There are still a few things about this aspect of phenomenology to clear up: which comes first, clearing [verb] or [noun], and what to do when the clearing [noun] is no longer suitable for its cleared [verb] purposes, are two questions which present themselves immediately. But, for now, we should shelve these issues; let’s look a little deeper into the situation which confronts the little space of clarity we may have cleared, already.

In the Modern tradition, there is a radically different starting place. Instead of the disclosure of things being of the constitution of the subject, and so irrevocably tied to the mode of the disclosure, and so to the discoverer, himself, with the significance of the disclosed only in terms of the purposes of his disclosing agency, the Moderns presume the rigid distinction between the subject, and the objects of its world.

Heidegger worked directly against this tradition. Descartes had thought that the mind and body were each a certain different sort of substance, each, in

virtue of their being a substance, able to stand on their own.<sup>375</sup> From this tradition, the mind as substance has been understood as a vessel holding representations of things so that the view of the mind is of a thing, able to stand alone, with only external relations to other self-standing things. “But when a mind is conceived as a mental substance ... the result is that the distinctive character of perception and thought as the disclosing of entities in the world is fatally obscured and has finally to be dealt with, very inadequately, by means of a theory of representation.”<sup>376</sup> What such an approach leads to are problems such as the existence of the so-called external world, and from this presumption the necessary appropriation of some sort of correspondence into all theories of truth.<sup>377</sup>

Traditionally,<sup>378</sup> this notion is exposed in terms like the following: “I am standing ‘right here,’ gaping at the object at point blank range. A distance separates me from the object. I am thus detached from the object.”<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> Which seems to be derived from a scholastic misunderstanding of Aristotle’s theory of the separability of some aspect of human soul. Where Aristotle makes this claim, it is in relation only to some aspect of the understanding which rightly does stand on its own, this being the essential account of any given thing. Just as it is the purpose for animals, self-standing unities of an organic variety, to produce other self-standing unities – that is have babies – it is the purpose of the understanding, Aristotle’s second tier of soul to do the same. What Aristotle implies here is merely that some men are able to render self-standing understandings, of the sort for which Socrates would volunteer to serve as mid-wife. Sadly, superstition and fear of death have likely conspired to ruin this ancient insight, and to lead to such wars as we find ourselves in even today. As Jefferson had long ago noted, how much we suffer for evils which never existed.

<sup>376</sup> Olafson, page 17.

<sup>377</sup> Even though this inclusion is redundant once the primary mode of truth as revelation and discovery is understood phenomenologically. For a brilliant discussion to the effect that correspondence is presumed by all epistemological approaches to bridging the gap as knowledge between the radically isolated subject and the external world in terms of the analytic tradition of philosophy, see David Lewis, 2001, and subsequent discussion.

<sup>378</sup> Speaking here of the Modern tradition in the Cartesian mold of the isolated self-certain atomic subject in an objective world.

<sup>379</sup> Wirt, page 89.

To some degree, this attitude is encouraged by a common sense understanding of the physical sciences. Thinking about the famous line of inquiry called sub-atomic physics, I can see two ways in which this is the case, both theoretically and practically.

Physicists, for one thing, work at studying ever-smaller particles by creating special environments, environments by way of which observations thought to correspond with a thing regularly arise. Physicists, and for that matter scientists of almost every sort, might not be successful in making their observations and if they do, there is no guarantee that their discovery will have any practical bearing on everyday life. Physics, thus, works at exposing objects on their own terms, as-if they were not being disclosed in terms of human agency, at all, as if the researcher, himself, was not even there. This presumes a certain detachment.

Theoretically speaking, Physics pictures things as-if they had presented themselves in a vacuum space, unaffected by the mode of the human inquirer, and by any other thing which does not suit the sitting there, in that environment, on display. This approach begins with the detachment of the researcher. Sitting behind ever increasing layers of theoretical apparatus, crunching numbers so big or so small that neither find representation in everyday experience, awaiting a blip on a computer screen, working in a lab can be very lonely business.

Practically speaking, the sense that the ever smaller objects of physical observation are distinct and separate from the human inquirers, themselves, is bolstered by the fact that these objects are so tiny as to never meet the human

being on the street; no one is going to stub their toes on one of these things. That is just not an observation anyone is going to be making, at least, not without the help of a lot of equipment, and even then, few will find the work significant. Often enough, it is the machine that makes the observation, in any event; the scientist may not even be there. In fact, it is not difficult to imagine that he need not be, at least not that particular scientist; this all carries a sense of detachment.

It is a fact that many of the more theoretical sciences, especially, require sometimes huge tools - practical and theoretical -which yield similar results no matter who runs the controls. It is as-if the scientist and his object were not related, at all. Objects of these sciences, whether quarks or ion-channels, seem only to show up for the machines, anyways. They arise in situations in which human beings will not, and so no one of us is ever going to be there, in the same situation, when they are. Instead, in between the human being and his object of study are hundreds of years of scientific understanding, and perhaps hundreds of millions of dollars worth of incomprehensible machinery. So, in the end, nothing guarantees that the scientist at work understands enough about the equipment around him to find a personal connection between himself and his study.<sup>380</sup>

Now, this is actually a gross mischaracterization of most physical scientists I have ever known, but it does clear the way for the following point. For the average everyday man on the street, there might as well be no connection between the theoretical scientist and his object of study; the gulf between them is

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<sup>380</sup> Though, originally, historically, the scientist would have had to build for himself his bridging equipment, to close the gap between his capacities to discovery and the situation in which his object of study reveals itself. Our current effort is of this form. In fact, it can be argued that all science presupposes this essential tie, and where it is forgotten, it fails as science, but this is another story.

conceptually unbridgeable. In turn, this provides further ballast for the notion that persons and the fundamental bases of the physical world are fundamentally detached. Either that, or persons are simply not the way that they appear but are hidden away in little sections of the brain, as if persons are merely chemical “balances” locked away behind special equipment like eyes and voices. In either case, persons seem to respond in terms of different laws than the everyday world, altogether, as-if in entirely different situations; these things, these people, ourselves, are alien.<sup>381</sup>

Why is this thinking so intractable? Let’s look at the scientific model, again. The object, and the subject, according to this understanding, are separate. Once the equipment is in place, over there, there is only for the observer to make the observation, over here, and that takes place inside the head of the scientist. Ideally, he is only the observer; as-if there were two entirely different situations. The idea is to put the physical world on display, and the parts of it which interest sub-atomic physicists display themselves in environments of which the physicist has no direct experience.<sup>382</sup> So, subject and object are detached, with a record of one inside the skull-bone of another.

