

The Foundations of the Sacred

The Immanent Metaphysics, Set Out from First Principles

Volume III
Ethics, Creation, and the Sacred

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A Note on This Series

The Foundations of the Sacred is issued in four volumes. The chapters are numbered continuously across the series, from Chapter 0 to Chapter 30, so that a reference to Chapter 22 means the same thing in every volume. Where a chapter named in the text belongs to a different volume, the volume is named beside it.

Volume I, *Foundations and the Machinery of Knowledge*. Chapters 0 to 9, Appendix A and Appendix B.

Volume II, *The Interior: Emotion, Motivation, and Choice*. Chapters 10 to 18.

Volume III, *Ethics, Creation, and the Sacred*. Chapters 19 to 27. *This volume.*

Volume IV, *Civilization: Technology, Community, and Collective Choice*. Chapters 28 to 30.

The book in your hands is Volume III, *Ethics, Creation, and the Sacred*. It assumes both Volume I and Volume II, and it is the one volume of the four that cannot be read first. The reason is precise. The ethics is a derivation, and it derives from comparison: symmetry and continuity, defined in Chapter 4 (Volume I) as properties of a comparison (symmetry, sameness of content across a difference of context; continuity, an unbroken connection without gap), arrive here as properties of an action. It is also an ethics of choice, and choice is not defined here. It is defined in Chapter 16 (Volume II), and used throughout these chapters without being defined again. Take away either parent and what is left is either a formal argument with nothing to apply it to, or a subject with no derivation. Both sets of inherited terms are listed in the glossary at the back. Within the order of the

series, each chapter of this volume is self-contained: a reader who has the terms of Volumes I and II can read any one of these nine chapters on its own.

The question this volume carries is what follows for a chooser from the structure of comparison, and it carries that question from conduct to the sacred. Chapters 19 to 22 give the ethics.

Chapter 19 is the shorter of the two accounts of the ethics that this volume carries, giving a compact account of the derivation as a whole; the fuller account, which arrives at the two principles step by step, is carried by the two chapters that follow the developmental sequence, Chapter 21, "Non-Relativistic Ethics", and Chapter 22, "The Two Principles in Practice".

I give the ethics twice in this volume, by two different routes that complement each other rather than duplicate each other, and I say here what Chapter 19 does that Chapters 21 and 22 do not, since a reader who wants only the derivation should go straight to Chapters 21 and 22. Chapter 19 is the volume's treatment of Hume's guillotine, the claim that no statement about what ought to be can be logically derived from statements about what is. It names the is-ought gap, states the metaphysical architecture the gap depends on, and dissolves it by way of a single claim, that ontology, epistemology, and axiology (the accounts of what is, of how it is known, and of what matters) stand to one another in the Axiom III relation of distinctness, inseparability, and non-interchangeability, so that the separability the gap presupposes is false at the foundation. Chapters 21 and 22 do not name Hume and do not argue the gap; they begin from comparison and reach the two principles of symmetry and continuity by a route that never passes through the fact and value literature at all. Chapter 19 also sets the derivation beside the nearest thing to it in recent Anglophone philosophy, Hilary Putnam's case against the fact and value dichotomy, and says why the claim of the Immanent Metaphysics is the stronger one; it takes the cooperative nature of choice from the theory of creation and draws the ethical consequence; it places the ethics within the historical frame of the three masteries, the mastery of change, the mastery of causality, and the still incomplete mastery of choice, toward which my later

work on artificial general intelligence, existential risk, and governance is directed; and it closes with an orientation for a reader coming to the material for the first time, a reading path through the sections of *An Immanent Metaphysics* and a test of the framework against one's own remembered choices. None of those five things is carried by Chapter 21 or Chapter 22. What those chapters carry, and Chapter 19 does not, is the derivation itself: the six intrinsics of comparison, the four primary operators (continuity, discontinuity, symmetry, and asymmetry, the four combinations of sameness and difference of content and of context), the formal content of the two principles, the constraint the Incommensuration Theorem places on them, and what they ask of a person act by act.

Chapter 19 dissolves the gap between is and ought, on the ground that ontology, epistemology, and axiology (the accounts of what is, of how it is known, and of what matters) cannot be separated. Chapter 20 shows why the two principles of the ethics bind a chooser: keeping the conditions of choosing is a factor in what the chooser most wants, and no other gain can make up for its loss. Chapter 21 derives the two principles, the symmetry ethics and the continuity ethics, from the six intrinsics of comparison (sameness and difference, content and context, subject and object, the six concepts that every comparison involves), and Chapter 22 says what they ask of a person, act by act, and where they stop. Chapter 23 carries the ethics into relationship and community, since a community in which care governs can make effective choices at a scale that neither an individual nor a state can.

Chapters 24 and 25 give the theories of creation and of consciousness. The theory of creation is the structural foundation of the ethical claims, because every choice is an act of creation and creation is cooperative; the theory of consciousness identifies consciousness with interaction itself, and every choice is an interaction. Chapters 26 and 27 give the sacred: Chapter 26 gives the structure of what lies beyond knowing, the unknowable, the Great Mystery, and the Catastrophic Theorem, that either everything is sacred or nothing is, which Chapter 22 meets first in the ethics; Chapter 27 gives what is made of that structure in a life, as spirituality,

religion, and practice. The thread through all nine chapters is choice, and the Catastrophic Theorem joins the two ends of it: "Effectiveness, meaningfulness, and life, are best realized when regarding All as sacred and significant".

The preface that follows describes the whole work and is printed in all four volumes; where it speaks of the volume in hand, it speaks of this one.

Preface

In this book I set out, step by step, the philosophical system I call the Immanent Metaphysics, which I have developed over a period of more than three decades.

The Immanent Metaphysics is a unified account of the necessary structure of interaction, grounded in a single formal result, the Incommensuration Theorem, and developed outward through epistemology, psychology, ethics, theories of creation and consciousness, and the structural analysis of civilization. The Incommensuration Theorem is a structural fact about the nature of knowing. Its scope runs from that one formal result to the structure of civilization, and its foundations are formal throughout. It is also, by its nature, dense.

The four volumes of this book exist to provide a structured way in. This volume is the third step of that way: it is entered from Volumes I and II, whose terms it uses.

Each of the thirty-one chapters of the complete work (the work also has two appendices, printed in Volume I and described below) takes one major concept or layer of the system and develops it from first principles, presenting the argument clearly enough that a reader encountering the material for the first time can follow each step of the reasoning, test each step in that reader's own experience, and decide for themselves whether and how to engage further.

The chapters are organized into six thematic layers:

Foundations (Chapters 0 to 3): the evaluative method, the three axioms, the Incommensuration Theorem, and the three modalities (the immanent, the omniscient, and the transcendent, the three basic natures that a concept can have).

Epistemology (Chapters 4 to 9): comparison as the basis of knowledge, and what follows from it for knowing, valuing, and the limits of knowledge; the song/text/code model of communication, and what it shows

about law, agency, and the integrity of the channel; and the four errors of extrema, with the right-angle turn that the metaphysics takes in their place. Both appendices are printed in Volume I, beside this layer, rather than at the back of the work. Appendix A is the companion to Chapter 4: it develops the six intrinsics of interaction at the length the rest of the work assumes. Appendix B is the companion to Chapter 2, and it carries the formal defenses of the Incommensuration Theorem entire, including the categorical proof, which reaches the theorem's two surviving modes by four mechanisms and without counting anything, so that a reader can work through the proofs of the central result of the system without leaving Volume I. It is mathematics, and it says so in its first section, and nothing elsewhere in the work depends on reading it.

Psychology (Chapters 10 to 18): the nature of thought, feeling, and emotion; the dynamics of emotion; desire, want, and need; the self as locus of choice; and the developmental sequence.

Ethics (Chapters 19 to 23): the derivation of ought from is, the reason a chooser has for keeping the conditions of choosing, non-relativistic ethics, and the structure of connection, relationship, and care.

Metaphysics of Creation (Chapters 24 to 27): the theories of creation and consciousness, and the nature of the sacred.

Civilizational Application (Chapters 28 to 30): technology and existential risk, and the structural design of governance and community.

Each chapter is designed to be self-contained within the order of the series: a reader who has the terms of the volumes before it can read it independently, starting from whatever topic most interests that reader. The chapters of this volume assume the terms of Volumes I and II, which the glossary at the back lists. At the same time, the chapters build on one another in the order given, and a reader who follows the full sequence will encounter the system's ideas in the order that makes their mutual dependence clearest.

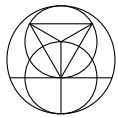
Numbers such as 2.44-12 or 2E6 cite the aphorisms of my book *An Immanent Metaphysics*. The bibliography lists my other books and papers that the chapters quote.

I derive the Immanent Metaphysics, as it now stands, from first principles.

I develop the evaluative method used throughout briefly in Chapter 0 (Volume I) and at full length in my three volumes of *A Metricated Means and Method of Comparative Philosophy*, which provide a complete, bias-resistant methodology for evaluating philosophical systems across all traditions.

A consolidated glossary of key terms and a topical index appear at the back of this volume.

My primary text is *An Immanent Metaphysics*, and this book sets out its system chapter by chapter.



Chapter Nineteen

The Ethics of the Immanent Metaphysics

Choice, Love, and the Dissolution of the Is-Ought Gap

ABSTRACT

This chapter sets out the ethical framework derived from the Immanent Metaphysics (IM), the philosophical system I have developed. Unlike most ethical systems, which begin from intuitions, cultural norms, or stipulated principles and then attempt to justify them, the IM ethics is *derived*: it follows structurally from the same axioms and the same proof (the Incommensuration Theorem) that ground the system's metaphysics, epistemology, and natural philosophy. The central claim is that ethics is not a separate domain appended to ontology but an intrinsic structural feature of any reality in which choice, change, and causality are foundational. In this chapter I give, as a whole, the derivation of the ethics from the axioms and from the Incommensuration Theorem. This chapter is also the place in this volume where I treat Hume's guillotine. The derivation of the two principles of the ethics step by step, from the six intrinsics of comparison, is carried by Chapter 21, "Non-Relativistic Ethics", and Chapter 22, "The Two Principles in Practice".

This chapter is written for a reader who has the terms of Volumes I and II and meets the ethics here for the first time; the background it needs from them is restated where it is used.

Can anything about how the world is tell a person how to act? I hold that something about how the world is can tell a person how to act. The reason is that what is, how it is known, and what matters cannot be separated from one another, and in this chapter I show why those three cannot be separated.

I. The Problem That the IM Ethics Addresses

For nearly three centuries, Western philosophy has operated under the shadow of what is known as Hume's guillotine, or the is-ought gap: the claim that no statement about what *ought* to be can be logically derived from statements about what *is*. Facts are one thing; values are another; and no amount of factual knowledge can, by itself, tell us what we should do. This principle has been enormously influential. It underlies the modern separation of science (which describes what is) from ethics (which prescribes what ought to be), and it is the deep reason why most contemporary ethical frameworks are either explicitly non-foundational (they begin from stipulated principles or cultural norms) or are understood to rest on premises that cannot themselves be justified from within the system.

The practical consequence is that the modern world has extraordinary power (technological, institutional, economic) and no grounded basis for deciding how to use it. The gap between technological capacity and ethical wisdom is an intellectual puzzle and, in an era of nuclear weapons, artificial intelligence, and ecological disruption, an existential threat. Whether the is-ought gap can be crossed therefore matters as much as any question can: to accept a false bridge, or to reject a real one, would be an error with the highest stakes there are.

The is-ought gap is a logical claim: it asserts that no valid inference can take you from "is" premises to "ought" conclusions. The gap is a claim about inference, so I answer it with an inference, and I set that inference out below on its own logical terms.

II. Background: Choice, Change, and Causality

To understand the IM ethics, one must first understand its metaphysical foundation, which is compact enough to state in a few paragraphs.

I hold that the fabric of all reality (all process, all being, all experience) is composed entirely of three things: choice, change, and causality. Choice, change, and causality *are* what reality is made of, and not aspects of reality among others. They are distinct (each has a different meaning), inseparable (none occurs without the other two), and non-interchangeable (none can substitute for another).

The Immanent Metaphysics has three *modalities*, three basic natures that a concept can have: the immanent, the omniscient, and the transcendent. Each of the three foundational terms has one of them, and what each term is shows what its modality is. Change has the nature of the immanent modality: it is the actual process, the happening, the event. Causality has the nature of the omniscient modality: it is the knowable pattern, the regularity, the lawful structure. Choice has the nature of the transcendent modality: it is the creative, the potential, the not-yet-determined. The assignment of change to the immanent, causality to the omniscient, and choice to the transcendent is the assignment of 1.61-3, made in the third person, explaining. Taken in the first person, with the emphasis on choice, choice is immanent, and I use that first-person assignment in Chapter 27. The third-person assignment and the first-person assignment are one Axiom II rotation.

Three axioms state how the three modalities stand to one another, and I give them in *An Immanent Metaphysics* at 1.3-1. Axiom I: "The immanent is more fundamental than the omniscient and/or the transcendent. The omniscient and the transcendent are in conjugate relationship to one another". Axiom II: "A class of the transcendent will precede an instance of the immanent. A class of the immanent will precede an instance of the omniscient. A class of the omniscient will precede an instance of the tran-

scendent". Axiom III: "The (classes/instances) of the immanent, omniscient, and transcendent are distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable".

Where the three axioms are applied to choice, change, and causality; by Axiom I, change is more fundamental than either choice or causality. You cannot have causality without change (no regularity without events to be regular), and you cannot have choice without change (no selection without a process of selecting). Choice and causality are conjugate: each of the two requires the other, yet the two point in different directions, choice toward creative potential and causality toward lawful structure. By the Incommensuration Theorem, choice and causality cannot both be perfected simultaneously. No process is purely chosen (absolutely free) or purely caused (absolutely determined). Every real event is an inseparable mixture of both.

By Axiom II, the cycle of precedence runs: a class of choices is needed to beget one instance of change; a class of changes is needed to beget one instance of causality; a class of causality is needed to beget one new choice. This cycle is the fundamental rhythm of process: creative potential crystallizes into actual events, actual events accumulate into known patterns, and known patterns generate the conditions for new creative potential.

What the three axioms say of choice matters for ethics, because choice is not something *added* to a causal universe. It is one of the three irreducible components of any universe. It is not an illusion, not an epiphenomenon (a by-product of what underlies it, with no effect of its own), and not a secondary effect of underlying determinism. It is structurally prior to any specific instance of causality, just as causality is structurally prior to any specific instance of choice. If choice is a foundational structural feature of all reality, then the question "what constitutes good choice?" is not a question *about* reality that floats free of reality's structure; it is a question *within* reality's structure, answerable from within that structure. Placing the question of good choice within the structure of reality is the first step toward bridging the is-ought gap.

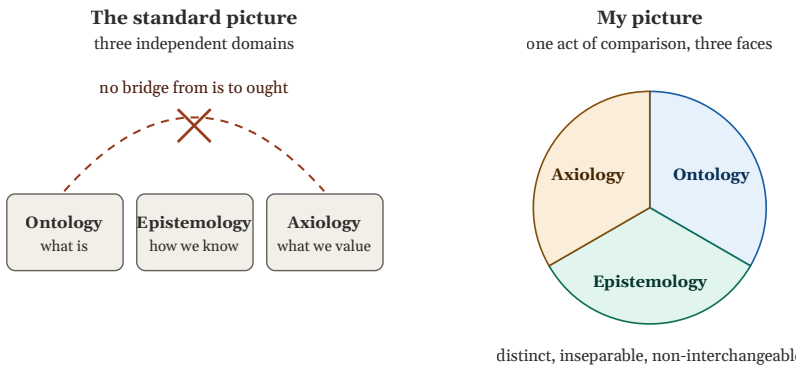
III. The Dissolution of the Is-Ought Gap

Hume's guillotine rests on a specific metaphysical architecture: the assumption that fact, knowledge, and value are independent domains, such that no logical bridge can connect them. In the standard modern picture, ontology (what is), epistemology (how we know), and axiology (what we value) are separate enterprises, and the gap between them is unbridgeable.

I reject the architecture that Hume's guillotine rests on as a structural consequence of the Axioms and of the Incommensuration Theorem (the ICT), and not by fiat. The ICT states that symmetry (sameness of content across a difference of context) and continuity (an unbroken connection without gap) cannot both be applied, simultaneously and fundamentally, to any event or comparison. Nor, by the ICT, can asymmetry and discontinuity both be applied, simultaneously and fundamentally, to any event or comparison. The argument proceeds as follows.

Ontology, epistemology, and axiology are themselves a foundational triple. They correspond, respectively, to existence (what is), knowing (how we know), and choice (what we care about, what we commit to, what we value). By Axiom III, these three are distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable. This means, in particular, that they are *inseparable*: you cannot have an ontology that does not already presuppose an epistemology and an axiology. You cannot make any claim about what *is* without implicitly committing to a method of knowing (epistemology) and a reason for caring about the question (axiology).

The is-ought gap is the claim that ontology and axiology are *separable*: that you can fully specify what is without thereby committing to anything about what ought to be. But if ontology, epistemology, and axiology are inseparable in the IM's precise sense (they are intrinsic to any act of comparison, which is the basis of all knowing), then the gap's foundational premise is false. The gap is not bridged by building a logical bridge from one independent domain to another; it is *dissolved* by showing that the domains were never independent in the first place.



Left, the picture that Hume's guillotine assumes: three independent domains, with no bridge from what is to what ought to be. Right, my picture: ontology, epistemology, and axiology as three faces of one act of comparison, standing in the Axiom III relation. The is-ought gap is dissolved rather than bridged, because the domains were never independent.

Dissolving the is-ought gap, by showing that the domains were never independent, is not a merely verbal move. The inseparability of ontology, epistemology, and axiology follows from the same structural argument that grounds the ICT: comparison (which is the basis of all knowledge and all evaluation) necessarily involves content, context, sameness, difference, subjectivity, and objectivity. The subjective aspect (which is the locus of value, of caring, of mattering) is an intrinsic of comparison, not an optional addition. You cannot have a comparison that is purely objective; subjectivity is built in at the foundational level. Therefore, any description of reality that is complete enough to include comparison itself (and any description must include comparison, since description *is* comparison) necessarily includes the subjective, evaluative dimension.

The key inference is: if ontology, epistemology, and axiology satisfy the Axiom III relation (distinct, inseparable, non-interchangeable), then the is-ought gap's premise of separability is false. The question reduces to: do they satisfy Axiom III? They do, because all three are intrinsic to comparison, and comparison is the foundation of all knowing and being. A read-

er may ask whether subjectivity really is an intrinsic of comparison. It is: a comparison must be *made by something* (a subject), *about something* (an object), and the subject's perspective shapes what is compared and how.

A reader may press the question further, in Hume's spirit, and insist that even if subjectivity is an intrinsic of comparison, the *value* dimension of subjectivity (caring, mattering, the ought) is distinct from the *perspectival* dimension (having a viewpoint). My answer is that the perspectival and the evaluative are themselves inseparable: to have a perspective *is* to have certain things matter and others not, because a perspective is constituted by what it attends to and what it ignores, and attention is an expression of valuation. A purely value-neutral perspective is a perspective that attends to nothing, which is no perspective at all.

IV. The Ethical Content: What I Derive

Having dissolved the is-ought gap as a structural claim, I now derive specific ethical content from the Axioms. The derivation does not smuggle in hidden premises (as Hume's guillotine predicts any such derivation must); it works directly from the structural properties of choice as a foundational modality.

IV.1. Choice as Cooperative and Creative

From the IM's foundations: choice has the nature of the transcendent modality. In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I state the cooperative character of creation and of choice together, in "Theory of Creation" at 1.73-8: "Both creation and choice are necessarily/fundamentally cooperative processes". No one and nothing creates entirely by themselves; creation always involves the coordination of multiple aspects, multiple sources, multiple participants. That creation always involves the coordination of multiple aspects, sources and participants is a structural observation, and not a moral injunction. The observation is that the transcendent modality, by its

nature, involves the gathering of multiple contributions into a new instance. Choice, insofar as it is an instance of creation, is therefore inherently cooperative.

A purely unilateral choice is one that disregards the participation of all other beings affected by the choice. Because choice is inherently cooperative, the immediate ethical implication is that a unilateral choice is a *less effective* choice to the degree that the choice is unilateral, and not only a less moral one. It is operating against the structural grain of what choice is. Effective choice requires the coordination of the chooser with the field of beings within which the choice operates.

IV.2. The Intensity of Choice and the Meaning of Freedom

I distinguish between three types of response to events: action, reaction, and response. Reaction is mechanistic: a fixed output triggered by a fixed input, with no internal processing. Action is deliberate but may be driven by unconscious habit or external pressure. Response is the fullest form of engagement: it involves perception, reflection, integration, and then expression (a complete cycle of the Axiom II process).

One case, told in three versions, shows the three types of response. Someone insults me in a meeting. If I snap back at once, with the words the insult pulls out of me, that is reaction: a fixed output to a fixed input. If I answer with the polite phrase I always use when someone is rude, that is action: deliberate, but driven by habit. If I pause, take in what was said and why it was said, notice what it stirs in me, and then choose what to say, which may be nothing at all, that is response: perception, reflection, integration, and expression, the whole cycle.

The *intensity of choice* is the measure of how much choosing a life contains. I define it in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, in "The Intensity of Choice" at 1.64-4: "The total intensity of personal expression (choice bandwidth, personal power) is defined to be the product of the density (the number of choices) and the frequency of expression (the rate at which choices are made)". I develop the intensity of choice in Chapter 16 (Volume II). A life

run mostly on reaction contains few choices, however busy it is; a life that responds contains many. Intensity measures how much choosing is going on, and freedom, as I say in the next paragraph, is how much of that choosing is effective. The two are distinct, and a full freedom needs both: a life with little choosing in it has little to be free with, and a life of much choosing that is divided against itself has much choosing and little effective choice.

Freedom, in the IM, is not the absence of constraint but the *presence of effective choice*. Freedom is proportional to the degree of internal coherence and cooperative coordination within the self and between the self and its environment. A self that is internally fragmented (in conflict with itself) has less effective freedom than one that is internally coherent. A self that is isolated from or in conflict with its environment has less effective freedom than one that is in cooperative coordination with it.

This redefines the ethical question. The question is not "what should I do?" (as if the answer were an external rule to be obeyed) but "how can I choose more effectively?" (which turns out to be: "how can I become more internally coherent and more cooperatively coordinated with the beings around me?")

IV.3. The Ethics and Morality Distinction, and the Criterion of Right Action

In this section I treat two claims of *An Immanent Metaphysics*: that ethics is more fundamental than morality (2.12-1), and that right action preserves and extends the conditions of effective choice (2.12-15, 2.156-2). Chapter 21 gives the two principles of the ethics, and those two principles are different claims from the two I treat here, that ethics is more fundamental than morality, and that right action preserves and extends the conditions of effective choice for all affected beings. The two principles of the non-relativistic ethics are named as such in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, in the section "The Two Principles of Ethics" at aphorism 2.12-6, and they are the Principle of the Symmetry Ethics and the Principle of the Continuity

Ethics. The first holds that where the omniscient, objective, external context is different, and where the transcendent, subjective, internal context is the same, the content of expression shall be the same. The second holds that where the omniscient, objective, external content is different, and where the transcendent, subjective, internal content is the same, the context of expression shall be the same. In Chapter 21 I quote both principles in the words of *An Immanent Metaphysics*, I explain the six terms in which the two principles are stated, and I give the two further formulations of the two principles that *An Immanent Metaphysics* contains. The two claims this section treats are claims of *An Immanent Metaphysics* in their own right, and they are treated here under their proper descriptions. Neither is a principle of the ethics in the sense that book gives that phrase. The first of the two claims that I treat in this section is the ethics and morality distinction, which I give in "Distinguishing Ethics and Morality" at 2.12-1. The second of the two claims is the criterion of effectiveness, which I give at 2.12-15 and in "Impeccability" at 2.156-2.

The first claim, which has the nature of a theoretical (Axiom I) claim (a claim about which of two things is more fundamental, the kind of claim Axiom I makes), concerns the relationship between ethics and morality. Ethics, in the IM's precise usage, refers to the principles of effective choice as such: the structural conditions under which choice functions well. Morality refers to the specific rules, norms, and customs of a particular community at a particular time. Ethics is more fundamental than morality: morality is (or should be) the culturally specific expression of ethical principles, adapted to the conditions of a particular community. When morality loses its grounding in ethics, when the rules become ends in themselves rather than expressions of the conditions of effective choice, the community's moral system ceases to serve its purpose.

The second claim, which has the nature of a practical (Axiom II) claim (a claim about what an action does in the course of a process, the kind of claim Axiom II makes), concerns the character of right action. Right action is that which simultaneously maintains and enhances the conditions under which effective choice is possible, not just for the actor, but for all be-

ings affected by the action. The criterion of right action is not a consequentialist criterion, which evaluates actions solely by their outcomes, nor a deontological one, which evaluates actions solely by their conformity to rules. It is a structural criterion: right action is that which preserves and extends the structural conditions of effective choice. My own statement of it in *An Immanent Metaphysics* names the two principles as its measure, at 2.12-15: "Choices (and actions) are most effective when they are the most ethical; when they preserve both symmetry and continuity". That sentence is the join between what this section treats and what Chapter 21 derives, and it is the reason the criterion is not a third principle standing alongside the two but a statement about them.

IV.4. Love as That Which Enables Choice

The most widely known of my statements is the aphorism that love is that which enables choice, which I give in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, in "The Nature of Love" at 2.44-2, with its condition attached: "Where love is an understanding, love is that which enables choice". In the context of the full ethical derivation, the aphorism that love is that which enables choice is a precise structural claim, and not a sentimental platitude.

If effective choice requires internal coherence and cooperative coordination; if the structural conditions of choice are potentiality (having real options), selection (having the capacity to choose among them), and consequence (having the outcomes be real); and if whatever maximizes effective choice across beings is performing the function that the word "love" points to in its deepest usage, then love, structurally defined, is the maximization of the conditions of effective choice.

I give the three conditions in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, in "Self of Choice" at 1.65-1, so this argument does not assume them: "The essence of the concept of choice is resolved into exactly three necessary and sufficient concepts. Choice is a process of potentiality, selection, and consequence".

"Without any of these, there is no choice (an impossible condition)". Chapter 16 (Volume II), section II, "What Choice Is", sets the three out in full.

A contrasting pair of teachers shows the definition at work. One teacher widens what a student can try: she shows the student more ways into a problem than the student knew of, which enlarges potentiality; she lets the student pick a way and does not pick it for him, which leaves the selection his; and she lets the attempt count, praising or correcting what actually happened, which makes the consequence real. The other teacher narrows what the student can try: one method only, chosen by the teacher, with the result decided before the student begins. Both may care about the student. Only the first relationship enables the student's choice on all three conditions, and that is the relationship the word love, structurally defined, names.

This connects the IM's ethics to its metaphysics in a very tight way. Love is not an emotion (though it may be accompanied by emotion). It is not a preference (though it involves preferences). It is a structural property of the relationship between beings: the degree to which that relationship enables each being to choose more effectively. A relationship characterized by love is one in which each participant's effective freedom is enhanced by the presence of the other. A relationship characterized by its absence is one in which each participant's effective freedom is diminished.

Most contemporary ethical frameworks are either explicitly relativistic (what counts as good depends on the culture, the individual, or the situation) or are understood to rest on premises that cannot be justified non-circularly. I derive ethics from the structural properties of choice and comparison, properties that are logically necessary, not culturally contingent. The resulting ethics is therefore non-relativistic: not in the sense that it prescribes identical behavior in all situations (it does not; the specific expression of the principles is always context-dependent), but in the sense that the *principles themselves*, the structural conditions of effective choice, are universal. They apply wherever choice occurs, which is everywhere that process occurs, which is everywhere.

V. Why the Dissolution Holds

In this section I show that the ethical derivation follows from the metaphysical foundations of the Immanent Metaphysics. What holds the derivation together is that its conclusions follow from its premises, which is a logical relation, and not that its conclusions are congenial, which would be a social-contextual one.

V.1. The Dissolution Rests on Inseparability

The dissolution rests on the claim that ontology, epistemology, and axiology are structurally inseparable: that they satisfy Axiom III. The argument for inseparability is that all three are intrinsic to comparison, and comparison is the foundation of all knowing and being. The perspectival and the evaluative are inseparable too, as section III shows: to have a perspective is to have certain things matter and others not, so a perspective that is part of every comparison brings value into every comparison with it.

This argument is structurally similar to Hilary Putnam's arguments in *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy*, but it is more precise because it is anchored in the analysis of comparison in Chapter 4 (Volume I), which gives three independent derivations of the six intrinsics of comparison (content, context, sameness, difference, subjectivity, and objectivity, as section III lists them), of which subjectivity is one; the six are prior to the ICT, and the theorem is built on them. Putnam argued that fact and value are entangled, so that the dichotomy between them collapses even where the distinction stays useful; I argue that they are structurally inseparable at the level of the foundations of comparison itself. My claim of structural inseparability is stronger and more precise than Putnam's claim of entanglement, because my claim is derived rather than observed.

V.2. How the Ethical Content Follows

Given that choice is a foundational modality, that creation (the transcendent) is inherently cooperative, and that effective choice is proportional to internal coherence and cooperative coordination, the two claims of section IV.3 follow directly: ethics is more fundamental than morality (because the structural conditions of effective choice are more fundamental than any specific cultural expression of them), and right action is that which preserves and extends the conditions of effective choice for all affected beings. The derivation of the two principles of 2.12-6, the symmetry ethics and the continuity ethics, does not run through the argument just given, and is the business of Chapter 21.

The derivation of "love is that which enables choice" follows from: if the structural conditions of effective choice are potentiality, selection, and consequence; if these conditions are maximized by cooperative coordination between beings; and if "love" is the word we use for whatever performs this function in its fullest expression; then love just *is* the enabling of choice, and the statement is a definition grounded in structural necessity rather than a sentiment grounded in cultural preference.

The premises are the Axioms and the ICT. The ethical content is not smuggled in; it emerges from the structural properties of choice as a foundational modality.

V.3. Three Questions a Reader May Ask

A reader may ask three questions at this point, and I answer each of them here.

The first question is whether I am simply redefining "love" and "ethics" to mean what I want. I am not. My definitions of these terms are explicit and grounded in structural analysis. "Love" is defined not by its emotional connotation but by its structural function: enabling effective choice. "Ethics" is defined not as a set of rules but as the study of the conditions of effective choice. These definitions are narrower and more precise than common usage, and they are derived from the Axioms rather than stipulated.

Whether one chooses to call the resulting structure "love" or "ethics" is a terminological question, not a substantive one. The structural content stands regardless of what labels are attached to it.

The second question is whether this framework generates specific guidance, or whether it is too abstract to be useful. I designed this ethics to generate principles rather than rules. It tells you what the *conditions* of effective choice are, and invites you to assess your own situation in terms of those conditions; it does not tell you what to do in any specific situation. Giving principles rather than rules is what makes it an ethics. A framework that generated specific rules for every situation would be a morality, not an ethics; and moralities, as section IV.3 states, are culturally specific and change with circumstances. The structural conditions of effective choice do not change with circumstances, even though their specific expression does. The practical guidance is: in any situation, ask what would preserve and extend the conditions of effective choice for all beings affected. The practical guidance is a demanding criterion, and not a vacuous one, because the criterion excludes many possible courses of action and gives priority to cooperative, coherent, life-enhancing courses of action.

The third question is how this ethics connects to the IM's broader civilizational claims. I situate the ethics within a historical narrative of "three masteries": humanity's mastery of change (developed through indigenous and Eastern contemplative traditions), its mastery of causality (developed through Western science and technology), and its still-incomplete mastery of choice (the ethical and governance capacity adequate to the scale of the problems created by the first two masteries). The ethics of the IM is the theoretical foundation for the third mastery: the development of collective choice-making capacity adequate to the civilizational challenges of the present era. My work on artificial general intelligence (AGI), on existential risk and on governance is work on the third mastery, the capacity for collective choice that the present era requires, and the ethics this chapter sets out is the ground of that mastery. My argument that AGI cannot be made safe rests on chemistry and thermodynamics, on established theorems

and physical laws independent of one another, and on economics, and not on this chapter. What this ethics grounds in that work is the question of value, what we mean by "existential risk" or by "catastrophic", which needs a theory of value as well as a theory of choice, and the question of what should be done, which is a question of ethics and of governance and belongs to a different argument.

VI. How to Engage

For the reader approaching the ethics for the first time, I recommend beginning with the "Choice, Change, and Causality" section of *An Immanent Metaphysics*, which establishes that these three are the irreducible fabric of all reality. Then read the "Action of Choice" and "Intensity of Choice" sections, which develop the distinction between reaction, action, and response, and which define freedom as the presence of effective choice rather than the absence of constraint. Then read "Distinguishing Ethics and Morality" and "The Two Principles of Ethics", which contain the core derivation.

As you read, test the claims against your own experience. Consider a time when you made a choice that felt deeply right, right not by some external standard but in the sense that it expressed your fullest engagement with the situation. Was that choice characterized by internal coherence (were you aligned within yourself?) and cooperative coordination (were you attending to the wellbeing of others affected?)? I expect that it was. Consider a time when a choice felt deeply wrong. Was it characterized by fragmentation or by disregard? I expect that it was. These questions are invitations to set the account beside the data of your own lived experience, and the derivation in the sections above is what establishes the account.

VII. Summary

Ontology, epistemology, and axiology are a foundational triple, and by Axiom III they are distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable, because all three are intrinsic to comparison and comparison is the basis of all knowing. The is-ought gap assumes that they are separable, and so its foundational premise is false: the gap is dissolved rather than bridged. To have a perspective is to have certain things matter, so value enters every comparison together with the subject who makes it.

From choice as a foundational modality I derive the ethical content. Choice is cooperative, because creation is cooperative. Freedom is the presence of effective choice, and it is proportional to internal coherence and cooperative coordination. Ethics is more fundamental than morality. Right action preserves and extends the conditions of effective choice for all beings affected, and at 2.12-15 I measure it by the two principles: choices are most effective when they preserve both symmetry and continuity. Love is that which enables choice. The two principles themselves are derived in Chapter 21. The ethics gives principles and not rules, which is what makes it an ethics, and it is the foundation of the third mastery, the mastery of choice.

I hold the ethics to be one of the most important structural consequences of the Immanent Metaphysics, and not an addendum to it. The is-ought gap dissolves because ontology, epistemology, and axiology are inseparable as intrinsics of comparison. The specific ethical content (the cooperative nature of choice, the definition of freedom as effective choice, the priority of ethics over morality, the structural criterion of right action, and the structural definition of love as that which enables choice) follows from the Axioms and the ICT. The two principles of the non-relativistic ethics, the symmetry ethics and the continuity ethics, are not derived here; Chapter 21 derives them from the six intrinsics of comparison and states exactly how far that derivation reaches.

The ICT is a structural fact about the nature of knowing, and so the ethics is a structural consequence to be understood and applied, not a philosophical proposal to be debated. The question it leaves is how to implement it, not whether to accept it: how to build the individual and collective capacity for effective choice that I identify as the third and still-incomplete mastery.

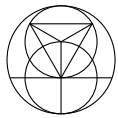
The world's most urgent problems (ecological collapse, ungoverned technology, institutional failure, the erosion of meaning) are, at bottom, failures of collective choice. A non-relativistic ethics grounded in the structural conditions of effective choice is not an academic luxury. It is exactly the kind of foundation that might, if enough people understand it and commit to it, make it possible to make good choices through the century ahead.

The dissolution raises a question of its own, and the chapter that follows answers it: if ethics describes the conditions of effective choice, what reason does a chooser have to keep those conditions?

KEY CONCEPTS IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Choice, Change, Causality**: the three irreducible components of all process; the fabric of reality in the IM.
- **The Is-Ought Gap** (**Hume's Guillotine**): the claim that no "ought" can be derived from an "is"; dissolved in the IM by showing that ontology, epistemology, and axiology are structurally inseparable.
- **Inseparability of Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology**: my structural claim that fact, knowledge, and value are intrinsic to comparison and therefore cannot be isolated from each other.
- **Effective Choice**: a choice that results in the realization (manifestation) of desire (2.112-1); its marks are internal coherence and cooperative coordination, and freedom is its presence.
- **Ethics vs. Morality**: ethics as the universal structural conditions of effective choice; morality as the culturally specific expression of those conditions.

- **The Two Principles of Ethics**: the Principle of the Symmetry Ethics and the Principle of the Continuity Ethics, named as such in *An Immanent Metaphysics* at 2.12-6. They are distinct from the priority of ethics over morality and from the structural criterion of right action, the two claims section IV.3 treats; the two principles themselves are derived in Chapter 21.
- **The Criterion of Right Action**: right action is that which preserves and extends the structural conditions of effective choice for all beings affected, which is neither a consequentialist nor a deontological test. *An Immanent Metaphysics* measures it by the two principles, at 2.12-15: choices are most effective when they preserve both symmetry and continuity.
- **Love Is That Which Enables Choice**: a structural definition derived from the IM's foundations, not a sentimental claim.
- **Action, Reaction, Response**: three modes of engaging with events; response involves the full Axiom II cycle and represents the fullest exercise of choice.
- **The Three Masteries**: humanity's mastery of change (contemplative traditions), mastery of causality (science and technology), and the still-incomplete mastery of choice (ethics and governance).
- **Non-Relativistic Ethics**: ethical principles that are universal (because grounded in the necessary structure of choice) even though their specific expression is always context-dependent.
- **The Cooperative Nature of Choice**: the structural observation that choice, as an instance of the transcendent modality, is inherently cooperative rather than unilateral.