Sounds simple enough, if not too simple. In doing Physics, there isn’t any problem; to be able to proclaim, “the particle is there” is, after all, the whole point of the pursuit! If the physicist can specify the environment in which certain

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<sup>381</sup> In fact, building bridging concepts has become the focus of unified science, and has taken a form conspicuously akin to our own upcoming focus, attunement.

<sup>382</sup> It isn’t always the case. When the physicist plays baseball, his science has a more practical relevance. I concentrate on the extreme case only to more effectively draw the comparison.

observations obtain, then there is the recipe for repeatability; other physicists can do the same. This is the commercial bedrock of science.<sup>383</sup>

The problem arises when a similar mode of viewing objects is applied to a living being, like a human being. They show up in vacuums, he shows up in air. They show up under huge forces near light-speed, he shows up with a bagel and coffee. They are static, not ex-static; they exist in terms of the environment, meanwhile the physicist is always trying to change his, for instance in holding out for new equipment and better graduate students.<sup>384</sup>

Yet, when people think of each other as objects, these essential differences are just the sorts of things they deny.<sup>385</sup> If they are objects, then they are physical bodies, and must obey physical laws, and behave predictably in predictable environments. If this does not describe one's experience, then perhaps persons are immaterial, souls and spirits, ensouled bodies, but this just leads to even more difficult problems. Either way, understanding themselves as either material bodies or not material bodies, they deny any avenue of access to each other. It is as-if there were an unbridgeable distance, whereby self and

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<sup>383</sup> And, not all bad: Heidegger insists that even this mode of being with things does provide grounds for further insight, just not in the way in which we are interested, and not in a way which presumes the special nature of the being under our current purview.

<sup>384</sup> Insodoing, he might meet a brick wall in the administration, perhaps the chair is especially dim-witted and cannot see the value of good research and even better undergraduate teaching. These two, if they treat each other as-if they were each physical objects of the sort under their study, may never reconcile. The chair, set in his ways, might as well be a rock, and may demand a rigidly dogmatic environment all his own, and demand that the researcher meet his proprietary terms. Meanwhile, the researcher, the good physicist that he is, may never understand the chair's dogma, and because he is used to treating the chair like all other physical bodies, as an object, over there in a given psychopathological state, an environment suiting only the inhumanity of duplicitous officiousness, there may be no room for coming to shared terms with the bigot. Sadly, this is all too often the situation, yet not one from which I will run.

<sup>385</sup> The allusion at an ambiguous use of "they" is purposeful. A case might be made, especially considering the neurological evidence, that persons who think of themselves and others like themselves as objects are, insodoing, effectively giving up what we might otherwise understand as their humanity, and so, by any rule of reciprocity, ask to be treated likewise.

other are essentially detached from the world, from each other, and even from those whom they love, whether that be themselves, their significant other, or God.<sup>386</sup> No matter how much we share, on either view, our worlds can never be the same.<sup>387</sup>

So long as one conceives of perception and practical contact with objects as having to 'occur' inside a subject which is closed off from the world, his contact with the world can only seem puzzling. It must seem as if each person is locked into his own world of "experience."<sup>388</sup>

The issue becomes further confused when the same mode of relating is applied to one's own self. Seemingly, all of a sudden, one comes to the realization that he has lost himself. Then in order to get to know himself, he recruits a theorist bursting at the seams with theoretical apparatus; maybe all this high-powered equipment can find him? Of course, the highest-powered tools are those of religion; often times, persons turn to religion to find themselves. Internalized, the sense of detachment which seems to characterize the surest modes of human inquiry results in absurdity. How many crooked bridges must be built between a broken heart and an unmade mind?

From the traditional phenomenological point of view,<sup>389</sup> it is only through the exploration of my own agency that any lived body comes to be aware of the

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<sup>386</sup> In fact, this goes doubly for themselves; when people treat themselves as objects like any other, expect especially strange results. For instance, in order to be sure that even he, his own self, exists, Descartes has to check with God, first. To be sure that a given man feels a given way, he may run his notions past a psychotherapist. If the therapist reflexively cites neurochemical imbalance and prescribes medication, then the man has become equipment.

<sup>387</sup> And so identity is understood as either strict logical identity, or indiscernible difference, in either case a third person stipulation.

<sup>388</sup> Wirt, page 89.

<sup>389</sup> At least from Husserl's distinction of lived body from body as corpse and onward.

stuff of the physical world, including other living bodies.<sup>390</sup> Our bodies are actual, their potentials actualized in our experience, and other things in the world are disclosed simultaneously.<sup>391</sup> Insofar as a thing is an object, static, they always meet the terms of our expectations on the basis of this experience. Evidence for this asymmetry is everywhere: diamonds are hard because we are softer, ice is cold because we are warmer, and times are tough because we aren't up to them.<sup>392</sup> In every case, good diamonds are consistently hard, good ice is consistently cold, and good times are consistently easy.

If they are understood as objects, evaluations of other persons proceed similarly.<sup>393</sup> Good persons are consistent. They stay put, show up on time, and

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<sup>390</sup> The difference between the body as object and as lived underlies Husserl's analyses of "empathy" ("einführung") as long as we understand empathy in a certain way. This is well known to Husserl scholars, though, probably because Husserl is not so easy to read, to few else. Our discussion presumes this history, as well as the influence which Husserl has on Heidegger in this regard in the next section.