Chapter Twenty

The Reason a Chooser Has

From the Conditions of Choosing to the Binding of the Two Principles

ABSTRACT

The derivation of ought from is that I give through the theory of communication establishes that the integrity of the channel between self and world is a constitutive condition of there being a chooser at all. One further step is needed, from that condition to a reason. A constitutive condition establishes that without it there is no agent; it does not, by itself, establish that the agent has reason to preserve it. The chooser who degrades the channel is not, on that argument alone, violating a principle; he is ceasing to be a chooser, which is a different finding and carries no obligation with it. This chapter makes that step, using only material *An Immanent Metaphysics* already holds. The step turns on three statements that were each written for other purposes and that converge here: that effectiveness is defined in terms of the realization of desire, that the most basic desire inherent in all consciousness is to maximize experience and creativity, and that maximizing actuality is identical with maximizing the integrity of self, world, and the relation between them. Taken together these entail that channel integrity is not a constraint placed upon desire from outside but a factor within the realization of desire itself, and that because the relation is multiplicative rather than additive, the factor cannot be traded away against the others. The conclusion is not that a chooser is obliged to preserve the conditions of choosing. It is that a chooser who preserves them is doing what he already most wants, and that a chooser who does not is not defying a rule but failing at his own

> purpose. An immanent ethics has to end in a conclusion in which a chooser who does not preserve the conditions of choosing is failing at his own purpose, and is not defying a rule. Because such a chooser fails at his own purpose and defies no rule, the two principles bind without being commands.

I. Where the Derivation Stops

Chapter 19 dissolved the gap between is and ought by showing that fact, knowledge, and value cannot be separated. I also derive ought from is by a second route, through the theory of communication, and this chapter begins from that route. My treatment of the is and ought problem is developed in several places and reaches the same result in each. In structure, my treatment of the is and ought problem begins from the claim that comparison is isomorphic with interaction and with relation (the three have the same form, each part of one corresponding to a part of the others), which is the root tautology. Communication is an interaction, so the theory of communication binds directly into the relation between subjective and objective. A general communication channel must satisfy two conditions in order to be a channel at all: the content of a message must survive the crossing from composition to reception, which is symmetry, and the channel must hold a proportionality between change of context and change of content, which is continuity. The relation between a self and a world is such a channel. Therefore the two conditions of a functioning channel are the two conditions of a functioning self-world relation, and these are the two principles of ethics. Chapter 21 gives this route in full at its section XII, from *An Immanent Metaphysics*, and states the two principles formally at its section IV; this chapter takes the result of the route as given, and the result is this: the two principles of ethics, symmetry and continuity, are the two conditions that the channel between a self and its world must meet in order to be a channel at all.

The crossing to normativity is then made through agency. My book *The Structure of Effective Choice*, in its chapter on the derivation of ethics, states it in these words:

> "To act with integrity, therefore, is not a matter of following a rule imposed from outside. It is a matter of maintaining the structural conditions upon which one's own existence, one's own experience, and one's own capacity for choice depend. Integrity is not a virtue added to life; it is the condition without which there is no life to add to".

The derivation in that passage ends at a condition, and this chapter asks the question that begins where the passage ends: does that condition give the chooser a reason?

What has been established is that channel integrity is a *constitutive condition* of choosing. Without symmetry, a choice does not survive the crossing and is not attributable to the one who made it. Without continuity, there is no basis on which selection could be made and no way to perceive what is available to select among. Break either and there is no longer an agent to be the author of the act.

The step that has not been made is from there to a reason. A constitutive condition tells you what a thing requires in order to exist. It does not tell you that the thing has reason to keep existing. The chooser who systematically distorts his own expression is not, on this argument, doing something wrong. He is doing something that dissolves the agent who does it. The finding that a chooser who distorts his own expression dissolves himself as an agent is a report about what happens. An ought has not yet appeared, and a reader who wants one can say so with perfect coherence: so much the worse for the chooser.

This gap is worth closing rather than dismissing. It is tempting to answer that reader by observing that anyone raising the question is a chooser raising it, and that the question therefore undercuts itself. That answer does not meet the question the reader is asking. A reader who presses this question is not claiming that he is not a chooser. He is claiming that being a chooser gives him no reason to protect the conditions of

being one, which is a claim a chooser can make without contradiction, in the same way that a person can coherently decline to protect the conditions of his own health. The self-undercutting reply mistakes a claim about reasons for a claim about existence. The gap is real, and it needs to be closed rather than deflected.

II. What a Constitutive Condition Cannot Do

The difficulty is the gap between a constitutive condition and a reason. I state the general form of that gap precisely, because the same form recurs in every transcendental argument in the tradition, and my derivation meets that form as every such argument does.

A transcendental argument establishes that some condition C is necessary for some capacity K. It is a strong form of argument, and it is not vulnerable to the ordinary skeptical reply, because the skeptic who denies C is exercising K in the denial. But the conclusion it delivers is modal and not normative. It says: no K without C. To reach "one ought to preserve C" requires a further premise connecting the possession of K to a reason. Kant supplied that premise by way of the form of practical reason itself. Others have supplied it by way of a prior commitment to rationality. Every version needs one, and a version that does not name its own is not thereby free of it.

My derivation needs such a premise too, and this chapter names it. The passage quoted above notes that the conditions are one's own, that they are the conditions of one's own existence, experience, and capacity for choice, and it lets the possessive do the work of a reason. The possessive is not nothing. It marks the place where the reason should go. It does not fill it.

What follows fills it. The material is already present in *An Immanent Metaphysics*: three pieces, each of which I wrote to answer a different question, and which this chapter assembles into one argument.

III. The First Piece: Effectiveness Is Defined in Terms of Desire

The first piece is the definition of effective choice, given at 2.112-1 of *An Immanent Metaphysics*:

> "An Effective choice is one that results in the realization (manifestation) of desire. An ultimately effective choice is one which realizes (manifests) the ultimate desires of all that is making that choice (the totality of the subjective) and all that is affected by that choice (the totality of the objective)".

Two things about this definition matter here.

The first thing that matters about the definition at 2.112-1 is that the definition defines *effectiveness* and not rightness. I state explicitly elsewhere in *An Immanent Metaphysics* that in ethics there is no right and wrong but only varying degrees of effectiveness. My statement that in ethics there is no right and wrong, but only degrees of effectiveness, is usually read as a modesty, a refusal to legislate. It is better read as a structural commitment: the evaluative term of the ethics is not compliance with a standard but the realization of what is actually wanted.

The second thing that matters about the definition at 2.112-1 is that I give the definition independently of, and prior to, the channel derivation. It is not derived from the two principles. It is not derived from the Incommensuration Theorem. It belongs to the treatment of desire and choice, and it would stand unchanged if the channel derivation had never been written. The independence of the definition of effective choice from the channel derivation is what makes the convergence below informative rather than circular.

IV. The Second Piece: What Is Actually Wanted

The second piece is the account of what desire, at its root, is a desire for. *An Immanent Metaphysics* gives it at 2.11-1, as the opening statement of the ethics:

"The most basic desire (the root cause) inherent in all consciousness is to maximize the degree (quantity), diversity (quality), and intensity of both the creative experience and the experience of creativity".

And at 2.11-4:

"Both actuality and potentiality need to be maximized for the full realization of life. Actuality and potentiality are conjugate with respect to complexity. All of life is complex. The concept of maximizing actuality is equivalent to the concept of maximizing experience, the integrity of self, world, and the relation between self and world".

That second passage is the hinge of this chapter, and its last clause is easy to read past. It does not say that maximizing actuality *requires* integrity, as a means requires a condition. It says the two concepts are *equivalent*: that maximizing experience and maximizing the integrity of self, world, and the relation between self and world are one concept under two descriptions.

The relation between self and world is the channel. Its integrity is what the two principles of ethics were derived as the conditions of. So the statement at 2.11-4, which I wrote in the chapter on the basal motivations for another purpose, already identifies the object of the deepest desire with the integrity of the channel.

The claim that all consciousness has this basic desire is the empirical premise the argument rests on. The empirical premise is a claim about what is found when desire is followed to its root, and not a truth by definition. The apparent counterexamples that come first to mind, the addict and the person bent on his own destruction, are handled elsewhere in *An Immanent Metaphysics* by the distinction between deep desire and surface want, where a want is located outside the self and a desire within it, and by the account of confused desire at 1.65-18: "When desires are confused (i.e., are internally conflicting or are unclear), or when one has conflicting ideas and beliefs, one has effectively become two smaller transcendent

selves, each of which has significantly less freedom of choice". That treatment has its own ground in the account of desire, want, and need in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, which stands apart from the present argument.

V. The Third Piece: The Product Form

The third piece is 2.112-2, which states how effectiveness is measured:

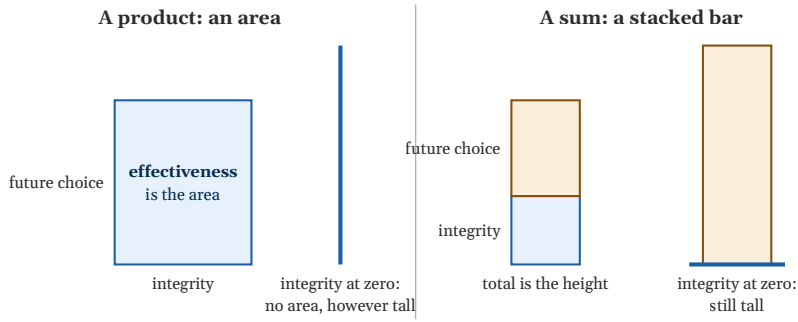
> "The most effective choices are those which provide or result in the greatest degree of wholeness and integrity (for self and world, necessary for experience), while at the same time allowing the greatest freedom to make additional future choices (for oneself and others, necessary for creativity). The degree of effectiveness of one's choices is proportional to the product of the degree to which one's choices (and their results) coherently maintain, sustain, enhance, and nurture: 1) the integrity and wholeness (i.e., the static continuity and symmetry) of the world, the self, and the relation between world and self, and, 2) the potentiality/realization/evolution of creativity and experience in all of life (i.e., the dynamic continuity and symmetry), including one's own life (the degree to which it potentiates other choices)".

In that statement the *static* continuity and symmetry are the two principles counted as preservation, keeping whole what is whole in the world, the self, and the relation between them, and the *dynamic* continuity and symmetry are the same two principles counted as potentiation, keeping open the choices still to come; Chapter 22, section III, reads the statement the same way, as the two principles counted twice, "once as preservation and once as potentiation". The word that carries the weight is *product*.

Had the statement said "sum", the argument would fail here, because a sum permits trade: a large enough gain in the second term would compensate any loss in the first, and a chooser could rationally sacrifice channel integrity for a sufficient increase in future options. Sacrificing channel integrity for a sufficient increase in future options is precisely the bargain

that instrumental reasoning about ethics always proposes. By that bargain every project of instrumental reasoning about ethics ends up justifying the thing that the project began by forbidding.

A product permits no such trade. If the first factor goes to zero, the product goes to zero, regardless of how large the second factor has grown. A chooser who has destroyed the integrity of the relation between himself and his world has not made an effective choice at great cost. He has made a choice of zero effectiveness, which is to say he has realized none of his desire, whatever else the choice produced.



The product form against the sum. In a product, effectiveness is the area of a rectangle whose width is integrity and whose height is future choice; a rectangle of zero width has zero area however tall it is. In a sum, the parts are stacked, and a bar with one part at zero can still be tall.

A story shows the same difference in a life. A person lies to win a contract. The contract comes, and with it more options for the future: the rectangle grows taller. But the trust that made the work worth doing, the integrity of the relation between that person and the people the work is for, has gone to zero: the rectangle has no width. However tall the rectangle stands, it encloses nothing. Counted as a sum, the lie would have been a bargain; counted as a product, the lie realized none of what the person wanted.

The product form of effectiveness has the same multiplicative structure that I use in the three rings of verification, given in Chapter 4 (Volume I). The three rings of verification are my procedure for measuring how far something counts as an objective part of a world. The measure has three parts: the intensity of one's interaction with the thing, the consistency of that interaction across rings of corroboration, and the novelty of the thing, the power of the thing still to surprise. There the degree to which something counts as objectively real is the product of intensity, consistency and novelty, and any one of the three at zero takes the whole to zero. The recurrence is not decoration. In both cases the multiplicative form is what converts a list of desiderata into a set of conditions, and the conversion is the point.

VI. The Argument

The three pieces can now be set in order. Each statement is already in *An Immanent Metaphysics*; only the ordering is added here.

1. The integrity of the channel between self and world, which is to say its symmetry and its continuity, is a constitutive condition of there being a chooser. Step 1 is the existing derivation, and in this chapter I take step 1 as given.

2. A choice is effective to the degree that it realizes desire. (2.112-1)

3. The degree of effectiveness is proportional to the *product* of two factors, of which the first is the degree to which the choice maintains the integrity and wholeness of the world, the self, and the relation between world and self. (2.112-2)

4. Therefore the integrity of the channel is not external to the realization of desire. It is a factor within it, and because the relation is multiplicative, a factor that cannot be compensated by any other.

5. The most basic desire inherent in all consciousness is to maximize the degree, diversity and intensity of experience and of creativity. (2.11-1) And maximizing experience is the same concept as maximizing the integrity of self, world, and the relation between self and world. (2.11-4)

6. Therefore a chooser, in choosing at all, is already engaged in seeking something whose realization has channel integrity as an uncompensable factor.

7. Therefore the chooser has reason to preserve the conditions of choosing. The reason is not that a rule requires it, and not that the conditions happen to be his. The reason is that those conditions are a factor in the realization of what he most wants, and that no other gain can substitute for their loss.

The conclusion is weaker than an obligation and stronger than a preference. It does not say that a chooser is bound by something outside himself. It says that a chooser who degrades the channel is not defying a law but failing at his own purpose, and failing at it in a way that no compensating success can offset.

The two principles bind a chooser by way of his own purpose, at which he fails when he degrades the channel. They do not command. They report the shape of the thing the chooser is already trying to do.

VII. Why This Is the Right Shape for This Ethics

The conclusion of section VI is that a chooser has reason to preserve the conditions of choosing. A reader could regard that conclusion as a weak substitute for a real obligation, and could wish that the derivation delivered something with more force. That wish should be examined, because the shape of the conclusion is not an accident and a stronger conclusion would be the wrong one.

I distinguish ought-as-morality from ought-as-ethics. A rule is a structure, held in the omniscient, which can be inspected and applied to a situation from outside it. A principle is what one practices from inside a situation, and is therefore immanent. Ethics is immanent here in the frame of practice: ethics as it is practiced from inside a situation. Where ethics is taken as principle, in triple with practice and theory, as in Chapter 22, section X, it is transcendent, since a principle is universal and is not directly applied, and the practice of it is the immanent member of that triple. I concede outright that no ought-as-morality follows from any is-as-being, and I claim only ought-as-ethics.

An obligation is a rule. It is inspectable from outside, it applies to a person whether or not he recognizes it, and it is enforced by something that is not him. Had the derivation delivered an obligation, it would have delivered a moral fact, which is exactly the thing it concedes cannot be derived and exactly the thing the omniscient modality would have to supply. A derivation that produced an obligation would therefore have proved too much, and its proving too much would be evidence that something had been smuggled.

What an immanent ethics has to deliver instead is a principle that a chooser can recognize from within his own situation as already governing what he is doing. "You are obliged to preserve the conditions of your choosing" is a rule and cannot be derived. "Preserving the conditions of your choosing is a factor in getting what you most want, and it cannot be traded" is a principle, is recognizable from inside, and is what has been derived. The apparent weakness of the conclusion is its correctness.

VIII. Three Questions a Reader May Ask

The Argument Is Not Circular

The sharpest question a reader may ask is whether the argument is circular: 2.112-2 defines effectiveness partly in terms of integrity, so that concluding integrity to be a factor in effectiveness would be to conclude nothing.

The answer turns on whether 2.112-2 is read as a definition or as a claim. Read as a definition, the charge of circularity succeeds and the argument is empty. Read as a claim, it does not. The definition of effective choice has already been given, at 2.112-1, as the realization of desire, and 2.112-2 does not repeat that definition but asserts something further: that the realization of desire is proportional to a specific product. The statement at 2.112-2 is substantive, and the statement is tested in the only place a statement about desire can be tested, namely in a life. It predicts that choices which degrade the integrity of the relation between self and world will be found, on later inspection, to have failed to realize what the chooser actually wanted, however much they delivered of what he thought he wanted at the time.

So the argument is not circular, and the reading it rests on is this: 2.112-2 is a claim about the structure of desire-realization and not a stipulation about the word "effective". I say as much in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, in the note attached to the same passage, which points the reader to the treatment of desire as distinct from want and from need for the basis of the distinction on which effectiveness rests.

A Chooser Who Does Not Care Is Divided

The second question is whether a person may know all this and be indifferent, preferring his surface wants to his deep desires and declining to be moved by an account of what he most wants.

He may, and the argument does not defeat his indifference. What the argument says to such a person is not that he is wrong but that he is divided, and *An Immanent Metaphysics* already gives an account of what division costs, at 1.65-17: "The freedom of the self to realize potential is directly related to the internal coherency/consistency/continuity of that self. Where self is divided internally, there is much less freedom of choice".

The person who prefers his surface wants has not escaped the argument. He has become, in the terms of *An Immanent Metaphysics*, two smaller selves, each with less freedom than the one would have had. Becoming two smaller selves is a cost to the person who prefers his surface wants, and the cost is in the currency that he was already spending. But it is not a refutation of his position, and it will not move him if he does not want to be moved. No ethics moves such a person, and one that claimed to would be claiming a power over the will that nothing in this system grants to anything.

The Argument Reaches Others

The third question is whether the argument, by grounding ethics in the chooser's own desire, fails to reach the other person and delivers at best an enlightened self-interest.

I answer the third question from the content of the desire, rather than by adding a premise. The desire at 2.11-1 is for the maximization of experience and creativity as such, not for one's own, and *An Immanent Metaphysics* is explicit about the scope at 2.11-3: "All the universe values all experiences and creations equally; it has no favorites". The second factor of the product at 2.112-2 is likewise stated for others as well as for oneself: the freedom to make additional future choices "for oneself and others". And 1.66-7 states the structural fact that closes the point: "All choice is cooperative. Choice can only be given, never taken". A chooser who diminishes the choosing of others has diminished a term in his own product, because the term was never indexed to him in the first place.

The argument is therefore not egoistic, though it does begin from the chooser's own desire. It begins there because that is where an immanent ethics must begin, and it does not end there because the desire it begins from does not.

IX. How to Engage

The inference of this chapter is short and can be checked in a sitting. The premise it rests on is tested in the first person.

Take a choice you made that damaged a relation, a choice you can still remember the reasons for. Do not ask whether it was wrong. Ask what you actually wanted, at the deepest level you can reach, and ask whether the choice delivered it. The argument of this chapter predicts a specific answer: that whatever the choice delivered of what you thought you wanted, the thing you most wanted was not delivered at all, and that this was not bad luck but structural, because a factor had gone to zero.

If you find that prediction confirmed, repeatedly, across cases that differ in every other respect, you have verified 2.112-2 in the only laboratory it has.

X. Summary

The argument runs from steps 2 through 6 to step 7. Its premises are all statements already made in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, and none of them was written in order to reach this conclusion. It rests on 2.11-1, the claim about the most basic desire, and on the reading of 2.112-2 as a claim rather than a definition, which section VIII sets out.

This chapter is my account of why the two principles bind a chooser. It makes one specific step and does not enlarge the ethics. Which of the two principles to favor in a given case is governed by the Incommensuration Theorem and by the practice of the path of right action, and not by anything here. It delivers principles and not rules, for the reason section VII

gives. Because I hold the boundary of self to be variable, the same argument applies to a community or an institution considered as a chooser; I carry that extension to a community deciding by consensus in Chapter 23, sections VII and XIII, where consensus, deciding from what all commonly desire together, is effective choice at the scale of a group.

An ethics whose principles are practiced from inside a situation cannot compel a person who declines to be inside his own situation. So the argument does not answer the person who has decided in advance not to be answered, as section VIII states, and that follows from the ethics being immanent.

The existing derivation establishes that channel integrity is constitutive of agency. The finding that channel integrity is constitutive of agency is true, and the finding is not yet a reason.

The reason is supplied by three statements *An Immanent Metaphysics* already makes: that effectiveness is the realization of desire, that the degree of effectiveness is proportional to a product of which channel integrity is one factor, and that the deepest desire of any consciousness is for the maximization of experience and creativity, which is the same concept as the integrity of self, world, and the relation between them. Put in order, these say that the conditions of choosing are not a constraint upon what a chooser wants but a term inside it, and a term that cannot be traded.

The chooser therefore has a reason, and the reason is his own. It is not delivered to him from outside, it does not oblige him, and it will not compel him if he refuses it. It reports that the thing he is already reaching for has, as one of its factors, the very integrity that his degradation of the channel would set to zero.

Because the chooser's reason is his own, and because the integrity of the channel is one of the factors of what he is already reaching for, the two principles are binding without being commands. For the same reason I can say that in ethics there is no right and wrong but only degrees of effectiveness, without thereby saying that nothing is at stake. And for the

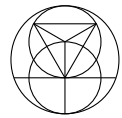
same reason an ethics of principles practiced from within is the only kind of ethics that a derivation whose conclusion is weaker than an obligation and stronger than a preference could ever have produced.

In this chapter I have taken the two principles as given. The chapter that follows derives them, from the structure of comparison.

KEY CONCEPTS IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Constitutive condition** A condition without which the thing in question does not exist at all. Establishing one settles a modal question and not a normative one.
- **Channel integrity** The symmetry and continuity of the relation between a self and a world: that content survives the crossing, and that change of content is proportional to change of context.
- **Effective choice** A choice that results in the realization of desire. Defined at 2.112-1, independently of and prior to the channel derivation.
- **The basal motivations** The most basic desire inherent in all consciousness, stated at 2.11-1 as the maximization of the degree, diversity and intensity of experience and of creativity.
- **The product form** The statement at 2.112-2 that effectiveness is proportional to the product, not the sum, of integrity maintained and future choice potentiated. The multiplicative form is what makes the first factor untradeable.
- **Ought-as-ethics** A principle practiced from inside a situation, held in the immanent, as distinguished from ought-as-morality, which is a rule inspectable from outside and held in the omniscient. Only the former can be derived.
- **Confused desire** The condition, at 1.65-18, in which internally conflicting desires divide a self into two smaller selves, each with less freedom of choice than the undivided one would have had.

- **Deep desire and surface want** The distinction on which effectiveness rests, made by the location of what is sought rather than by its intensity: a desire is located within the self, a want outside it.



Chapter Twenty-One

Non-Relativistic Ethics

Symmetry, Continuity, and the Derivation from Comparison

ABSTRACT

In the Immanent Metaphysics (hereafter the IM), there are exactly two principles of non-relativistic ethics, principles that apply to all consciousness, in all contexts, at all times. These principles are derived from the structural analysis of comparison and are expressed in terms of symmetry and continuity, the same two concepts that ground the Incommensuration Theorem (hereafter the ICT), the result that symmetry and continuity cannot both be perfected in any one comparison. The symmetry principle encompasses the golden rule, Kant's categorical imperative, equality before the law, the prohibition against deception and coercion, and integrity of communication. The continuity principle encompasses prohibitions against violence, involuntary creation or destruction of life, and abrupt disconnection from community. Together they constitute the complete and most concise language within which non-relativistic ethics is expressed. The theorem constrains them: because symmetry and continuity cannot both be perfected, no ethical system can be simultaneously perfectly rule-based and perfectly responsive. Morality, which is rules, and ethics, which is principles, are therefore structurally distinct and permanently necessary.

The companion chapter, Chapter 22, carries what the two principles demand in practice, what effectiveness is a degree of, justice and judgment, communication, maturity, and the limits of the whole derivation.

Where could a principle of effective choice come from, a principle that holds for every chooser in every context? My answer is that it comes from comparison: choice lives in the relationship between a self and an other, a relationship is an interaction, and an interaction is a comparison, so the principles of effective choice must be sayable in the language of comparison. In this chapter I find out what the language of comparison contains, and I read the two principles of ethics from the language of comparison.

I. Ethics and Morality

I draw a sharp distinction between ethics and morality. Ethics is the study of principles of effective choice, internal to oneself and independent of any particular domain. Morality is an externally defined set of rules in a particular domain, generally applicable to all selves, representing, one hopes, the principles of ethics in terms appropriate for a specific world or culture.

The relationship between ethics and morality is analogous to the relationship between physics and engineering. Gravitational equations are universally true; plugging in the mass of specific bodies gives specific predictions. Moral codes are the specific predictions; ethics is the underlying mathematics.

Moral codes are heuristics, simplified rules so that people can find their way through daily life without performing massive calculations. When moral codes work, they are adequate. When they fail, when people suffer, when the political divide grows, when the world feels hostile, one must return to underlying principles, create new practices, and derive new heuristics. The movement between principles and rules is the cycle: principles → practices → rules → rules fail → return to principles.

In times of great change, of which the present era is one, getting back in touch with the principles of a non-relativistic ethics is essential. Relative ethics says that what is right depends on the particular situation, which is

not really a principle at all. Non-relativistic ethics claims that we can know something about goodness independently of particulars, by way of principles that emerge from the nature of choice itself.

In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I add a consequence of the distinction that is worth having early, because it is the reason a reader should not expect this chapter to end with a list of instructions. At aphorism 2.12-9 of "The Two Principles of Ethics": "While there are only two principles (essential statements) of a non-relativistic ethics, there is an infinity of (diverse) effective ways to enact them; to live ethically". And: "While there can be any number of moral codes (expressions of rules), it is usually considered that there is only one right (correct) way to enact them, to live morally". The asymmetry is exact and it runs the opposite way to intuition. Ethics is few in principle and unbounded in practice. Morality is unbounded in principle and single in practice.

II. Telling the Two Apart

The physics and engineering analogy gives the relation between the two. It does not give a test. I give three, and each of the three is a different kind of thing: one structural, one procedural, one consequential.

The structural test is directional. In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I do not distinguish ethics from morality by degree of generality but by the direction in which the statement travels and by where it originates. At 2.12-1: "A statement of ethics (as a finite content) originates from (and has its basis within) self (the infinite subjective context) as a commitment to all worlds (the infinite objective context)". And, in the same aphorism: "A statement of morality (as content) originates from (and has its basis within) a specific world (domain or culture, the objective context) as a command to (a directive to be followed by) all selves (the subjective context)". A commitment made outward from a self; a command directed inward at

selves. Once one has that, the two are not easily confused, and the many cases in which a moral code presents itself as an ethics become visible as what they are.

The procedural test is a matter of counting. In my conversation on ethics, one of the conversations of my *Delicate Fire* series, I put it as a difference of base, and it is the most portable of the three tests. Morality is a simplification: it simplifies a base-three way of thinking to a base-two way of thinking. The simplification yields the familiar pairs, good and bad, pure and impure, clear and unclear, and it is a real simplification, which is to say a real loss. The test follows immediately: if you are thinking in terms of good or bad, you are working within a moral system, not an ethical one. The same passage gives the way back up, which is not a return to a third moral category but a move to measurement: there is a zero, a unit, and an extent, which is the simplest way to think about the notion of measurement. A zero, a unit, and an extent replace a boundary, and a degree replaces a verdict. A degree in place of a verdict is the concrete form of the claim that I make in Chapter 22, that in ethics there is no right or wrong but only varying degrees of effectiveness.

The consequential test is what happens when the two are confused. The same conversation gives it as a matter of law. Ethical principles are natural laws in the sense that they cannot be legislated away, and moral codes are civil laws in the sense that they can be enforced. It is a bad idea to have civil laws require people to do things that are inconsistent with the laws of physics; such laws only get a great many people punished for no real reason. The failure mode of a moral code is not that it is wrong in the abstract. It is that it commands what the structure of the situation does not permit, and the people who are punished for that failure are punished for a defect in the code.

A moral code that is right for its world, and right only for its world, makes the point better than an argument. One I have used in teaching comes from the era of electronic mail lists, before social media, when every community developed informal rules. One rule was near universal: "thou shalt not send messages in all capital letters". The reasons were en-

tirely practical. Capitals destroyed the reader's ability to tell whether the sender was shouting or merely using a primitive terminal, and they destroyed the distinction between the country Poland's adjective and what one does to shoes. I grant that the rule had real grounding and then place it exactly: it was specific to that constructed world. Change the world and the rule loses its warrant while the principle it was serving, the integrity of a message across a channel, does not.

One motivation for the whole enterprise belongs here, and I state it best this way: ethics, canonically the study of the principles of effective choice (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, p. 135), is downstream of understanding, with precision, what can and cannot be known. Ethics, on that account, is not a separate discipline that a metaphysics may or may not get around to. Ethics is what one is obliged to say about choice once one has said precisely what can be known. Because ethics is downstream of what can be known, the derivation that I give below starts from comparison and not from conduct.

Starting there has one consequence for what this chapter argues. Starting from comparison means that this chapter never argues against the is and ought gap, Hume's claim that no statement about what ought to be can be validly derived from statements about what is. The gap is not bridged here and it is not attacked here. It is simply not the road taken: the derivation asks what the language of comparison contains, finds two poles in it, and reads the ethics off them, and at no point does it need a premise about facts and values. The volume's other account of the ethics, which answers the gap directly, is Chapter 19. Its argument is that the domains the gap separates, ontology, epistemology, and axiology, stand in the Axiom III relation to one another and so were never separable to begin with; the epistemological form of that argument is in Chapter 5 (Volume I).

III. Why Comparison Is the Ground

The question that opens the derivation is not what is good. It is where a principle of effective choice could come from. Choice lives in the relationship between a self and an other. A relationship is an interaction. An interaction is a comparison. Therefore whatever principles describe effective choice must be sayable in the language of comparison, and the first task is to find out what that language contains.

In the *Delicate Fire* conversation on non-relativistic ethics I arrive at the terms rather than announcing them, and I begin with the eye. The vision of the eye is essentially difference. We notice difference, the edges of things, contrast, and change; if things are the same, if they are consistent throughout, then there is nothing to see. Perception is registration of difference, and difference is unintelligible without its complement. In this sense sameness and difference are the first pair of concepts that come with the notion of comparison, which is the notion of perception, and the second pair is content and context. The second pair arrives because a sameness or a difference is always of something and always within something: the painting is the content, the frame and the wall are the context. The third pair arrives by noticing the noticing: when we look at the fact of looking, we have already taken for granted that there is a difference between subject and object. And then the claim: those six concepts, taken together, are required for the notion of comparison.

Six terms, in three pairs: sameness and difference, content and context, subject and object. I state the same six with their sufficiency claim attached: the six intrinsics of comparison are sameness and difference, content and context, subjective and objective: three pairs, necessary and sufficient to characterize any comparison, none of which can be removed without destroying the notion.

The six intrinsics are three pairs, and in this chapter the pair, not the single term, is what a modality is assigned to: a modality belongs to concepts taken together, as they are joined in a comparison, and, as I state in *An Immanent Metaphysics* in note 1 to aphorism 1.76-6, "The specific associ-

ations between a triple of concepts and the modalities depend on the specific context of consideration in which that triple is used". So wherever a modality is named below, the pair or triple it is assigned to is named with it.

The six are reached a second time, independently, and by a route that owes nothing to introspection. My paper on the theorem in particle terms, "The Incommensuration Theorem: Particle Physics Modeling", builds the smallest physical arrangement that can represent an interaction at all, and then checks it by removal. "Necessity can be checked by subtraction". Take away the second hydrogen atom and distance and frequency lose their basis; take away the proton and there is no bound state that can register absorption as anything but an elastic bump; take away the photon and there is no signaling channel. "No smaller arrangement of Standard Model particles supports the concept of interaction". What is left standing, and cannot be subtracted further, is exactly six: "Given both necessity and sufficiency, six intrinsic concepts fall directly out of the construction: sameness, difference, content, context, subject, and object". And I state in the paper that nothing was assumed: "None of these was assumed in advance and then illustrated by the physics". Two routes, one from an ordinary act of seeing and one from the minimum physics of an interaction, arrive at the same six.

The step from comparison to everything else is a named result in *An Immanent Metaphysics* rather than a convenience. "The Root Tautology", at 1.42-4: "Comparison is isomorphic with interaction and relation". And: "All relations are interactions and are comparisons". And: "All comparisons are interactions and are relations". Because of the root tautology, a result about the structure of comparison is automatically a result about choice. Choice is an expression, an expression is an interaction, and an interaction is a comparison. The six intrinsics are therefore not one vocabulary among several in which the ethics might have been couched. They are the only vocabulary there is.

It remains to say what non-relativistic means, since the word carries the whole claim of the chapter's title. It does not mean standing outside all worlds. *An Immanent Metaphysics* fixes the three terms precisely, at 1.53-5: "Axioms refer to that which is applied between all domains, but is a part of none of them". "Laws refer to that which applies to/in/within only one world/domain". "Principles refer to that which applies to/in/within many worlds/domains". A principle is what holds across many worlds. So a non-relativistic ethics is an ethics of principles in that exact sense, and its non-relativity is a claim of scope: its principles hold across many worlds, and whether they hold in a given world can be checked in that world.

Two further grounds for the non-relativity are worth having, because they are independent of each other and of the argument just given. The first of the two further grounds for the non-relativity is ontological. I put it in one sentence: "since the notion of choice is attached directly to the notion of the real, and both objectivity and subjectivity emerge from the real, ethics connects to something even deeper than objectivity". And: "It is more fundamental and more powerful in that sense". The second states the non-relativity as a claim about every reasoning species. Any species capable of three things, observation, reasoning, and experience, will encounter the same constraint. It is not our invention. It is not our convention. It is a feature of reality itself. The claim that the constraint is a feature of reality itself is a strong claim, and I state the claim at full strength. The claim is about what every species that observes, reasons, and experiences will meet.

IV. The Two Principles

In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I state the two principles with formal precision and in the modal register, and I explain the modal register in the rest of this section.

The Principle of the Symmetry Ethics, at 2.12-6: "Where the omniscient/objective/external context is different, and where the transcendent/subjective/internal context is the same, the content of expression (immanent) shall be the same".

The Principle of the Continuity Ethics, in the same aphorism: "Where the omniscient/objective/external content is different, and where the transcendent/subjective/internal content is the same, the context of expression (immanent) shall be the same".

Six terms appear in those two sentences and a reader who does not already know the system cannot parse either of them. I define all six in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, in the two notes attached to the very aphorism just quoted, and they should be read with the principles rather than after them. Note 1: "Objective context refers to the domain, to time, space, and possibility; the environmental circumstances in which an event occurs". "The content of expression is the content of the communication channel from self to a world". "It is one's statements, assertions, actions, choices, and expressions". "Subjective context refers to the integrity, self-integrity, wholeness and continuity of self" (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, the section "The Two Principles of Ethics"). Note 2: "Objective content refers to matter, force, and probability (energy)". "The context of expression is the communication channel itself, the carrier of the expression between self and world (for example; one's beliefs, attitudes, perceptual filters, etc)". "Subjective content refers to the quality, the inner nature of self, the unique identity that is the being of Self" (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, the section "The Two Principles of Ethics").

With those in hand the symmetry principle says something quite ordinary. Where the circumstances differ and one's own integrity and wholeness are unchanged, what one says and does shall be the same. Its short name in the same note is a principle of consistent expressions. The continuity principle says something equally ordinary and much less often noticed. Where the other party or the material differs and one's own inner quality is unchanged, the channel itself, one's beliefs, attitudes and perceptual filters, shall be the same. Its short name is a principle of equal

valuations. The symmetry ethics is an expression of a principle of consistent expressions; the continuity ethics is an expression of a principle of equal valuations. The continuity ethics, the principle of equal valuations, is the one of the two principles that does the unfamiliar work. It says that one does not get to run a different channel for a different kind of other.

	What differs outside	**What stays the same inside**	**What shall be the same**	**Short name**	**Everyday case**
Symmetry Ethics	Objective context: the circumstances	Subjective context: one's integrity and wholeness	Content of expression: what one says and does	Consistent expressions	I tell the same truth to the powerful and to the powerless
Continuity Ethics	Objective content: the other person, or the material	Subjective content: one's inner quality	Context of expression: one's beliefs, attitudes, and perceptual filters	Equal valuations	I bring the same attention and the same filters to a stranger as to a friend

An Immanent Metaphysics restates both principles twice more, and the restatements are its best teaching device, because each says the same thing from a different standpoint. The essay "Alternate Formulations of the Ethics" gives the personal locus form, in which the terms are attached to an observer rather than to an interaction. At 2R8: "Symmetry Ethics: Where the observer/internal (subjective) context is the same, and where the observed/external (objective) context of perception is different, that the observer content of expression is (shall be) the same". At 2R9: "Continuity Ethics: Where the observer/internal (subjective) content is the same, and where the observed/external (objective) perceived content is different, that the observer expressed context is (shall be) the same". Three formula-

tions of one pair of sentences, in the modal register, the interaction register, and the personal register. Reading all three is the fastest way to see that the modal labels are not decoration.