<sup>391</sup> Commensurately, Heidegger maintains that understanding is equiprimordial with disclosure.

<sup>392</sup> One might argue that diamonds are hard no matter our experiences of them, and this might be correct to the extent that diamonds have consistent crystalline matrices with low bond strain and so are an extremely stable structure, resistant to change, and this goes no matter who or what does the evaluation. But, this is not how we come to understand the situation, originally; we do not, in fact, experience the strength of this order in these terms, per se. The structure of diamond does not obviate the fact that there is only a qualification, "hardness," on the basis of our own experience of objects in terms of our own constitutions; and, consequently, diamonds will always be "hard."

<sup>393</sup> Persons are "rational," for instance, when they are consistent with one's expectations in the terms of one's own prior understanding, and "irrational" when they are not. Again, though, absurdity is the result. On the basis of this seemingly innocent presumption, persons have moral worth when they are responsive to the reasons of the rational other self, and without moral worth, or of negative worth – irresponsible, immoral or amoral, and yet still culpable - when they are not amenable to the appeals of reason. Thus, what we see is a presumptive rationalism which procures the moral value of its own orthodoxy, and which at once frees the orthodox practitioner from responsibility for the failures of the tradition, for, after all, in retaining fundamental dogmas, and in evaluating self and others in terms of the essentially out-of-date, that presumptive rationalist is only being "rational." Perhaps nothing is more telling of the weakness of such a position that the comedy that is watching this same approach attempt to theorize "practical reason." Without any practical experience to speak of, their efforts fall hard on the concept of "reason," and, so there is nothing practical about the reasoning which attends, at the same time, to practical reason. If you cannot embody the phenomenon, then it is beyond your study; if you cannot allow the thing under purview to be realized, then you shall never realize the thing under study. Sorry Peter; you lose, and I do not forgive you for treating me poorly as an orthodox extension of your prior presumptions, no matter how reasonable you feel yourself to be in

proceed according to our expectations. Otherwise, they are difficult, so-called “free-thinkers,” and defy any traditional classification, unless those be “trouble-maker,” or “criminal.” Socrates, himself, fell into these categories, and others.<sup>394</sup>

What this discussion thus far shows is that we first experience, then we understand, and this process implicitly evaluates: first, we feel out the situation in which we find ourselves, and in so doing we come to terms with it.<sup>395</sup> These terms serve as a resident standard; they provide the high- and low-water marks by which further experiences are evaluated. We find those experiences which confirm our expectations pleasant, like people and diamonds. We seek pleasant experiences, and avoid unpleasant ones; we value things associated with the one, and disvalue the other. But this hamstring us; learning is hard work, health requires sacrifice, and the truth hurts. Sadly, few people are willing to go against the grain; normal people take it easy. Normal people are, well, normal. This will not give you conscience of the not so everyday sort.

Heidegger takes a different tact.

It is in the view of a mortal being, a being for whom time matters, that any other relationship matters. Space matters because it traversing space counts

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general. Understanding all of this, in its terms, is, so far as you retain your rationalist ways, beyond you. Yes, you need to be a criminal to know what it is like to be a criminal, just as you must actually be a philosopher, Peter, to know what it is to be a Philosopher. Here is, for you, an example. One is branded “criminal” in error the same way one takes up the moniker “philosopher” in error; in either case there is a forgotten relation between “criminal” and “criminality,” “philosopher” and “philosophy,” that is the original phenomenal evidence for the original branding. Convention has taken the truth of the matter, and has, so to speak, forgotten its own reasons why for the labels in the first place; it applies them with a squint, as-if all striped yellow sharp-toothed predators are tigers. This, of course, explains the difference between your position, and my own, on all of the levels available for your interpretation, which is likely one, though most obviously this expression demands at least two, so call me criminal for not spelling it out any more explicitly.

<sup>394</sup> A good friend.

<sup>395</sup> And only further downstream verbalized, which disqualifies “knowledge that” from any sense of being a realistically grounded epistemological stipulation.

against the time of life, and it is in the traversing as a temporal movement that the significance of the world arises. But, this issue must wait; we will come to these terms in fuller detail when we get to conscience and guilt. For now, it can only be alluded to that, for mortal living beings, significance shows up in the space of time as temporality; with significance comes urgency. When time is short, short distances seem long; when time is lost, unlike car keys or autumn leaves, one's self is forgotten. For us, the most important situation is always up ahead; the things we count on are those which we anticipate being there, then, as before. Otherwise, unfit for calculation and planning, they may not be such good things, as if they had abandoned us.

Things are not alone, in the world outside of us; they are with us, and us with them, always already together in the space of the situation, which is essentially shared with other like ourselves. We are the things of the world, as they are us, and altogether we are the situation. What we care about becomes constitutive of our selves; we become "bound up with" our "being toward the world taken care of."<sup>396</sup>

Instead of conceiving the relation between self and world in terms of spatial relations between objectively given things, as if there were distinct substances whose ties are outside of themselves, so to speak, Heidegger articulates a view of being which takes "attunement" as fundamental: the proper philosophic study, then, is not of detached beings, with inside, in an external world, but being-in-the-world, as an always already present relation. Attuned is how you start, and end, but the terms of this relationship, well, may not be the

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<sup>396</sup> Heidegger, page 115

one's that seem pleasant. It is on the basis of attunement that things seem anyway or anything at all.

Attunement is the source of significance; in attunement, certain things stand out from the situation. Certain aspects of the relation overwhelm others; yet, this is, also, dependent on something.

We have simply to come to terms with this situation in order to understand our places in it and in opening it up to experience, and this is an ongoing process, in fact the ongoing process at the root of living the life of a body in the world.

Even rocks "understand" this; in fact, it is only in coming to terms with the situation that rocks become diamonds in the first place. Rocks though, unlike men, have no capacity to do otherwise; in terms of a given situation, a given rock will be a given diamond. Men have a certain freedom; men are able to deny the situation, to find significance in some aspects more than others, to impose their own terms on the situation rather than to accept the terms of the moment. Men determine for themselves their world, and to change their situations, altogether, moving, walking, and as they do, disclosing and discoursing, and pointing only to what makes them smile, even if that be another man's misery.