Both principles are stated as relations between an external objective term and an internal subjective term, and a reader may fairly ask why that shape and not another. The answer is in the theorem's own vocabulary, and I have given it in conversation on the theorem. Symmetry describes everything knowable about the objective, and continuity describes everything knowable about the subjective: there is no knowledge of the objective that is not symmetry-based, and no knowledge of the subjective that is not continuity-based. The two surviving compounds of the theorem are the two perspectives. A principle built on symmetry must therefore be phrased across a difference of objective context, and a principle built on continuity must be phrased across a difference of objective content with a sameness of the subjective. The grammar of the two sentences is a consequence of which pole each of them is about.

V. The Symmetry Principle Unpacked

Symmetry is sameness of content where there is difference of context. Applied to ethics, this means that the same treatment, which is the content of expression, should hold across different circumstances, which are the contexts.

The instance I give in *An Immanent Metaphysics* is physical and it is worth having first, because it shows that the concept is not borrowed from ethics and then applied to physics. The Technical Appendix, at 2M3, takes the boiling point of water. "The results of this experiment do not depend on whether it is done somewhere in the USA or somewhere in France". And: "The universality of the 'natural laws of science' is thus an implication of the concept of symmetry". The content is the same across a differ-

ence of context. Sameness of content across a difference of context is the whole of the concept of symmetry, and everything that the symmetry ethics says is that same relation, with a person's expression as the content.

The golden rule is a special case: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Same treatment as content, different positions as context, namely what I do to you against what you do to me. Kant's categorical imperative is another special case: do only what would work if everyone did it. Same action as content, different actors as context. Equality before the law is a third: same treatment regardless of race, creed, or orientation. Where I list, in my writings on the theorem, what the symmetry principle encompasses, the third item on the list is integrity of communication, and not Kant's categorical imperative. My paper "The Incommensuration Theorem" (1995, revised 2004) gives "the symmetry principle encompasses the golden rule, equality before the law, integrity of communication", and to these belong the golden rule, equality before the law, and the prohibition against deception and coercion. That last is the symmetry principle's most practical consequence and it should not be left out. A deception is a message whose content at the point of composition differs from its content at the point of reception, which is a failure of symmetry by construction. A coercion is an expression whose content is a function of who is standing in front of one, which is the same failure from the other side.

Communication integrity is the deepest expression of the symmetry principle, and in the *Delicate Fire* conversation I give it a geometry. What is on one side of the plane of perception I call the subjective, and what is on the other side I call the objective. Everything that crosses that plane is a message. The symmetry principle is then a condition on the crossing: the message that I put into the channel and the message that comes out of the channel are the same message. The message is the same across different contexts: the subjective context, where I compose the message, and the objective context, where somebody decodes and reads the message. The two contexts are composition and reception. The content is the message.

Where symmetry breaks down, in the garbled message, the projection, the misheard intention, relational friction arises, and it arises for a structural reason and not a psychological one.

Two consequences close the section. The first of the two consequences is a test of quality, and that test is the ordinary use of the word 'quality'. If a tool works in many situations, it is a better tool, because a tool is a content whose value is its invariance across contexts. The second of the two consequences is a test of a choice, and I draw the conclusion of that test in the same *Delicate Fire* conversation. If a choice works only for me and is terrible for everybody else, that is a bad sign: the choice does not have the symmetry that it needs to have, and therefore it is probably selfish, or probably a crime, or probably a problem in some other way. A choice that benefits only me lacks symmetry in a sense that has now been defined, and the consequence in the domain of persons is this: fairness and justice, which are forms of symmetry applied to persons, are not optional features of a good society; they are structural requirements.

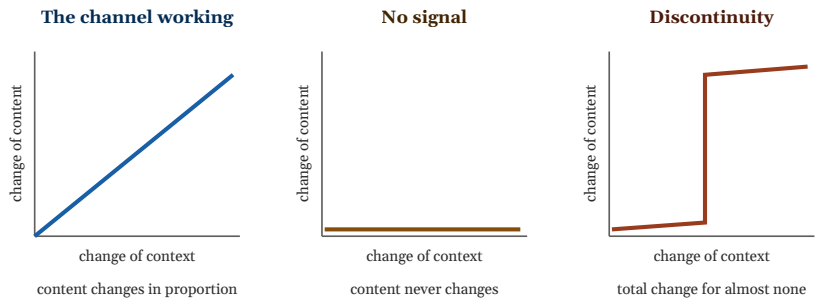
VI. The Continuity Principle Unpacked

Continuity has two registers and the chapter needs both, because the argument of the next section can only be seen in the formal one.

The formal definition, at 1.43-1 in "Symmetry and Continuity", is one of four given together, which is the form in which the concept is usable: "Continuity refers to where there is a sameness of content and a sameness of context". Set beside symmetry, which is a sameness of content and a difference of context, the two are seen to differ in exactly one place, which is whether the context is the same or different. I have stated the same point in one line: "Symmetry is sameness of content with difference of context; continuity is sameness of content with sameness of context. Sameness underlies both; what distinguishes them is whether context differs".

The informal register is a proportionality, and the Technical Appendix gives it at 2M6: "To assert continuity is to state that an infinitesimal change in context will always and necessarily result in an infinitesimal change in content". Applied to ethics this means that the context of expression, the communication channel itself, one's beliefs, attitudes and perceptual filters, should not undergo abrupt, involuntary disruption.

The proportionality has two failure modes and not one. In the *Delicate Fire* conversation I give both together. There should be a proportionality between the change of context and the change of content. If there is no change of content at all, despite massive changes of context, there is continuity, but there is also no signal. If, on the other hand, there is a total change of content for an infinitesimal change of context, almost none, then that is a discontinuity, which means the channel is not working. Without the first failure mode named, a reader may reasonably conclude that the continuity ethics is a counsel of never changing. It is not. Total invariance of content under massive change of context is a channel carrying no signal, which is a failure of the same principle at the other end.



The continuity proportionality. Left, the channel working: the change of content is in proportion to the change of context. Middle, the first failure: no change of content however much the context changes, which is continuity with no signal. Right, the second failure: a total change of content for an almost infinitesimal change of context, which is a discontinuity. Never changing is itself one of the two failures.

What makes continuity an ethical matter at all is stated in a single clause of the same conversation, and it is the ethical content of the principle: there is a kind of gradualness that gives the other person a chance to respond to the change that the mere fact of the message introduces. Continuity is the condition under which the other party retains the ability to answer. Because continuity is the condition of the other party's ability to answer, I can also say in the same conversation, of the relation between the two principles, that without continuity we do not get symmetry either. If the channel does not persist, message integrity is moot.

Two instances fix the concept, one relational and one internal. The relational one is a phone call, at 2M10: "There is no significant environmental difference between the instant when the conversation was alive and the instant that it was not (i.e., the context is still much the same)". The context did not change; the content did, totally. A total change of content with no change of context is discontinuity in its exact definition. The same total change is why an abruptly ended conversation feels like a violation rather than an inconvenience. The internal one is at 2M8: "To consider a continuity of self is to assert a wholeness to the self; that there is no part of self that is disconnected from, or rejected by, another part of self". The continuity principle therefore has a first-person reading as well as a second-person one, and the two are the same principle.

VII. Violence, Weapons, and the Continuity of Choice

Continuity has an obvious class of violations, and an instance is the quickest way into it. The list of violations that usually follows the instance comes from my paper on the theorem and not from *An Immanent Metaphysics*.

A stranger on the street who goes from no relationship to a life-threatening encounter is a discontinuity in relationship pattern, and a crime for structural reasons. I give the list of continuity violations in the words of that paper, because the paper says it better and because its third item mat-

ters: "The continuity principle encompasses prohibitions against violence, involuntary creation or destruction of life, abrupt disconnection from community". The third item is the one that ties the continuity principle to relationship and community, which is where the rest of the book puts it, and without it the principle reads as a list of physical harms. The word violence, and the word weapon, do not occur anywhere in *An Immanent Metaphysics*; I bring the vocabulary of violence into this subject in the theorem paper just quoted and in the *Delicate Fire* conversation, where I extend the list to prohibitions against war, prohibitions against rape, and prohibitions against all the things that involve weapons, because the use of weapons creates discontinuity. The same passage makes the parity claim that keeps continuity from being an appendix to symmetry: there are as many ways to go wrong with continuity as there are to go wrong with symmetry. That such prohibitions rarely appear in legal codes is a remark about codes and not about the principle: where things are breaking, one does not usually have a code of law.

In my teaching, as *Relating* sets it out, I take the framing furthest, and I make the violence vocabulary structural rather than moral. There, violence is not defined by injury or by intent. "Violence comes from a discontinuity of choice and begets a discontinuity of choice". It is discontinuity in the availability of choice, at both ends of the act: "Even the perpetrator is usually not in sovereign possession of their choice". A weapon receives a definition of the same kind: "A weapon is the use of causation to suppress choice". The definition of a weapon as the use of causation to suppress choice is the reason that weapons belong on a continuity list at all. They are instruments for converting a gradual field of available choice into a sharp edge.

Two consequences follow that the ordinary vocabulary obscures. The first of the two consequences is that 'nonviolence' is the wrong name for what is wanted. "Nonviolence is a negatively defined term", and a negative term specifies nothing. I state the positive form directly: "What we actually want is continuity of choice". Not that everyone has the same choices, nor that every choice is equally available, "but that the boundaries

between where one can choose and where one cannot are gradual". The second of the two consequences is that intensity is not violence. "Intensity is distinguished from violence: high-energy communication in which all parties retain sovereign possession of their capacity to choose and remain in cooperative commerce in the communication channel". A conversation may be as intense as its participants can bear without violating continuity at all, and a perfectly calm act may violate it completely. The test is what happened to the availability of choice.

Classical ethical philosophy attends to symmetry, to fairness, consistency, and the golden rule, while continuity is so taken for granted, being that through which we perceive rather than that which we perceive as content, that it tends to be invisible. Much of modern ethics is addressing continuity questions, about violence, bodily integrity, and the right to life, in symmetry vocabulary, which is a large part of why those discussions go in circles.

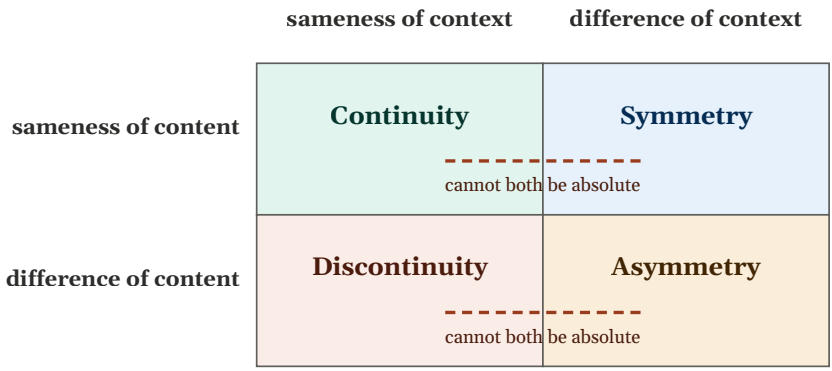
VIII. The ICT Constraint

The theorem proves that symmetry and continuity cannot both be perfected simultaneously. Applied to ethics, this means that no ethical system can be both perfectly rule-based, which is perfectly symmetric, the same rule in all contexts, and perfectly responsive to the specific situation, which is perfectly continuous, no abrupt disconnection from the particular case.

The formal proof of the theorem's result is carried in Chapter 2 of Volume I, on the theorem: it eliminates the ten tertiary pairings, which are the ways of joining the four compound terms given below (continuity, discontinuity, symmetry, and asymmetry, defined in the next paragraph) two at a time, a term with itself included, under three rejection classes, the three kinds of reason for which a pairing is ruled out: that it joins a term with itself, that it joins two opposites, or that it leaves sameness and dif-

ference out of balance. I have also published the reason in four independent expository forms, and of the formal elimination and the informal argument I say "Both are legitimate proofs of the same theorem".

Begin with the four compounds, which the chapter has so far used two of. At 1.43-1: "Primary Operators : Where there is assumed a sameness of subjective context", and then "the following four definitions hold about the nature of the objective: Continuity refers to where there is a sameness of content and a sameness of context. Discontinuity refers to where there is a difference of content and a sameness of context. Symmetry refers to where there is a sameness of content and a difference of context. Asymmetry refers to where there is a difference of content and a difference of context". Four compounds, exhausting the combinations of two binary axes. They are not four topics. They are the four cells of one square.



The four primary operators as the four cells of one square. Each pair the Incommensuration Theorem forbids to be perfected together (symmetry with continuity, asymmetry with discontinuity) shares one row, the same content condition, and differs in one column, the context condition. Symmetry with continuity carries three samenesses to one difference, which is the count given below.

Three of the four expository forms can be given in one sentence each. In modal terms, symmetry is an omniscient demand, for one account that holds identically wherever the observer stands, and continuity is a transcendent demand, for scale independence (the same proportion between a change of context and a change of content at every scale, however small, which is the proportionality of section VI); because the omniscient and the transcendent are conjugate under Axiom I, no comparison can meet both demands at once without collapsing the distinction between the two modalities that Axiom III preserves. As a reductio (an argument that shows a supposition leads to absurdity): if both held absolutely and everywhere, context would make no difference to content and difference itself would become impossible, which erases two of the six intrinsics of comparison, so the joint perfection of symmetry and continuity is not a hard problem but an incoherent one. As a count: each compound term makes two assertions, one about content and one about context, each an assertion of sameness or of difference; a pairing is admissible only if its samenesses and its differences stay in the one-to-one balance that inseparability requires, and symmetry joined with continuity gives three samenesses to one difference, so that pairing fails.

The fourth form answers a question that every reader of this section will ask: ordinary ethical life plainly contains both consistency and responsiveness, so how does ordinary life join what the theorem says cannot be joined? The answer is given in terms of epistemic concepts (concepts concerning knowing, how anything comes to be known). When the relevant epistemic concepts, symmetry, continuity, determinism, possibility, are treated as absolutes, pushed to their perfected, totalized limit, the theorem applies absolutely, with no exceptions. But at ordinary scales, where nothing is being pushed to a perfected limit, imperfect symmetry and imperfect continuity can and do occur in conjunction, without contradiction. The formula I offer for this is deliberately paradoxical in shape: "the relatively absolute is absolutely relative". My paper "The Incommensuration Theorem" (1995, revised 2004) makes the same point negatively: "The ICT

does not prove that symmetry is impossible. It does not prove that continuity is impossible. It proves that their conjunction is impossible. Both symmetry and continuity are real. Both are structurally achievable".

An Immanent Metaphysics states the theorem in its main body as well as its appendix, at 1.43-2, in the plainest form it takes: "Nothing anywhere at all can be both absolutely symmetric and absolutely continuous". And it adds, at 1.43-3, a gloss in parts and wholes that is exactly what an ethical reading of the theorem needs: "Symmetry is an assertion about the parts (the microscopic) that is made from the perspective of the whole", and "Continuity is an assertion about the whole (the macroscopic) that is made from the perspective of the parts". A rule is a claim about all the particular cases made from outside them, and so is symmetric. A response is a claim about the whole situation made from inside the case, and so is continuous.

IX. Ethics as the Balance of Both Poles

The constraint has a consequence for the relation between ethics and morality, and the consequence begins from where the two poles belong.

In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I assign symmetry to world and continuity to self, at 1.83-1 in "The Universal Law", and I assign both to ethics. At 2.12-15: "Choices (and actions) are most effective when they are the most ethical; when they preserve both symmetry and continuity". At 2.156-2, in "Impeccability": "An action of self is ethical to the degree that it increases the symmetry and continuity of self, world, and the relation between them". Put another way: a sound ethics must honor both symmetry and continuity while recognizing that they cannot both be absolute simultaneously. So morality is not the symmetric pole and ethics the continuous one: both poles belong to ethics, and choices are most effective when they preserve both symmetry and continuity as fully as the situation allows.

The consequence of the constraint is that ethics is the balance of the two poles, and that a morality is one domain's attempt to write that balance down. In a single sentence: a morality is one domain's attempt to encode the balance; the balance itself is prior to every such encoding. The theorem then explains why the encoding can never be finished. Because no encoding can be both perfectly symmetric and perfectly continuous, a code that is perfectly consistent across cases will produce an unjust result in some particular case, which is a discontinuity; and a practice that adapts perfectly to every case will lack consistency across cases, which is an asymmetry. Both morality and ethics are necessary. Neither can be perfected. That both morality and ethics are necessary, and that neither can be perfected, is the structural basis for the permanent distinction between morality and ethics.

A reader may ask here, as I anticipate in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, how the ethics can ask that both be maximized if the theorem says both cannot be perfected. Note 2 to 2.12-4 answers it: "To maximize the degree of continuity and the degree of symmetry is not to assert that symmetry and continuity will be realized in exactly the same manner for the same thing at the same time (i.e., as being in opposition to the Incommensuration Theorem)". And: "Rather, symmetry and continuity are to be considered as applying to different aspects of one common dynamic, the relationship/communication between the subjective (self) and the objective (world)". The theorem forbids their joint perfection in one comparison. The ethics asks that each be honored in the aspect of the common dynamic to which it belongs.

An Immanent Metaphysics states the cost of forgetting this at 2.12-13, and I give the quotation exactly as it is printed there: "To attempt to make life adhere strictly, ultimately, and absolutely, to a moral code (without exceptions, no matter how minor) is to eventually kill it", and then, past the footnote marker, "to loose all meaningfulness and value, up to an including even the value of and meaning of the moral code itself"; the printed text reads "loose" for "lose" and "an" for "and". And: "Life (and evolution) itself depends in part on occasional exceptions". And: "No single set of

rules, no matter of what origin, can encompass life". The note attached to that aphorism gives its reason: "No world is 'fair' (nor can any world be expected to be fair) even though all worlds are in their own way beautiful". And: "Life is ultimately ethical, but it is not moral".

X. What the Theorem Makes Possible

The previous section used the theorem only to say what an ethics cannot be. The theorem also says why an ethics is possible at all, and that is the stronger of its two contributions to this subject.

The argument runs through the difference between determinism and causality. Determinism is the claim that the state of the world could in principle be completely specified. It requires no observer; it is lawful, objective, and mathematical; it is symmetry-based. Causality is the persistent perceived relation between events. It requires a self, a temporality, and a perspective from which to notice that one thing follows another; it is continuity-based. Taken in the triple of choice, change and causality (1.61-3), as in Chapters 19 and 24, causality is the omniscient member, the knowable pattern; what this section sets against it is determinism, the claim of complete specification, which requires no observer.