## Appendix 2) Why Conscience, Why Now? Old Religion And The Case From The Environment:

Recently released, a United Nation's Millennium Project report on the "Environment and human well-being," dated February 21, 2005, calls for radical changes in the ways in which we use the earth's environmental resources.<sup>397</sup> Our alternatives are bleak, indeed: global flooding, disease, famine, and an uninhabitable planet are the projected consequences for today's inaction.<sup>398</sup> In effect, either we will determine what ways of living are best, now; or global, environmental catastrophe will change our ways of living and dying, no doubt for the worst, later. In the following paper, I will suggest just what role philosophy may play so that changes, of our own determination, in fact take place.

We may be on the cusp of the most important ethical problem in human history:

Global-scale environmental problems caused by synthetic toxins, climate change, the decline of ocean ecosystems, ozone depletion, extinction, and groundwater depletion were largely nonexistent as recently as forty years ago and have accelerated so rapidly that by many estimates there is little time to lose if we are to avert a planetwide catastrophe.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> UN Millennium Project 2005. *Environment and Human Well-being: A Practical Strategy. Summary version of the Report of the Task Force on Environmental Sustainability.* The Earth Institute at Columbia University, New York. This, and other Millenium Project reports are available for download at <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/reports2.htm#09>

<sup>398</sup> In short, extinction. Current energy practices, mismanagement of toxic chemicals, and the conversion of natural habitats and related patterns of overproduction, overconsumption, and mismanagement of ecosystems have resulted in unsustainable levels of air and water pollutants.(U.N., page 26) By environmental sustainability we mean meeting current human needs without undermining the capacity of the environment to provide for those needs over the long term.(U.N., page 11)

<sup>399</sup> Matthew Orr, "Environmental Decline and the Rise of Religion," *Zygon*, Volume 38, No. 4, December 2003, page 895. Even without this information, no one needs an ethicist to tell them that selfishness and short-sightedness, conspicuous consumption and littering, are vices; and, if they don't already know it, why should they listen? That's what insurance is for. Shouldn't the scientists take care of the environment?

What can philosophy do about it? Some Environmental Ethicists have argued that they can positively, as they have not grown up in a world which recognizes that humankind does not act well in the face of the environment.<sup>400</sup> Few contemporary philosophers are trained well enough in the natural sciences to even begin to assess the problems impeding environmental sustainability, let alone advise how to manage them, trained as they are to isolate and analyze arguments.<sup>401</sup> Implementing and designing the mechanisms for an environmentally sustainable future do indeed seem to be technical problems whose solutions fall to experts outside of the field of philosophy. Likewise, there is no mention of a philosopher king in the recent U.N. report. We can agree with Aristotle that argument alone might lead someone to virtue, but how is argument going to help us to overcome our environmental problems?

It is no secret, after all, that our current practices are environmentally vicious. Everyone knows that pollution is bad. Where is the argument? Unless philosophers start building solar panels, it may look like philosophy has no place in a solution to global environmental problems, after all.

But, philosophy isn't just about argument; part of doing philosophy is pointing out the unpopular thing, the hidden truth in the shadow play of our everyday puppet show.<sup>402</sup> Often enough, it is this pointing out of the unpopular

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<sup>400</sup> For instance, Rosalind Hursthouse.

<sup>401</sup> Likely, these are either not recognized (because they don't know what to look for) as problems or at least not recognized as problems for them (as lying outside their specialty; it's someone else's responsibility). I am arguing that these are problems for everybody, and especially for philosophy. I understand that this sentiment runs contrary to many people in philosophy who believe that contemporary philosophy requires no knowledge of the natural world at any level of sophistication. A trend, I must note, contrary to every indication about the way the world is going.

<sup>402</sup> "This is because the speeches that I make on each occasion do no aim at gratification, but at what's best."(521e) Philosophy in both the East and the West have traditionally been critical of

thing which leads to argument, not the other way around.

So, I began by pointing out a very unpopular notion: people must change the way they live, now, or the environment may become uninhabitable for future generations. There is, of course, a lot of argument about this, and not just amongst philosophers. We will confront what I take to be the most fundamental sticking point in the next section.

The unpopular thing to point out to philosophers, specifically, though, is that, if it is up to others besides philosophers to do the hard work necessary to accommodate the science of global environmental sustainability, where are they? The specific changes that the Millennium report recommends are "not new," having been under consideration or inconsistently enforced since the early 1970's.<sup>403</sup> That's two generations to adapt to a revealed changing environment; still, things are getting worse, not better.

Why? For one thing, according to the U.N. report, no tested institutional strategies exist to deal effectively with the sacrifices this generation must suffer so that future generations have any future at all.<sup>404</sup>

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received traditions, and both have traditionally stressed self-knowledge, and in fact self-knowledge achieved through critical reflection on language, as the critical component in order to live and to die right with the world, not simply according to tradition and habit. In this way, I am arguing, philosophers have played a crucial role as exemplars of a self-critical mode that, in practice, provides a social resource for change. Sadly, this resource, as the others of this Earth, has been, especially in the last 40 years, abused.

<sup>403</sup> U.N., page 31.

<sup>404</sup> U.N., pages 21-22. These "intergenerational tradeoffs" lie at the heart of the challenge to adopt environmentally responsible ways of life. The problems with these sorts of issues are that those who suffer by one's own vices are most often temporally and spatially distant, so the ill-effects of one's own bad actions are masked by the fact that he does not inherit them. For one thing, the negative effects of one person's environmentally destructive way of life are largely hidden from them day to day. Firstly, those who suffer most because of my environmentally destructive practices are spatially distant from my self. The ill-effects often fall on the other side of the globe, if not on the other side of the tracks; and, although industrial countries are primarily responsible, so-called "developing" countries, and poor people in general, are the most

Which brings us to the focus of this paper; I disagree with this assessment. I believe that philosophy offers such a strategy.

The problem with the "intergenerational tradeoffs" with which we are faced is this: if we continue to satiate our sweet-teeth for luxury at the expense of the environment, then we are doing injustice to those who certainly will suffer because of it, those who will inherit the ill-effects of our own selfish actions, and this is not a popular message, especially for those who are used to things the way they are. But, this is the point; the science tells us that things will not stay the way they are. The warning in the U.N.'s report is just this; sacrifice luxuries, now, give up current ways of life, now, or your children will lose everything, if they live at all, because current ways of life are changing the world, and for the worse. And this just means that giving up your SUV today doesn't mean that tomorrow the world will appear to be a better place; evidence of these sacrifices will take time. Having given up the SUV, one will not look out on a renewed environment in their own lifetime; likelier, they will look out on a still crashing environment through the windshield of a much smaller car. Intergenerational tradeoffs, then, essentially, are concerns about what happens with the world after we are dead; which, in turn, appears to be a question, not for philosophy, but for religion.

Yet, when we look to religion for guidance on what to do with the world's resources in light of the warnings from science, what we find is, not surprisingly, an ongoing argument. For one thing, there is a deep tradition of religious

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vulnerable to these ill-effects. Secondly, those who stand to suffer most from today's environmentally vicious ways of life are temporally distant, in the future. For instance, an investment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions now imposes a cost on today's generation, with most of the benefits of a more stable climate accruing at some future time, and in some other place.

suspicion of scientific prognostication. For instance:

The renowned theologian Karl Barth warranted against theological conclusions based on natural data. According to Barth, God cannot be known by the powers of human knowledge but is apprehensible and apprehended solely because of his own freedom, decision, and action.<sup>405</sup>

God doesn't show up in the U.N. report on environmental sustainability; but, from the religious perspective, this absence is the root of our problems. Dee Carter, for instance, argues that science is just one aspect of secularism, and further blames secularism for the world's problems in general. In regards to the environment, she argues that the geo-centric rationalism of Enlightenment science had, historically, co-opted a politically naive though environmentally sensitive Christian religion, and that the resulting, increasing, secularity is in fact responsible for the destruction of God's Earth, a secular destruction that we are only now understanding scientifically as an emerging environmental crisis.<sup>406</sup>

The ecological crisis, wrought by exploitive attitudes toward nonhuman life (and, in a wider sense, to some human life) and by the careless despoliation of God's world, is surely a manifestation of the broader problems of secularism: a loss of the sense of the sacred and a lack of respect for divine law.<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> Ilia Delio, *Brain Science and the Biology of Belief: A Theological Response*, *Zygon*, vol. 38, no. 3, September, 2003, page 579.

<sup>406</sup> This is essentially Huston Smith's position. Further references will focus on Huston Smith, "Huston Smith Replies to Barbour, Goodenough, and Peterson," *Zygon*, volume 36, number 2, June 2001, pages 223-231.

<sup>407</sup> Carter, page 359. By Carter's assessment, the ecological crisis of late modern times must be seen as an aspect within the broader "secularity" crisis emerging historically since the enlightenment. (Carter, page 364) She holds secularism responsible for the objectification of nature, and she blames modern philosophy for greasing the mechanistic, reductive, objectifying wheels of secularism. She blames Descartes for raising human reason above the rest of nature, and other animals. She blames Kant for finally cementing humanity's opposition to the natural order. (Carter, pages 360 and 364, respectively) She blames modern ethical theory for maintaining this tradition in the operating myth of the "rationalist calculator model of the human being." (Carter, page 369) These are all criticisms to which I am especially inclined to endorse. Furthermore, Christianity, by Carter's picture, has simply been "unwittingly" duped into legitimizing these developments, having "acquiesced in the vested interests of particular power groups." (Carter, page 364) As a result, humanity has set itself against "God's good creation,"

Could it be that Carter has a point, that a history of science and secularism are responsible for emerging ecological crisis? Could it be that a return to traditional religions is our best hope for an environmentally sustainable future? Religion does appear to have a deep history of confirmation and success, thousands of years in as many forms, while the upstart secularism seems to have only modern failures in evidence for its faithful adherence. Pollution, after all, is not a direct product of traditional religion, but of science. Yet, what makes the religious past the right response to emerging crisis, now?

The seasoned religious person could eventually come to have faith in God to sustain him through future trials, as God has already demonstrated his real presence consistently in the past. Thus, to rely on God in faith is not an irrational act to the Christian, but a perfectly reasonable and justified act, based on empirical evidence.<sup>408</sup>

So, what gives religion the edge is the depth of the religious experience; maybe we should return to traditional ways of life. A thousand years ago, a lot more about the world was taken on faith; and, there was a lot less ozone depletion in the dark ages, that much is a fact. Even though it is unlikely that our own age should be so bright, faithful executors of inherited religious practices, by their religious experience, do at least appear justified in blaming secularism and

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embodying "the false ontological status that raises human beings out of the created order and that both inhibits our self-understanding as creatures and denies the construal of Christian notions such as grace and redemption in ways that establish any commonality of focus within which the goods of the human and the non-human might be considered together."(Carter, page 369) Accordingly, for our environmental concerns, it appears to be a simple case of one or the other, a simple, but irreconcilable, dispute.

<sup>408</sup> Christine I. Niles, "Epistemological Nonsense? The Secular/Religious Distinction," *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics, and Public Policy*, Volume, 17, 2003, page 569. (Such evidence must be at least partly the source of Wilson's admirable admission in the late pages of E.O. Wilson's *Consilience*, regarding his own scientific world-view in the face of religious competitors, that "I might be wrong.")

scientism for the natural world's emerging ills.