My essay "Ethics from the Incommensuration Theorem" draws the consequence. "The Incommensuration Theorem tells us that no world is purely and completely deterministic". "Every world is to some non-zero degree causal". The reason is the theorem itself. Complete determinism would require both perfect symmetry and perfect continuity, and the theorem forbids their conjunction. In one clause: this is a corollary of the theorem (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, pp. 67 to 68).

And then the step that matters here: "If the world were purely deterministic, there would be no genuine choice. Without choice, there is no responsibility. Without responsibility, there is no ethics". The incommensuration guarantees the remainder in which choice lives. "The space between pure determinism and pure causality is the space in which ethics exists".

That the incommensuration guarantees a space in which ethics exists changes the reading of everything earlier in this chapter, and so I state the guarantee plainly. The theorem is a limit on ethical systems, and it is also the reason there is a subject matter here to be limited.

The constraint also has a worked instance in ordinary life, which the abstract statement does not supply. The same essay, at section VIII: "The mixing of incommensurable domains is forbidden, because it attempts to apply both symmetry and continuity simultaneously to the same interaction". And the instance: "This is what occurs, for example, when a privileged personal relationship and a transactional economic exchange are collapsed into a single channel. The theorem says this cannot be done without corruption". A friendship carries continuity obligations; a market transaction carries symmetry obligations; running both through one channel asks that channel to perfect both at once. Everyone recognizes the resulting corruption. The theorem says where it comes from.

XI. The Bridge from the Theorem to the Two Principles

The passage from the Incommensuration Theorem to the two principles of ethics is what I set out in this section. The most useful thing that can be done with it is to state its logical shape accurately, because the shape is not what a phrase such as derivation from the theorem would lead a reader to expect, and I state it carefully here because a short restatement easily loses that shape.

The first step is a requirement, stated in the theorem's own vocabulary. From the incommensuration, a specific ethical requirement follows. Because symmetry cannot be eliminated from reality, certain things must be honored: laws, consistency, reliability. Because continuity cannot be eliminated from reality, certain other things must also be honored: feeling, connection, quality. And the requirement itself: a sound ethics must honor both symmetry and continuity while recognizing that they cannot both be absolute simultaneously. The requirement follows from the Incommensur-

ation Theorem, and at this step nothing more than the requirement follows from the theorem. Neither pole can be eliminated, so neither pole may be ignored, and their joint perfection is unavailable.

The second step is the one in which the requirement takes a definite form. The requirement does not by itself produce two sentences. The requirement then takes canonical form in two principles, the two principles of *An Immanent Metaphysics*. I state each of the two principles in the modal register given in section IV above, and I give with each principle the list of what that principle covers. The theorem then returns, as a constraint on what it did not generate: these two principles cannot both be perfectly satisfied in any given comparison; this is a corollary of the theorem (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, pp. 67 to 68).

So the passage from the theorem alone to the two principles is a bridge and not a deduction. The theorem generates a requirement that both poles be honored; the two principles are the canonical form that requirement takes; and the theorem then returns as a corollary constraining them. Why there are exactly two, and why these two, is answered by the Universal Law and by the conditions of a communication channel, which the next section gives, and not by the theorem alone.

XII. Why Exactly Two, and Why These Two

An Immanent Metaphysics answers the question of why there are two. The answer is not the theorem. It is the Universal Law, at 1.83-1: "All knowledge of law, of dynamic process, both inner and outer, revolves around two fundamental concepts: that of symmetry and that of continuity". And: "Any instance of a law will either be a law of symmetry, or a law of continuity". And: "The basic beingness, nature, and lawfulness of all World is defined by, and founded upon, the concept of Symmetry". And: "The basic beingness, nature, and lawfulness of all Self is defined by, and founded upon, the concept of Continuity". The same passage says which relations each governs, at 1.75-13: "The law of symmetry is the law of in-

tradomain relations". "It is the law of existence, of world, the law of physics, of substance, and of form". "The law of continuity is the law of interdomain relations". "It is the law of creation, of self, of change, and of feeling". Ethics concerns the relation between a self and a world. World is founded on symmetry and self on continuity, and all lawfulness whatever is of exactly these two kinds. On that basis there can be exactly two principles and they must be these two.

The pair sits inside the three. The two laws belong to the two modalities that Axiom I sets in conjugate relationship: symmetry to the omniscient, the lawfulness of what is external to the self (1.83-2), and continuity to the transcendent, the lawfulness of what is internal to it (1.83-3). The third modality, the immanent, is more fundamental than either, and it is not a third law: it is the expression itself, the content that each principle governs, as 2.12-6 marks it ("the content of expression (immanent)"), and its practice is particular and unique to each individual (2.12-8). So a system built on threes has exactly two principles: one for each member of the conjugate pair, and the third member is the act in which both are kept.

An Immanent Metaphysics also gives a dedicated derivation of the pair, which does not go through the theorem at all but through the conditions of a communication channel. The essay "Alternate Formulations of the Ethics", at 2R: "The two principles of ethics are the two assumptions necessary for 1) the establishment and persistence of the integrity of a general communication channel and, 2) the maximization of the degree of meaningfulness (significance in the terms of actuality and potentiality) in conjunction with the same". The two assumptions are then named: "A general communication channel, to be such, must assume that all messages passed through maintain their own (content) integrity and that no message in the communication channel will overtly 'crash' or change the dynamics of the communication channel (the language) itself". The first assumption is symmetry, the second is continuity.

What makes this ontological rather than merely technical is the Root Tautology, at 2R2: "The significance of this consideration of a general communication channel (in terms of understanding ethics) is a result of vari-

ous isomorphs of the Root Tautology: that the dynamic of the relationship between a self and a reality is a general communication channel". And the same aphorism verifies the two assumptions against two independent isomorphs: "This ontology is verified by recognizing 1) that the first assumption of communication (the integrity of the message, a principle of symmetry) is itself an isomorph of the concept of objectivity and, 2) that it is an inherent assumption of physics that no experiment done within the universe can have the (unexpected) impact or effect of damaging the integrity of the universe itself". In my teaching I reach the same identification from the other direction, as Chapter 5 (Volume I), section IV, sets out in full: "What constitutes an integral communication channel? After the ICT, we know that symmetry and continuity are the ways we characterize integrity". And I state the derivation in one line: "Symmetry and continuity define integrity. From integrity, the two principles of the non-relativistic ethics are derived".

The routes of section XI and of this section meet at the pair, and neither passes through the other. The route of section XI begins from the theorem: the theorem yields the requirement that symmetry and continuity both be honored, and the two principles are the canonical form that requirement takes. The route of this section begins from a general communication channel: the two assumptions that the channel must make in order to persist are a principle of symmetry and a principle of continuity. As *An Immanent Metaphysics* states the channel route, at 2R and 2R2, it does not cite the theorem; it verifies the two assumptions against objectivity and against an assumption of physics. The route of section XI, for its part, does not use the communication channel. The passage of my teaching quoted above joins the two routes from the side of the channel: it names symmetry and continuity as the ways integrity is characterized "After the ICT". The aphorisms at 2R and 2R2 do not rest on that join. In this sense the two routes are independent, and neither subsumes the other. The two principles are derived from within the metaphysics: the theorem gives the requirement, and the Universal Law and the conditions of a persisting channel give the pair. That a requirement drawn from the theorem and

the conditions of a persisting channel name the same two principles, one of symmetry and one of continuity, is itself evidence for the pair, and it is evidence that neither route supplies by itself. The step of section XI, from the theorem alone, keeps its exact scope as a bridge.

XIII. A Second Route, Through Value

There is a second and quite different route from the theorem to the ethics, which I treat as independent of the first, and which is worth carrying because it does not go through the poles at all. It goes through value. The errors of extrema, which Chapter 8 of Volume I treats in full, are four ways of minimizing one component of the cycle of perception and expression: reaction, in which perception determines expression directly; idealism, in which expression determines perception directly; realism, in which the flow never reverses; and prejudice, in which expression has no consequence for perception. Each is a mistake, and to recognize it as a mistake is already to have accepted that all four components are essential. I draw the consequence: "Recognizing this is accepting a value: the right balance between symmetry and continuity. This is what bootstraps the incommensuration theorem into the non-relativistic ethics".

One choice shows all four errors. The choice is what to say to a friend who has missed an appointment with me. In reaction, I speak straight from the sight of the empty chair: what I perceived becomes what I say, with nothing between. In idealism, what I have already said about her ("she is always late") decides what I see when she arrives, so I never hear her explanation. In realism, the flow runs one way only: I take in what happened and speak from it, and nothing I say or do ever goes back to test or change what I take in. In prejudice, I decide about her once, and what I then express has no consequence for how I perceive her: whatever she does next, my view stays where it was.

Each of the four keeps one part of the cycle of perception and expression and starves another. When I call each of them a mistake, I rank the full cycle, in which perception and expression each shape the other and are shaped by it, above any one of its extremes, and a ranking of that kind is a value, not a fact. The value is the balance of the two poles. Prejudice shows the shape of such a failure plainly: it holds what I express the same across every change in what my friend does, which is symmetry perfected, and in doing so it cuts the channel that would let her actions reach my view, which is continuity lost. Each error perfects something at the cost of something else the cycle needs, so the value accepted in recognizing the errors is the right balance between symmetry and continuity, and accepting that value is the step that brings the theorem into the ethics by this second route.

I give the warrant for grounding oughtness in beingness by eliminating the alternatives, in four sentences: "If oughtness does not come from isness, where does it come from? Someone's opinion? Cultural history (earlier people's opinions)? Evolution (which is an isness again)? For existential-risk-scale choices, the basis must be grounded in beingness itself". That argument, by elimination, establishes that beingness is the one ground available at the scale at which the question is being asked; the derivation itself is the work of the sections above.

XIV. How to Engage

The distinction that does the most immediate work here is between ethics and morality, and it can be applied to your own speech. Ethics is a set of principles of effective choice, internal to a self and holding within many worlds. Morality is an externally defined set of rules for one domain, and rules can be enforced where principles cannot. Listen for the words good and bad in your own reasoning. Where you are sorting acts

into two bins, you are working in a moral frame, whatever you are calling it, and the prediction is that the frame will fail when the context it was cut for changes.

Then test the completeness claim against the ethical tradition you know best. The symmetry principle asks for sameness of expressed content across a difference of external context, and it should absorb the golden rule, the categorical imperative, equality before the law, and the prohibitions on deception and coercion. The continuity principle asks for sameness of valuation across a difference of external content, and it should absorb the prohibitions on violence and on abrupt severance from a community. Take a principle you hold that seems to fall outside both, and try to place it. That attempt is the only test of the completeness claim a reader can actually run.

Then watch for one specific failure in ordinary life. Symmetry and continuity cannot both be perfected in any one comparison. Where a relationship governed by continuity and an exchange governed by symmetry are collapsed into a single channel, that channel is being asked to perfect both at once. Payment inside a friendship is the everyday case, and what is predicted is corruption and not awkwardness.

What the two principles demand, and where the derivation stops, belong to the chapter that follows this one.

XV. Summary

Comparison has exactly six intrinsics, reached independently from an ordinary act of seeing and from the minimum physical system that can represent an interaction. Choice is an expression, expression is interaction, and interaction is comparison, by the Root Tautology, so principles of effective choice must be phrased in those six terms. Four compounds exhaust the combinations of two of the three pairs, and the joint perfection of two of those compounds is incoherent, by four independent expository arguments and by the formal proof carried in Chapter 2 (Volume I). From

the incommensuration a requirement follows, that both poles be honored and neither perfected, and the requirement takes canonical form in the two principles. The Universal Law (1.83-1) and the two assumptions a general communication channel must make (2R, 2R2) give that there are exactly two principles and that they are these two, and the two routes meet at the pair. So the two principles are derived from the structure of comparison; the step from the theorem alone to the canonical form is a bridge.

The non-relativity of this ethics is the scope of a principle in the sense *An Immanent Metaphysics* gives that word, what applies within many worlds, and not a claim to stand outside all of them. The theorem's constraint bites at the perfected limit and not at ordinary scale, where imperfect symmetry and imperfect continuity coexist without contradiction. The central result, as I state it, includes both of these, the scope of a principle and the perfected limit at which the constraint bites.

Why there are exactly two principles rather than one or three, and why these two and no others, is answered by the Universal Law together with the general communication channel argument, both of which are given in section XII above; neither of them is a consequence of the theorem. The grammatical form of each principle is explained in section IV by which pole each principle is about. The derivation gives principles and not a decision procedure, and I say so outright; what stands in the place of a decision procedure belongs to Chapter 22.

The claim that no ethical system can be both perfectly symmetric and perfectly continuous is the structural foundation for moral pluralism without ethical relativism. Multiple moral codes can all be valid relative to their contexts while the underlying ethical principles remain invariant, and the reason is not tolerance but structure. I offer it as the one result of this chapter that another metaphysics can take up without taking up the rest of mine.

The non-relativistic ethics of the Immanent Metaphysics consists of exactly two principles: the symmetry principle, consistent expression across different contexts, and the continuity principle, no involuntary disruption of the channel or of the availability of choice. They are stated in the six terms of comparison, they apply to any consciousness making any choice, and together they provide the complete language within which effective choice is described.

They arrive by a route that this chapter has now walked in full. Perception is comparison; comparison has six intrinsics in three pairs; two of those pairs generate four compounds; two of the four cannot be jointly perfected; that incommensuration generates a requirement that both poles be honored and neither absolutized; and that requirement takes canonical form in the two principles. The Universal Law and the conditions of a persisting channel complete the derivation, and the two routes meet at the pair; the step from the theorem alone is a bridge.

One thing should be said here rather than in the chapter that follows, because it belongs to the derivation and not to the practice. The two principles are a discovery about comparison, and not a discovery about human beings, and human beings fall under them only because a human choice is a comparison like any other. That the two principles are a discovery about comparison, and not about human beings, is what the word 'non-relativistic' in the title of this chapter means. For the same reason, I am willing to say that any species capable of observation, reasoning, and experience would meet the same constraint, the incommensuration of symmetry and continuity. Such a species would also arrive at the same requirement, that an ethics honor both symmetry and continuity without making either one absolute. These pages set out the argument for that claim step by step.

The two principles cannot both be perfected. This means that morality, which is rules, and ethics, which is principles, are permanently necessary and permanently distinct. The task of any civilization is to maintain the cycle between them: derive moral codes from ethical principles, apply those codes until they fail, return to principles when they do, and derive

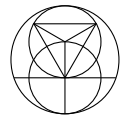
new codes with greater understanding. What the two principles ask of a person in the meantime, what a degree of effectiveness is a degree of, and how far the derivation can be pushed before it stops helping, are the subject of the chapter that follows.

KEY CONCEPTS IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Ethics**: principles of effective choice, internal to self, independent of any domain. A commitment originating in a self and directed at all worlds. Natural laws; they cannot be enforced.
- **Morality**: an externally defined set of rules for a particular domain. A command originating in a world and directed at all selves. Civil laws; they can be enforced. Heuristic simplifications of ethical principles, and a base-two simplification of a base-three reality, so that thinking in terms of good and bad is the mark of being in a moral frame rather than an ethical one.
- **The Cycle**: principles → practices → rules → rules fail → return to principles. Permanent and necessary.
- **Six Intrinsics of Comparison**: sameness and difference, content and context, subject and object, taken as three pairs. Necessary and sufficient to characterize any comparison, reached independently from an ordinary act of seeing and from the smallest physical system that can represent an interaction. Not to be confused with the separate section of *An Immanent Metaphysics* on the six intrinsics of interaction, which enumerates a different six.
- **Root Tautology**: comparison is isomorphic with interaction and relation. The warrant for treating a result about comparison as a result about choice.
- **Principle, Law, Axiom**: a principle applies within many worlds, a law within only one, an axiom between all and within none. Non-relativistic ethics is an ethics of principles in exactly this sense, so its non-relativity is a claim of scope.

- **Modal Assignment Tracks Conjunction**: modality attaches to the unit of conjunction and does not distribute to its parts, because a domain is defined purely on the basis triple involved. The six intrinsics are three pairs, and it is the pairs that carry the assignments. Stated in full in Chapter 4 (Volume I).
- **The Four Primary Operators**: continuity, sameness of content with sameness of context; discontinuity, difference of content with sameness of context; symmetry, sameness of content with difference of context; asymmetry, difference of content with difference of context. Four cells of one square, exhausting two binary axes.
- **Symmetry Principle**: where the objective external context differs and the subjective internal context is the same, the content of expression shall be the same. A principle of consistent expressions. Encompasses the golden rule, the categorical imperative, equality before the law, the prohibition against deception and coercion, and integrity of communication.
- **Continuity Principle**: where the objective external content differs and the subjective internal content is the same, the context of expression shall be the same. A principle of equal valuations. Encompasses prohibitions against violence, involuntary creation or destruction of life, and abrupt disconnection from community. It fails in two directions: total change of content for infinitesimal change of context, and no change of content at all, which is a channel carrying no signal.
- **The Plane of Perception**: the subjective on one side, the objective on the other, and every expression a crossing. It names the two contexts across which channel symmetry is asserted, composition and reception.
- **Violence as Discontinuity of Choice**: violence comes from a discontinuity of choice and begets one, at both ends of the act; a weapon is the use of causation to suppress choice. The positive form of what nonviolence names negatively is continuity of choice, gradual boundaries in the felt availability of choosing. Intensity is not violence, provided all parties retain sovereign possession of their capacity to choose.

- **The Incommensuration Theorem**: symmetry and continuity cannot both be simultaneously and fundamentally applied to any one comparison. Argued expositorily four ways: as conjugate modal demands under Axiom I, as a reductio that erases two intrinsics, as an unbalanced count of samenesses against differences, and as a constraint that binds only at the perfected limit.
- **The Scale Regime**: the theorem applies absolutely where the concepts are pushed to a totalized limit, and not at ordinary scales, where imperfect symmetry and imperfect continuity coexist without contradiction. The relatively absolute is absolutely relative.
- **The Ethical Requirement**: what actually follows from the theorem, namely that a sound ethics must honor both poles while recognizing that they cannot both be absolute. The two principles are the canonical form this requirement takes; the Universal Law and the conditions of a communication channel complete the derivation of the pair, and the step from the theorem alone is a bridge.
- **The Universal Law**: all lawfulness is of exactly two kinds, symmetry and continuity; world is founded on the first and self on the second. The answer *An Immanent Metaphysics* gives to why there are exactly two principles of ethics.
- **The General Communication Channel**: the two principles are the two assumptions necessary for a general communication channel to persist, that messages keep their content integrity and that no message crashes the language. Ontological rather than technical, because the relation between a self and a reality is such a channel.
- **The Space in Which Ethics Exists**: no world is purely deterministic, since complete determinism would require both perfect symmetry and perfect continuity. Without indeterminacy there is no choice, without choice no responsibility, and without responsibility no ethics.
- **The Mixing of Incommensurable Domains**: collapsing a relationship governed by continuity and an exchange governed by symmetry into one channel, which asks that channel to perfect both. The theorem says it cannot be done without corruption.