The secularist or socialist has a limited resource mentality and views the world as a pie ... that needs to be cut up so everyone gets a piece ... the Christian knows that the potential in God is unlimited and that there is no shortage of resources in God's earth. ... while many secularists view the world as overpopulated, Christians know that God has made the earth sufficiently large with plenty of resources to accommodate all of the people.<sup>409</sup>

Now, this statement embodies the polar opposite of the message that there is an emerging environmental catastrophe; according to this view, there is no environmental crisis, at all. Scientists, from this perspective, are simply taken as advocates of a contrary religion, a religion with a bad record.<sup>410</sup> Faith in traditional ways of life, faith in God, appears to have the evidence on its side. Scientists, lacking faith in religious experience, instead come to what appear to be, from the religious perspective, unwarranted conclusions regarding the

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<sup>409</sup> In a now famous, recent, address delivered while accepting the Global Environmental Citizen Award presented by the Center for Health and the Global Environment of the Harvard Medical School December 1, 2004, Bill Moyers, himself a Christian, lamented the fact that religious policy makers, especially Christians, have been committed to the destruction of the environment. This address is available for public download at <http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/april.html#bill>. The passage is taken as quoted from Moyers's address. It is as if God, himself, will replant the forests and revitalize the rivers; no worries.

If we take this passage seriously, it appears that there is no environmental crisis at all! This doesn't describe the world in which I live; indeed, they are assertions without even a basis in publication. For instance, see Roger Lewin's short review appearing in *Science*, Vol. 228, No. 4701, May 17, 1985.

<sup>410</sup> If this is the case, then, as Huston Smith has maintained, we must return to so-called "traditional world-views." This implies the wholesale rejection of contemporary scientific thought. Smith himself believes that, expecting the scientist to admit that a God-like agency may play a role in science, in our present case the science of saving the earth from global environmental collapse, is simply asking too much:

"It would be wrong for theologians to ask scientists to admit supernatural causes into their theories; there they would abort their scientific project." (Smith, page 224) Smith goes on: "But it is equally wrong for them to close their eyes to places where proximate, naturalistic causes are missing. For until satisfactory naturalistic explanations come along - and they may be never - it is reasonable to believe that causes from outside nature (to wit, God's direct inputs) hold the answer." (Smith, page 224)

So, until science can answer all the technical solutions to environmental problems necessary for sustainable human life on Earth, all scientific recommendation for changes in traditional ways of life in light of environmental crisis must be rejected? Apparently, at least, there can be no resolution between these two poles if Smith is right.

condition of our environment.

Together, these two poles work against any resolution to environmental problems; as long as they argue, the changes required for global environmental sustainability cannot be instituted. We appear to be in a condition much like that in which Socrates finds himself, with Callicles, at the close of the Gorgias:

For it's a shameful thing for us, being in the condition we appear to be in at present - when we never think the same about the same subjects, the most important ones at that - to sound off as though we're somebodies.<sup>411</sup>

To get around this and similar disputes, some religious thinkers have asserted that science needs to be conceived anew, theologically.<sup>412</sup> Maybe if this were to happen religion could give us guidance in regards to the science of environmental sustainability. Until then, it seems that we might be stuck with a choice between one or the other. How could philosophy ever help us to choose between a religious and a scientific way of life?

Thankfully, it won't have to; the religious experience is as universal as is the experience of growing environmental calamity, though in either case the understandings of these experiences may differ. As long as the evidence of a religious experience, or evidence of environmental collapse, or evidence of God, just is the experience of a human being with a human brain in a certain prepared condition, then these experiences are not unique. If they were, then there truly could be no communication between the poles of science and religion, and no

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<sup>411</sup> 527d.

<sup>412</sup> Positive work in the Christian tradition channelling Paul Tillich's influence to this end, reciprocal and productive co-dependence between science and religion, comes under the heading of "theonomous science," and is delicately discussed in Ronald B. MacLennan's excellent "Belief-ful Realism and Scientific Realism," *Zygon*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2001, pages 309-320.

way past vicious dispute. Socrates recognized this fact:

...if human beings didn't share common experiences, some sharing one, others sharing another, but one of us had some unique experience not shared by the others, it wouldn't be easy to communicate what he experienced to the other.<sup>413</sup>

According to Socrates, this is the real issue. It is the common experience which permits communication. The religious, and the scientific, exist as poles in argument only because they exist as poles of human experience, in common. There is, in fact, between a life of science and a life of religion, no choice to be made. Of course the scientist uses his terms, and the religious hers, but underlying there is common experience, or there is no communication, and no understanding, and no hope, at all.

It may be objected, immediately, that Socrates knew nothing of environmental science, not to mention cognitive science, and was not concerned with the malaise from which our modern world suffers; he wasn't even Christian. Just because it has been said by a brilliant man, many years ago, before our global environmental crisis presented itself, doesn't ensure it is right. Looking to a 2500 year old tradition, especially one largely out of practice, for answers to contemporary problems seems like a false start; what about progress, after all? Hasn't the world changed so much that whatever his philosophy has to say is really just novelty?

One thing that hasn't changed is change; the world is changing, and we need guidance as to what is the best way of life in light of this fact. The best life,

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<sup>413</sup> 481d. Notably, these are not nobodies who are arguing with one another over what needs to be done about world catastrophe. Our greatest minds have lined up as champions of opposing traditions against one another.

according to Socrates, is that which is "adequate to and satisfied with its circumstances at any given time."<sup>414</sup> In fact, it is a resistance to this way of life which motivates the dispute between science and religion over the environment. People continue to simply live the way they are used to living, according to traditions which, unlike the Socratic tradition, are not adequate to any given time.

The fundamental point in this present work is the following: to hold onto a way of life which encourages and even inflames tragic conditions is vicious. It is nothing less than hanging the future of life on Earth on an article of faith. It is as if Pascal's wager were extended to the whole of the globe, with an expectation that 70 years is long enough a life-span for not just one's self, but for anyone and everyone and everything else. In fact, though, 70 years may be too generous an estimate if past practices are continued, on faith, in the face of changing material evidence; we may not have even that much time.

One's articles of faith might have served for thousands of years, or since the enlightenment, but that is no guarantee that they will continue to serve, or even that they serve us, now.

The fact is that a way of life is not all that we inherit from the scientific and religious past; we inherit the effects of these ways of life, as well. These effects need to be weighed - the point of the environmental science is that for the most part they have been - and our future practices adjusted accordingly.<sup>415</sup> This fact,

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<sup>414</sup> 493c.

<sup>415</sup> This fact has been recognized by many other influential contemporary thinkers whose concerns are specifically the possibilities for living well, with others, in the upcoming millennia. One principle component of these thinkers is the responsible appreciation of the impact that consistently applied, that is inherited and faithfully maintained, modes of life have had on our resource environment.

needless to say, is not popular to point out. Especially for philosophy.

Why? Consider the inaction at the institutional level to adjust to new ways of life; it is not a popular notion to advise that old ways are vicious. Those presently faithful to the ways of life that they have inherited are depending on those inherited ways to remain effective, even in the face of ill-effects on the changing environment due to those same practices.<sup>416</sup>

And, they may be right to do so; but, once we do understand that we are in the midst of a global environmental crisis, in terms of both the scientific and the religious experience, themselves simply common poles of human experience, the question appears differently.

In the face of environmental crisis, new ways of being must be explored, invented, and these must become habit, routine, and finally convention as replacement for that past convention that has fallen from virtue to vice. True, experts in all fields do have to figure their areas out; but, the change itself takes more than simple reassessment. It takes philosophy.

Somehow, though, the institution of philosophy escaped the notice of the environmental scientists responsible for the U.N. Millennium Group report. The philosophic solution, the solution I am recommending, is not in the institution of philosophy, per se; in this regard, the U.N. report is essentially right to overlook it. The philosophic solution that I am recommending is the philosophic life.

The tested strategy for dealing with intergenerational tradeoffs, that necessary component for an environmentally sustainable future, is philosophy. It

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<sup>416</sup> On faith in the authority of past actors; and this attitude, when influential on public policy, is, if not dangerous, simply irresponsible. For interesting discussion in this vein, see Niles, page 567.

is the demonstration, and willingness, to realize the uncomfortable truth, to integrate the wisdoms of past and future in study, and in practice, that is the philosophic life. Of course, this means pointing out the unpopular; and, often enough, this leads to argument. But:

For my part, if I engage in anything that's improper in my own life, please know well that I do not make this mistake intentionally but out of my ignorance. So don't leave off lecturing me the way you began, but show me clearly what it is I'm to devote myself to, and in what way I might come by it...<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> 488a.

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Vita:

**Jeffrey Benjamin White**

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513 North Fifth Street  
Columbia, MO 65203  
573 424 3830  
jbenjaminwhite@gmail.com

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- PhD.** Philosophy - *University of Missouri - Columbia* (December, 2006)  
AOS: Ethics, Philosophy of Neurology and the Cognitive Sciences.  
Emphasis: Socratic Philosophy, Phenomenology.
- M.S.** Chemistry (General) *Cleveland State University* (2001)  
Emphasis: Chemistry and Education, Analytic Chemistry,  
Molecular Modeling, Philosophy of Chemistry.
- M.A.** Philosophy (Bioethics) *Cleveland State University* (2001)  
Emphasis: Pragmatism, Discourse Theory, Bio/Medical Ethics.

My dissertation, *Conscience: The Mechanism of Morality*, was 4 years in the making. In it, I develop a model of moral cognition as a text in traditional philosophy. The long gestation period necessary for the adequate conceptualization of the mechanism, not to mention the articulation of the text itself, presented me with the opportunity to test and to revise the work in progress against some of the best in contemporary philosophy and psychology at conferences, in person, and through an exhaustive review of literature. I was inspired to begin the project by the need for a clear articulation of conscience for applications in artificial intelligence as well as in philosophy and everyday life. The work lay in stitching together 2500 years of philosophical insight with the cutting edge of the cognitive sciences. The model takes hybrid system neural network architectures as a starting place equally with Socratic philosophy, contemporary neurology, and evolutionary psychology. The work solves many deep problems in contemporary Ethics. For instance, instead of taking morality to be a set of additional rules and conventional stipulations, the model developed in *Conscience* generates a sense of morality as a necessary aspect of cognition, generally. Martin Luther King, Jr., Socrates, St. Paul and others each exemplify conscience at work in the world. Kant, Heidegger, Plato, James, Hegel, Rousseau and modern thinkers give accounts of conscience. These insights are integrated with the revolutionary science of researchers Ilya Prigogine, Kevin Ochsner, Antonio Damasio, E. O. Wilson, and many others.

## **Recent Conferences**

*The Kline Conference on Collective Agents* - Fall, 2005.

From this conference, a paper was inspired and presented at the 2006 MPSA. This work became threaded into the finished dissertation. Notable influences here are David Copp, Daniel M. Hausmann, and the incomparable Robert Sugden.

*The University of Missouri Brain Imaging Symposium* - Fall, 2005.

This conference anticipated the addition of fMRI to the University of Missouri's psychology department resources. It presented the opportunity to speak with a few at the cutting edge of the cognitive sciences on issues related to the ethics of death and dying, conscience, and the objective limits of imaging technologies. Notable influences here are Kevin Ochsner, whose pioneering field of Social Cognitive Neuroscience provides substantial justification for the model of conscience as developed in the dissertation.

*The Kline Conference on Practical Reason* - Spring, 2006.

This was a fantastic opportunity to test the mature model of conscience against insights into practical reason from the brightest in the field of Analytic Philosophy including Ruth Chang, Jamie Dreier, John Broome, and Michael Smith. As a result of this conference, I have been able to account for these diverse views within the model as developed, thereby realizing that the model itself is doing the work it needs to do to be called the mechanism of morality.

*The MidWest Political Science Association* – Spring, 2006.

This conference presented an opportunity to apply some dissertation research results within contemporary discussions in Political Philosophy regarding the status of collective entities. I delivered a paper assessing the status of collectives as “agents” grounded in a robust yet simple theory of intention which is itself consistent with the cutting edge thought in the neurosciences, social cognitive neuroscience.