Chapter Twenty-Two

The Two Principles in Practice

Effectiveness, Communication, Justice, and the Limits of the Derivation

ABSTRACT

The companion chapter derived two principles of non-relativistic ethics from the structure of comparison and from the Incommensuration Theorem (hereafter the ICT), which is the result that symmetry and continuity cannot both be perfected in any one comparison. Symmetry is a sameness of content where there is a difference of context; continuity is a sameness of content where there is a sameness of context. This chapter takes up what those two principles ask of a person, and where they stop.

The chapter is an account of what the two principles positively require, which is more than the list of what the two principles forbid. It says what a degree of effectiveness is a degree of, in the product form of *An Immanent Metaphysics* and in the experiential form of pain as a decrease and joy as an increase in available potentiality. It separates justice, which is symmetry applied to persons and a structural requirement, from judgment, which is the evaluation of another's choice and is what I call presumptuous. It grounds the three rights of communication in the prior claim that everything a person does is communication. It gives the warrant for the Catastrophic Theorem from *An Immanent Metaphysics* itself. And it locates this pair of chapters in a chain that runs from the theorem through the two principles to the three principles of right action and on to concrete choice, across at least eight orders of indirection. A section of questions a reader may ask sets the completeness claim beside four named positions, names the standing obstacle to seeing that ethics is downstream of epi-

> stemology, and states that what the derivation supplies is principles and the per-act evaluation of each choice for self, other, and world, which is what it gives in the place of a decision procedure that resolves hard cases. That section also gives my answer to the case of the person whose alternatives appear to have been foreclosed: that the kinds of choice available can be taken while the fact of choice cannot, and that a dilemma constructed to deny it is not a question about ethics.

What do the two principles ask of me when I act, and where do they stop helping? My answer is that they ask for fairness and care in every act, asked about in three directions, for myself, for the other, and for the world, and that they stop where a rule would have to begin.

I. What the Two Principles Demand

The continuity principle arrives in most statements of it attached to a list of what it forbids. Attaching the continuity principle to a list of what the principle forbids is a defect. I say so in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, in note 3 to aphorism 2.12-5 of "Distinguishing Ethics and Morality": "A/all negatively defined ethical systems define a contrast class against an infinite set, and therefore must be regarded as incomplete". An ethics of prohibitions is incomplete by construction, because it names its subject by exclusion from an unbounded set. So the first question to ask of the two principles is not what they rule out but what they require.

In the domain of persons the two poles have a positive reading, and it can be given in one stroke. Fairness and justice, which are forms of symmetry applied to persons, are not optional features of a good society; they are structural requirements. Care and compassion, which are forms of continuity applied to persons, are also structural requirements. Two demands, one from each pole, and neither of them is a matter of tempera-

ment or of preference. Fairness is symmetry with persons as the content and circumstances as the context. Care is continuity with a relationship as the context and the availability of choice as the content.

An Immanent Metaphysics supplies the operational test, in "Impeccability" at 2.156-2: "An action of self is ethical to the degree that it increases the symmetry and continuity of self, world, and the relation between them. To act in accordance with ethics is an affirmation of the integrity of self and others". Three terms are being asked about, not one: self, world, and the relation between them. The same shape can be stated as a procedure: held per act, and evaluated triadically, for the self, for the other, and for the world, the two principles provide action guidance. The per-act triadic evaluation is the most nearly operational form that I give the two principles anywhere. The virtue of the per-act triadic evaluation is that the evaluation does not require totalizing. One is asked about this act, in three directions, and not about the ranking of all possible outcomes.

An Immanent Metaphysics also names three failures, each of which is a discontinuity in a different register, and they are more useful than a list of forbidden acts because they name what is missing rather than what is done. At 2.156-4: "Prejudice reflects a discontinuity in one's awareness of change and interchange. Selfishness reflects a discontinuity in one's awareness of choice and potentiality. Cruelty reflects a discontinuity in one's awareness of actuality, cause , and consequence". Prejudice is elsewhere in the same aphorism called "the choice not to ever choose again", which places it exactly: it is a discontinuity in the distribution of one's own choosing.

Finally, *An Immanent Metaphysics* gives the one operational rule it offers for conflict, and it is not a counsel of passivity. At 2.12-16: "Where the degree of intensity in interaction is very high, so also is one required to act with a very high level of integrity", and note 7 to that aphorism supplies the rule: "One is permitted and empowered (required) to respond to an action affecting oneself, to act on, with a similar extent and level of intensity as with which one is affected (neither more nor less) as the degree to which one is acted upon. In all interchange, there is to be maintained con-

tinuity. Where one has been deeply affected, that one may effect deeply; not to diminish or to escalate, but to change". Proportion, in both directions. To respond with less intensity than one was affected by is as much a discontinuity as to escalate, which is why the continuity ethics is not pacifism and does not read as one when its terms are kept straight.

II. What Ethics Cannot Do

The ethics of the Immanent Metaphysics (hereafter the IM) is positively specified. It describes what effective choice looks like rather than only what to avoid. But it has clear limits, and they are limits of a particular kind: they follow from the same structure that produced the principles, so they cannot be legislated away either.

In ethics there is no right or wrong. There are only varying degrees of effectiveness, of enhancement of life and evolution, and of the capacity to nurture consciousness. The absolute principles of ethics are common to all consciousness. The absolute *practice* of ethics is particular and unique to each individual; my phrase at 2.12-8 is that "it cannot be prescribed from without". Ethics is always implemented relative to the self and the situation. The realization of ethics is unique in each choice.

Four consequences follow, and I state them in *An Immanent Metaphysics* as aphorisms. One cannot enforce ethics on another, ever. Only by being ethical can one encourage, allow, and enable others to also be ethical. To require others to be ethical, or to label them as unethical, is itself unethical. One can only act effectively as oneself, in every world, always, and one can never act on behalf of, or in the place of, another.

Those four are left bare, as they are in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, because their force is in their bareness. One argument behind them is worth having, all the same, and I give it in the *Delicate Fire* conversation on the path of right action. Command and control requires being separate from and over the other, and being separate from is a division. Without the in-

tegration there is no integrity, and no acting as one together. An enforced ethics is a contradiction in its own terms: the enforcing is a discontinuity, and the discontinuity is the thing the principle forbids.

III. Effectiveness, and What It Is a Degree Of

To say that there is no right or wrong but only degrees of effectiveness is to invite the obvious question, which I answer here. A degree of effectiveness is a degree of what?

An Immanent Metaphysics gives a formula, in "Effective Choice" at 2.112-2, and it is the only place in that book where the two principles are attached to a measure. "The degree of effectiveness of one's choices is proportional to the product of the degree to which one's choices (and their results) coherently maintain, sustain, enhance, and nurture: 1) the integrity and wholeness (i.e., the static continuity and symmetry) of the world, the self, and the relation between world and self, and, 2) the potentiality/realization/evolution of creativity and experience in all of life (i.e., the dynamic continuity and symmetry), including one's own life (the degree to which it potentiates other choices)".

Three things in that sentence do the work. The first of the three things in the formula at 2.112-2 is that the measure is a product and not a sum. So a choice which perfectly preserves integrity while foreclosing all future creativity scores at zero, and so does the mirror image of that choice. The second of the three things in the formula is that both factors of the formula are named in terms of symmetry and continuity, as the static pair and the dynamic pair. So the measure is not an independent criterion imported to referee the two principles. It is the two principles counted twice, once as preservation and once as potentiation. The third of the three things in the formula is that the same three terms recur: world, self, and the relation between world and self. Because world, self, and their relation recur, the per-act triadic evaluation of section I is the practical form of the formula, and not a separate device.

In my teaching, in *What Is Choice?*, I give the same measure in experiential terms: "Pain is a perceived decrease in the potentialities available to self; joy is a perceived increase". In the same experiential terms I also give the reason that killing is the clearest case of a violation of continuity. On that reading a violation of continuity is distressing and also measurable in the currency the formula uses. Killing takes the second factor to zero and therefore takes the product to zero.

I draw a consequence of the ethics and morality distinction through this measure: "If morality is applied to the outcome of interaction, suffering results. If ethics is applied to the action of making choices within a particular context, pain may still occur despite best intentions, but suffering need not. There can be pain without suffering". Pain is a fact about potentiality. Suffering is a moral judgment laid over that fact. The distinction is not a consolation; it is a structural claim about which frame one has applied to an outcome.

This derivation supplies the per-act, triadic evaluation: this act, asked about in three directions, for self, for other, and for world. It does not provide a decision procedure, and it does not resolve hard cases. Both belong here, the measure and its limit, and the limit keeps the measure from being read as an algorithm. A reader who wants an algorithm will not find one, and the reason is this: the balancing may be intrinsically not algorithmizable, and it may be that the space in which symmetry and continuity must be balanced is precisely the space in which consciousness is required.

IV. Justice, Judgment, and Responsibility

Justice is where two of my positions must be held together, and holding only one of them produces a claim that the symmetry principle contradicts.

The first of the two positions is that justice, in the IM's analysis of the word, is a moral concern rather than an ethical one. The definition is at 2.13-1: "Justice : When a self (a personality) external to an event of subjective action (choice) attempts to deliberately implement on that subjectivity a moral causality (believed to be necessary), on the basis of a belief that no other (natural) causal relation would be (impersonally) implemented". To implement justice in that sense is to attempt to act on behalf of natural causality, to personally impose what one believes the impersonal world should deliver. My reason for calling this ineffective is one clean move, in note 3 to 2.13-5: "In that the objective cannot perceive the subjective, the attempt to personally consider or to implement justice, or to sit in judgment, is fundamentally ineffective and is to act (choose) ineffectively (by definition, unethically)". A choice is subjective. An evaluation of a choice from outside is an objective consideration of something objectivity cannot reach. *An Immanent Metaphysics* gives a compact instance in note 2 to 2.13-3: "any war that is justified on the basis of religious convictions is ultimately founded on an absence of religious conviction".

In the second of the two positions, I call fairness and justice forms of symmetry applied to persons and say they are structural requirements, not optional features. Both positions are mine, and the distinction that reconciles them is this: what is presumptuous is judgment, not fairness. Discernment, not judgment: what is called for is the ongoing, feeling-based reading of what is actually so, which perceives distinctions accurately, updates continually, and never closes with a verdict, not judgment in the canonical sense, the evaluation of a choice of someone other than oneself, or the attempt to choose on another's behalf (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, p. 144).

So the statement that holds both of my positions together is that justice as impartial equal treatment is symmetry applied to persons and is a structural requirement. Judgment, which I define at 2.13-4 as the evaluation of a choice of someone other than oneself or the attempt to make choices in the place of another, is what cannot be done ethically. A referee and a spectator at the same match show the two apart. The referee applies

one rule to both teams, the same call for the same foul whichever side commits it: that is justice as impartial equal treatment, symmetry applied to persons. The spectator decides that a player who fouled is a bad person: that is judgment, the evaluation of another's choice from outside it. Both are called justice in ordinary speech, and only the first is symmetry. *An Immanent Metaphysics* preserves the one sense in which the word justice does carry ethical weight, in note 1 to 2.13-2: "Only in thinking of 'justice' as a personal practice of maintaining a continuity of intensity in interaction (to 'make just' or 'to regulate') can this concept be regarded as having ethical implications". Justice as a personal practice of maintaining a continuity of intensity in interaction is the continuity principle again, in the vocabulary of section I above. In that sense of justice, one may act to restore proportion without sitting in judgment on anyone.

The responsibility structure follows directly from the two principles and is worth stating, because it is more precise than most accounts of responsibility and it is derived rather than asserted. Expression is public and perception is private, so at 2.13-9: "One cannot be legitimately required to account for one's perceptions or knowing in any domain, world, or universe". And at 2.13-10: "The knowledge of something in itself carries no ethical assignment". And: "The expression (of knowledge/understanding) will always have (must have, cannot not have) an ethical aspect". The line falls where the plane of perception falls. What crosses outward from a self is ethical matter; what a self holds inwardly is not. One is responsible for the totality of one's own choices and expressions, "neither more nor less", and, at 2.13-12, "One cannot ever be responsible for the choices of another".

The chapter's remaining claim in this area is the law of subjective causality, at 2.13-8: "The Law of Subjective Causality : The consequences of the intent of one's action is always returned to its point of origin". And: "No one can hide from the consequences of their choices". I state this in *An Immanent Metaphysics* as an aphorism, and it is given here in that form.

V. Communication as the Ground

The three rights of communication, which the next section sets out, read as an appended practical framework unless the prior claim is stated first, and the prior claim is a strong one.

In the *Delicate Fire* conversation on ethics in communication I put it at the start. Everything we do is communication; there is no non-communication. Every action, every choice we make, is our communicating with the world. *An Immanent Metaphysics* says the same in its own register, in note 1 to 2.12-3: "In this sense, ethics is the study of the 'best way to communicate' in the largest sense of communication". If every choice is a communication, then a theory of the integrity of communication is not one application of the ethics among others. It is the ethics, stated in the register of its most general instance.

The same conversation narrows the subject matter one step further. Ethics is not about the inward flow but the outward one: it is not so much about the flow in, and it is everything about the flow out. Perception carries no ethical assignment, as section IV recorded; expression always does.

And the same passage says what makes an expression ethical rather than merely caused, which the later section on the react and response ratio needs. We have a pause, an infinite moment between the time that we perceive something and the time that we express, and an expression becomes ethical to the degree that choice is involved in it. A reaction is a perception passing straight through to an expression. A response is a perception that has passed through a choice. The interval between them is where ethics lives, and it is also, in the language of Chapter 21 (section X), the interval that a purely deterministic world would not have.

I give the link back to the two principles in one sentence: "What constitutes an integral communication channel? After the ICT, we know that symmetry and continuity are the ways we characterize integrity". So the sequence is complete. Every choice is a communication; a communication runs in a channel; the integrity of a channel is symmetry and continuity; and the two principles are the conditions of that integrity.

VI. The Three Rights of Communication

In the *Delicate Fire* conversation on ethics in communication I develop the ethical principles into a practical framework. Three rights of communication, each voluntarily granted: the right to speak, in which I make space in my perception to receive your signal; the right to be understood, in which I make space in myself to meet what you say with understanding; and the right to know that one has been understood, in which I express something back that confirms comprehension.

The three rights of communication are irreducible. My reason is a claim about simplification, and not an appeal to intuition. The three rights cannot be simplified further, and any attempt to make the framework conceptually simpler loses something essential. If any of the three is missing, communication degrades. Most commonly the third is absent: people respond with their own content without first confirming understanding, which doubles the cognitive load on the other person. Most people do not feel heard for precisely this reason.

A worked case shows the three rights and the missing third. A friend tells me about a meeting she prepared for all week, cancelled at the last minute. I make room for her to say it, without cutting in: that is the first right, given. I take in what she says, the week of work and the disappointment in it: that is the second. Then, before saying anything of my own, I say back what I heard, that she put a week into it and had no chance to show it, and she says yes, that is it: that is the third, and she knows that she has been understood. Now the same case with the third right missing. She tells me, I listen, and I go straight to my own view, that cancellations happen and the work will keep. My view may be right, but she now has to carry two loads at once, working out whether I understood her and answering what I said, and she leaves the conversation not feeling heard.

These rights cannot be taken; they can only be given. They are instances of the two principles operating together on a single practice. The first and second are symmetry: the same message sent and received across the plane of perception, which is the condition set out in the companion

chapter's section on symmetry. The third right, the right to know that one has been understood, is continuity. Continuity here means that the channel is maintained without abrupt break, and that the sender is given the gradualness needed to respond to what the exchange has changed. That the two principles can be seen jointly at work in one ordinary practice is the reason they are given here as well as in Chapter 23, "Connection, Relationship, and Care", at its section XII, which develops them as a practice of connection rather than as an instance of structure.

VII. The Catastrophic Theorem

In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I state a result I call the Catastrophic Theorem, at 2.14-3 in "Act, React, and Response": "The Catastrophic Theorem : To negate the significance (the meaningfulness and value) of any life, is to negate the significance of all life. Either everything, (at all scales of being, in all worlds, at all times) is sacred, or nothing is".

In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I state the theorem at 2.14-3, and the warrant for it is in that book itself: the general form of a catastrophic theorem, in note 1 to 2.14-3, together with the premise at 2.11-3. The general form makes the theorem a structural type rather than a single result. Note 1 to 2.14-3: "More generally, a catastrophic theorem is any derived statement of the form: either every X is Y or there are no X which is Y". The substantive premise is in *An Immanent Metaphysics* too, in "The Basal Motivations" at 2.11-3: "Everything (all eventities in all domains) is/are intrinsically significant". An *eventity*, in my coinage, combines the meanings of an entity and an event. With that premise the result has the general form and does not need to be borrowed from anywhere.

I can walk the step from the premise to the theorem in one case. To deny that one life matters, one has to name some feature that the life lacks and that a life which matters has: it is too small, it does not last long, it does not know that it matters. Whatever feature is named, some part of every life lacks it, one's own life included, so the ground that would take

significance from that one life takes it from all of them; and in my aphorisms on value I add that the universe has no favorites. There is no feature on which to stand in order to grant significance to some things and withhold it from others, so either everything has it or nothing does. *Sacred*, here, means that which is considered ultimately meaningful: structural and not supernatural, the recognition that reality has three aspects that matter; Chapter 26, section I, gives the full account.

The Catastrophic Theorem and the Incommensuration Theorem are results of different kinds: the Incommensuration Theorem is an incommensurability result and the Catastrophic Theorem is an all-or-nothing result. I state the Catastrophic Theorem in *An Immanent Metaphysics* without connecting it to the Incommensuration Theorem.

The two lines I put immediately after the theorem are what give it its force, and they are the reason this book is titled as it is: "Effectiveness, meaningfulness, and life, are best realized when regarding All as sacred and significant. “Heaven opens to all that know all is sacred. Hell imprisons all who think that nothing is sacred” (2.14-3)".

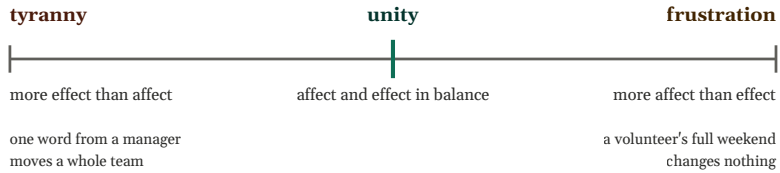
VIII. Wisdom, Maturity, and the React/Response Ratio

I define maturity as the product of three factors: the degree of responsibility, the relative degree of wisdom, and the degree to which one's choices of responsibility are made in accordance with that wisdom. “A mature individual is someone who has choices to make and who chooses well, with effectiveness for all concerned” (2.14-7). Because the metric is a product, any factor at zero takes the whole to zero: wisdom without responsibility yields no maturity, and responsibility without wisdom yields none either. That any factor at zero takes maturity to zero is the entire force of putting maturity as a product rather than as a list of virtues.