## **Presentations**

*Who Killed Socrates? The Plausibility of a Blameworthy Collective Agent.*

Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago: April 2006.

- Travel supported by the Kline Chair fund, University of Missouri –  
Columbia department of Philosophy.

*A Vector Analyses of the Euthyphro.*

University of Missouri Graduate Student Roundtable: Fall 2002.

*The Philosophy of Quantum Chemistry: A Primer.*

University of Missouri Graduate Student Roundtable: Fall 2002.

### **Affiliations and Offices**

Program Coordinator, Global Action to Prevent War, *Currently*.

Midwest Political Science Association, *Member*.

American Chemical Society Student Chapter, C.S.U., *Past Officer*.

Student Advisory Council, B.G.S.U. Firelands Campus, *Past Chairman*.

### **Professional Experience**

*Research Assistantship and Dissertation Support*, funded by the Dean's Office, University of Missouri College of Arts and Sciences, *August 2005 - August 2006*.

I assisted my dissertation advisor Professor John Kultgen in administering a large lecture course, the *Philosophy of War and Peace*, while focusing on the dissertation. Graded written work and assisting with thesis revisions, worked one on one with students on course projects and tests, and provided general classroom support and substitution.

*Teaching Assistant*, University of Missouri – Columbia, *August 2001 - May 2004*.

Responsibilities here involved the assessment of all coursework including theses and their revision, the administration of weekly small class discussions, the organization and presentation of study sessions, testing and exam composition, and large lecture substitution for the following professors: Bina Gupta, Alexander VonSchoenborn, Paul Weirich, and John Kultgen. The courses to which I had been assigned were alternately *Introduction to Philosophy* and *Introduction to Ethics*.

*Chemistry Department Laboratory Technician and Assistant*, at both Bowling Green State and Cleveland State Universities, *August 1992 - August 1994 and January 1997 – August 1998*. Responsibilities included set-up of experiments, maintenance of lab and lab equipment, the inventory and production of chemicals and equipment for chemistry laboratories both for professional and for student/educational use, and teaching support during lab sessions.

*Teaching Assistant and Logic Tutor*, Department of Philosophy, Cleveland State University, *August 1997 - August 1999*. Graded tests, tutored students, and provided support for Introductory Logic courses.

*Tutor*, Athletic Department, Cleveland State University, *August 1999 – May 2000*. Here, I helped students with a variety of coursework including psychology and sociology, some mathematics and chemistry. Responsibilities also involved overseeing the department study hall and computer lab.

*Graduate Student Assistant*, Office of Graduate Admissions, *August 2000 – May 2001*. Assisted in overcoming obstacles presented by whole office transition, served and advised applicants to the graduate school while in person, via telephone and through file systems from paper to PeopleSoft.

**Selected Seminars in Philosophy:**

American Pragmatism: Peirce (DeMarco)  
 Rousseau (Canivez)  
 BioMedical Ethics: Health Care (Richmond)  
 Heidegger (VonSchoenborn)  
 Aristotle (Kultgen)  
 Phenomenology: Readings (Kultgen)  
 Wittgenstein (audited, Sievert)

Plato (Foley)  
 Indian Metaphysics (Gupta)  
 Habermas (Richmond)  
 Empiricism (Sievert)  
 Hegel (VonSchoenborn)  
 BioEthics: Issues (Richmond)  
 Kant (audited, VonSchoenborn)

**Selected Seminars in Related Fields:**

Physical Chemistry: Group Theory (Diraj)  
 Organic Chemistry (Masnovi)  
 Analytic Chemistry (Guo)  
 The Education of Chemistry (Luoma)  
 Artificial Intelligence: Neural Networks (Sun)

Spectroscopy (Flechtner)  
 BioChemistry (Wei)  
 The Professoriate (Townsend)

**Courses/Seminars I Am Interested in Teaching/Developing:**

Introduction to Logic: Critical Thinking  
 Introduction to Ethics  
 Introduction to Philosophy  
 Introduction to Bio-Medical Ethics  
 BioEthics: Medical Ethics/Health Care  
 Existentialism and Phenomenology  
 Philosophy of the Cognitive Sciences  
 Logic and Advanced Symbolic Logic  
 American Pragmatism  
 Eastern Philosophy: Comparative  
 Philosophy of Technology and Engineering  
 Social and Political Philosophy: Rousseau  
 Metaphysics: Being and Becoming  
 Philosophical Issues: Evolutionary Psychology  
 History of Bio-Medical Ethics: From Asclepius to Modern Medicine  
 Medical Ethics: Comparative Health Care Systems  
 Dynamic Systems Theory: Complexity, Self-Organization, and Chaos  
 Philosophy of Mind, Artificial Intelligence, and the Cognitive Sciences  
 Social and Political Philosophy: The Philosophy of War and Peace

Ethical Issues: Globalization  
 Ancient Greek Philosophy  
 Philosophy of Religion  
 BioEthics: Clinical Issues  
 BioEthics: Genetics  
 Philosophy of Death and Dying  
 Environmental Philosophy  
 Social and Political Philosophy  
 Discourse Theory: Habermas  
 Philosophy of Science  
 Plato, Kant, Hegel and Heidegger  
 Issues in Ethics: Virtual Reality  
 Philosophy of Chemistry  
 Philosophy of Biology

**Contacts:**

John “Jack” Kultgen, *Professor of Philosophy*, dissertation adviser, University of Missouri – Columbia. Office Phone: (573) 882-3772. Office Address: 424 General Classroom Bldg. E-mail: KultgenJ@missouri.edu

Alexander VonSchoenborn, *Associate Professor of Philosophy*, advisor, University of Missouri – Columbia. Office Phone: (573) 882-3462. Office Address: 431 General Classroom Building. E-mail: VonSchoenbornA@missouri.edu

Ron Sun, *Professor of Cognitive Sciences*, outside advisor, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Office Phone: (518) 276-3409. Office Address: Carnegie 302A. E-mail: rsun@rpi.edu