Wisdom, one of the three factors, has a definition, two aphorisms above the passage the formula comes from. At 1.57-6: "Wisdom is the integration/synthesis of both knowledge and understanding". And: "Where

from the perspective of the self , wisdom has the nature of the immanent, knowledge has the nature of the omniscient, and understanding has the nature of the transcendent". The same definition says what the two principles require of an agent: the specific balance in any situation requires wisdom, canonically the integration and synthesis of both knowledge and understanding (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, p. 150). In the *Delicate Fire* conversation on right action I give the working gloss beside the canonical one: wisdom is the wholeness of my whole process of life and learning, and of being in this present. Since knowing is symmetry-natured and understanding continuity-natured, wisdom is the name for holding both at the one place where the theorem says they cannot both be perfected, which is why it appears at exactly this point in the argument and not as a decoration.

The react and response ratio measures the ratio of affect, which is choice, effort, and personal energy invested, to effect, which is outcome, consequence, and impact. The continuity principle is best realized when this ratio is near unity. The greatest effectiveness is attained when there is a balance between what one puts in and what comes out. “To have significantly more affect than effect is to experience frustration. To have significantly more effect than affect is to be tyrannical” (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, the section “Act, React, and Response”).



The ratio of affect (choice, effort, and personal energy invested) to effect (outcome, consequence, and impact). Effectiveness is greatest near unity; far toward one end is tyranny, far toward the other is frustration.

The ratio is a ratio between two poles of one inseparable triple and not between two separate quantities, which the section it comes from states as its title claim, at 2.14-2: "Action, reaction, and response are distinct, yet inseparable. There is never a response that does not have some aspect of action and reaction". And: "Nothing is purely chosen (random, chaotic, indeterminable dynamic), or purely deterministic (causal, logical, or of fixed process)". The second sentence is the result of Chapter 21 (section X) about determinism, arriving in the domain of conduct. No act is pure response and none is pure reaction, so the ratio is always a measure of proportion within one act and never a classification of acts into two kinds.

In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I add a limit on governance. Note 2 to 2.14-8: "In practice, it is unreasonable to expect the most thoroughly wise person in a civilization to have a degree of wisdom that encompasses 30 or so 'average' individuals. In more general terms, no form of governance of any grouping of 30 or so people (under any circumstances) can be expected to be ethical in its relations with single individuals. As such, a government 'of the people, for the people, by the people' will (cannot not have) significant ethical problems when ratios of influence of more than 30 to 1 people are involved in any stage of the administration of the culture". Two things in it are exact. I say that it is unreasonable to expect, which is a claim about what may be relied upon, and not that no person can, which would be a claim about what is possible. Its subject is the most thoroughly wise person in a civilization, which is an upper bound and not a typical case. The main text carries the principle the note applies, at 2.14-8: "Never should the scope of a leadership exceed its degree of maturity". The note applies that principle to numbers, and it makes a structural prediction: governance at ratios of influence above thirty to one fails ethically in its relations with single individuals. The number is a ceiling that is not reached, not a limit below which governance is safe. The ceiling is about thirty for this reason: the rule that the scope of a leadership must not exceed its maturity is the principle of 2.14-6, that effectiveness is greatest when the wisdom with which one chooses is equal to the consequence of the choice, applied to leadership, and the note applies that

rule to numbers. In note 2 to 2.14-8 I estimate that no one can reasonably expect the wisdom of the most thoroughly wise person in a civilization to encompass thirty or so average individuals. So, at a ratio of influence above thirty to one, the wisdom of those who govern would have to encompass more lives than any wisdom can be expected to encompass. Chapter 29 (Volume IV), section VII, "The Thirty-to-One Limit", sets this ceiling beside the other numbers of scale I use in the design of governance, the deliberating group of five or six and the band of about one hundred and fifty, and shows that each stands on its own ground.

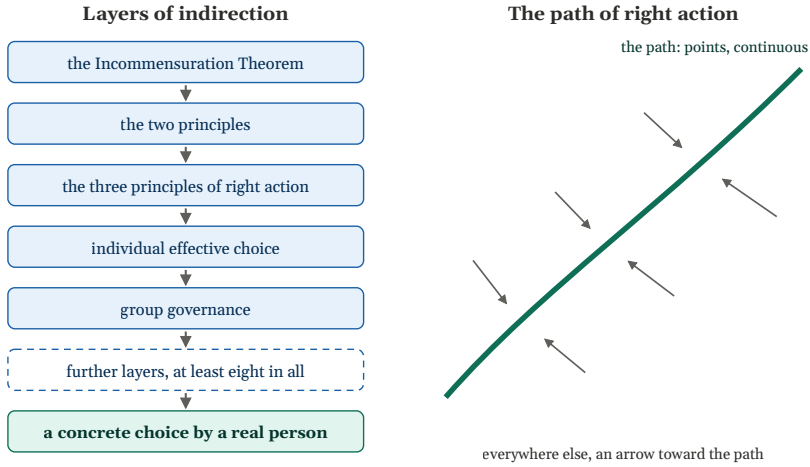
IX. Where These Two Chapters Sit

The two principles are not the last layer, and I am explicit that they are not usable as they stand. I put the whole architecture in three sentences: "The incommensuration theorem translates into two principles of non-relativistic ethics, which are still too abstract for ordinary moral use. These translate further into three principles of right action". And: "The level of indirection from something as abstract as the ICT to actual concrete choices by real people in real situations is at least eight orders". An order of indirection, here, is one layer of translation, in which a statement is restated in terms more concrete than the layer above it, as the two principles restate the theorem and the three principles of right action restate the two.

The layer above the two principles should be placed as well. Above the two principles stands the question of whether an ethics can be derived from a metaphysics at all, which is the is and ought question, Hume's claim that no statement about what ought to be follows validly from statements about what is. Neither this chapter nor the companion chapter takes that question up. They begin below it, from comparison, and derive the two principles without ever needing a premise about the relation of facts to values. The volume's other account of the ethics, which answers the gap directly, is Chapter 19. Chapter 19 dissolves the gap rather than bridging it, on the ground that ontology, epistemology, and axiology

stand in the Axiom III relation of distinctness, inseparability, and non-interchangeability, so that the separability the gap presupposes is false at the foundation.

The layer immediately beneath the two principles is therefore named, and Chapter 17 of Volume II carries it from *An Immanent Metaphysics*. The three theorems of the path of right action, at 2.16-1, hold that it is always possible to choose in a way that is win-win for all involved, including oneself, at all levels of being; that win-win choices are contiguous with one another, so that choosing well enables one to continue to choose well; and that the degree to which it seems that one cannot so choose is the measure of one's deviation from the path. In the *Delicate Fire* conversation on right action I give the three a geometry that *An Immanent Metaphysics* does not. The first theorem says that the path of right action is made up of points, and that those points exist. The second theorem says that these points are continuous. And the third theorem says that everywhere else in the space there is an arrow that points you toward the path. Points, continuity, and a gradient everywhere else.



Left, the layers between the theorem and a concrete choice, each restating the layer above it in more concrete terms, at least eight orders in all. Right, the geometry of the three theorems of the path of right action: the path is made of points, the points are continuous, and everywhere else in the space an arrow points toward the path.

Two consequences of the eight orders of indirection should be drawn rather than left implicit, because they govern how these two chapters should be read.

The first consequence of the eight orders of indirection is that settling a particular case is the work of the levels below the two principles of ethics. They are eight orders away from a particular case, and I offer them as principles and never as a decision procedure. A reader who wants guidance for a specific choice should be reading at the level of right action and below, where Chapter 17 of Volume II operates.

The second consequence of the eight orders of indirection is that the same distance from a particular case is the reason that the two principles of ethics can be non-relativistic at all. A statement general enough to hold across many worlds must be far from any particular one. Generality and immediate applicability trade against each other, and the trade is not an accident of exposition. It is the same trade, in the domain of statements,

that the theorem describes in the domain of comparisons: what holds identically across many contexts, which is symmetry, cannot also be maximally responsive to each, which is continuity. The abstractness of the two principles is a consequence of what they are for, and I say as much at 2R5, that the abstractness of their formulation is a necessary aspect of the generality and degree of inherentness of their application.

X. Questions a Reader May Ask

The claim of Chapter 21, stated exactly, is that the two principles are derived from within the metaphysics: the theorem generates the requirement, and the Universal Law and the conditions of the channel give the pair. The theorem generates a requirement, that both poles be honored and neither absolutized. The requirement takes canonical form in two principles, the two principles of *An Immanent Metaphysics*, and the theorem comes back as a corollary constraining them. Why exactly two, and why these two, is answered elsewhere in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, by the Universal Law and by the general communication channel argument, neither of which is a consequence of the theorem. The passage from the theorem by itself to the two principles is a bridge, as the companion chapter says at the point where the question arises.

A reader may ask three further questions here, and I answer each of them.

Does the completeness claim survive contact with rival ethics? My writing on the theorem supplies a test, and it names four positions. Pure utilitarianism is incomplete because it honors only symmetry: "It has abandoned the continuity pole and with it the entire domain of felt experience". Pure relativism is incomplete because it honors only continuity: "It holds that anything is acceptable as long as it feels right to those involved". Totalitarianism is unbalanced "because it applies rigid law without compassion, enforcing discontinuous treatment of persons". And the mixing of incommensurable domains is forbidden for the reason the

companion chapter gave. The test shows that each of the four can be located as a failure of one pole or of the constraint. A virtue ethics of character, which is about the agent rather than about the expression, is answered in part by 2.12-8, that the absolute practice of ethics is particular and unique to each individual.

Why is this hard to see? The standing obstacle has a name, and it is worth carrying because it explains the shape of the resistance rather than merely asserting that resistance exists. The obstacle is the omniscient bias, the tacit presumption that there exists a complete and correct account of how things are, available in principle, which is the account of no one in particular. I call it a structural feature of how perception works and not a personal error. Under that presumption, ethics looks like the search for the correct ranking of outcomes, which is an omniscient question, and the two principles look like an evasion of it. Give up the presumption and the question changes shape: one asks whether this act maintains both principles for all affected parties, which is an immanent question, and the answer does not require a complete account of anything. Giving up the omniscient bias is the same move that I make against the results of social choice theory, Arrow's theorem among them. The results of social choice theory in question are about combining many individual rankings into one social ordering.

Does the ethics evade hard cases by declaring them ill-formed? I take this question, which presses hardest of the three, at its strongest. I hold that the trolley problem and its relatives (stipulated dilemmas, defined in full below, in which a runaway tram will kill one group of people or another and the chooser is permitted no third course) are structurally incapable of evaluating an ethics. The reason is that they are omniscient-modal constructs, thought experiments held in imagination with the alternatives stipulated away, while ethics can only be practiced in the immanent. In the *Delicate Fire* conversation on right action I state it flatly. The nature of trolley problems is to start with an omniscient frame, to assume that there are no other alternatives, and to fix you into dealing with that situation. Someone who presents a trolley problem and claims to be

studying ethics is in fact studying morality, and has not understood ethics, because ethics is about principles. The constructive replacement is this: instead of asking what is the correct social ordering of all alternatives, an omniscient-modal question, ask whether this specific decision, this specific act, maintains the symmetry ethics and the continuity ethics for all affected parties, an immanent-modal question.

That answers the framing, and the answer rests on the first theorem of right action, that a win-win choice always exists, which is itself supported by the claim that values, unlike purposes, do not necessarily conflict, as *That Which Enables Choice* sets out: "Purposes, I have found, are frequently mutually exclusive; two people cannot always both get the specific outcome each one wants. But values are not like this. Values are intercompositional", and therefore "there are no necessary value conflicts".

My answer to the framing does not by itself cover the case of a person who is actually inside a situation in which the alternatives seem to have been foreclosed, by someone else's prior choice or by simple bad fortune. I answer that case from the structure as well, and my answer turns on what a person can and cannot be deprived of. The term for that is my own, from *An Immanent Metaphysics*. *True ownership* is defined at 2.18-1 as what cannot be taken from a self even in principle: "Law of True Ownership : 'None can take from you that which you truly own'". And: "If someone or something can take something, some property, or some quality away (even in principle), then it was never truly owned; it is not a part of one's unique Self". I state the same result of choice directly, in the aphorisms on choice rather than in the law of ownership. At 1.66-9: "Choice can partially limit and constrain other choices, but choice cannot take away (the beingness of) choice itself". And at 1.66-4: "Choice is not conserved, finite, or limited (the self cannot 'run out of choice(s)')". The first of those is the distinction I am drawing, between limiting particular choices, which can be done, and taking away the fact of choice, which cannot. The second closes the remaining escape, that a person might be brought to the end of their supply. I hold that so long as a person is living and conscious, there is no situation in which every alternative has been foreclosed. Someone in

a prison still has the capacity to dream, and so does someone locked entirely into their own body by the rare and unfortunate medical condition that produces that state. We may not be given the kinds of choice we want. The fact of choice, of something rather than nothing, is truly owned. Other people can take away particular choices; they cannot take away choice itself. To lose the range of one's options is a real deprivation and a real injury, and it is not a deprivation of agency.

I answer the dilemma cases on their own terms, in five steps. A *trolley problem* is a stipulated dilemma in which a runaway tram will kill one group of people or another and the chooser is permitted no third course. I set out why the form fails at length in my book *The Path of Right*, at Chapter 3, "The Nature of Trust", and the argument there begins one step earlier than the modal one. The first of the five steps is that, ethics being the principles of effective choice, what is meant by choice is "that really means choice, not a hypothesis about choice, but the actual embodiment of choice", and so, as I write there, "because the hypothesis about what you should do is not the embodiment of what you're actually doing, there is no reasonable way to consider trolley problems as a way of considering ethics".

The second step is modal. The trolley problem's framing is omniscient, the *omniscient* being the modality of the view from outside, in which the situation is structural, describable, and already enumerated. My position is that ethical principles, taken as principle, in triple with practice and theory, are transcendent, the *transcendent* being the modality of what exceeds any given frame, of potentiality and of what can still be brought into possibility. A construction that can only be posed from the omniscient cannot put a question to what lives in the transcendent, because the enumeration on which the construction depends is the very thing the transcendent is not bounded by. So a trolley problem is not, on this account, a question about ethics at all.

The third step is a concrete demonstration, which shows the failure rather than only naming it. Presented with the tram and the children on the track, my first act would be to take inventory: whether they can be un-

tied, whether the train can be derailed, whether the rock lying nearby is flint and can be struck against the rail into something close enough to a knife to use in the next ten seconds. "That's not something that would ever show up in any description of the scenario. But it's really relevant to my choice at that moment". The stipulation of no third course is not a feature of any situation. It is a feature of the description of one, and what a describer leaves out is exactly what the person actually standing there would be choosing from.

The fourth step is the classification, and I draw it myself: "So trolley problems are not about ethics. They're about morals". The reason I give for that is a second one, independent of the modal argument, namely that a stated should attached to a stated circumstance is a rule with respect to a domain of action, and a rule with respect to a domain of action is a moral code.

The fifth step names what the trolley problem smuggles in: the impression that existence has priority over reality, that the third-person account of how things stand outranks the first-person interaction one is actually in. I deny exactly that, holding the real to be more fundamental than the existing, since the existing is an abstraction from many real interactions and not the other way about, which Chapter 5 (Volume I) sets out at its section VI under the distinction between being, existence, and reality. I state the reversal and its ground in my book *Accessing the Real*, at Chapter 1, "Choice, Change, and Causality", section V, "Existence, Reality, and Objectivity", first naming what is being reversed, that "The standard Western philosophical tradition treats existence as the most fundamental category", and then giving the correction with its reason: "The real (first-person, interactive, immanent-modal) is more fundamental than the existing (third-person, structural, omniscient-modal), because existence is an abstraction from reality: one derives the concept of existence by abstracting from many individual real interactions, not the other way around". A trolley problem is a description, which is to say an abstraction, put for-

ward as though it were the interaction it was abstracted from. The dilemma is not a hard case for the ethics. The trolley dilemma is a case built on the priority that I reject, the priority of the existing over the real.

XI. How to Engage

Begin with the separation this chapter insists on, because it is the one most often collapsed. Justice is symmetry applied to persons and is a structural requirement. Judgment is the evaluation of another's choice, or the attempt to choose on another's behalf, and it is what cannot be done ethically at all. Watch your own reasoning about someone else's conduct and notice which of the two you are performing. The test is whether you are asking that a like standard apply to like cases, or delivering a verdict on a choice that was never yours to make.

Then measure your responses with the ratio given here. Affect is the choice or effort invested in an expression; effect is its outcome. The ratio works best near unity. More affect than effect is frustration. More effect than affect is tyranny. The ratio of affect to effect is a proportion taken within a single act, and not a description of a temperament, so the ratio can be taken again on the next act and will often come out differently.

Then grant the three rights of communication deliberately, in one conversation. The right to speak, the right to be understood, and the right to know that one has been understood. They can only be given and never taken. The third right, the right to know that one has been understood, is the right usually withheld, and without the third right what has occurred is transmission rather than communication.

One warning about hard cases. A dilemma stipulated to admit no third course puts its question from the view outside with the alternatives already enumerated and closed, and the argument here is that such a question cannot evaluate an ethics of principles at all. Test the two principles on a live situation whose options are still open.

XII. Summary

Each result of this chapter follows from the two principles and from the account of effectiveness, or else I give it as an aphorism of *An Immanent Metaphysics*. Effectiveness is defined in terms of the two principles counted twice, statically and dynamically, so it introduces no new criterion. The responsibility structure follows from the asymmetry between public expression and private perception, which is itself the plane of perception of the companion chapter. The three rights follow from channel integrity. The law of subjective causality is given as an aphorism, and the Catastrophic Theorem rests on its own warrant in *An Immanent Metaphysics*.

The two principles are complete in the sense this chapter claims. They are stated in the six intrinsics of comparison, which are analytically grounded and independently derived twice. They are expressed in symmetry and continuity, which the theorem defines. They encompass, as special cases, the major ethical principles of the Western tradition, among them the golden rule, the categorical imperative, equality before the law, the prohibition against deception and coercion, and the prohibitions against violence and against abrupt disconnection from community. Four rival positions can be located as failures of one pole or of the constraint.

The ethics and morality distinction explains why moral codes become outdated, since they are specific to contexts that change; why ethical principles persist, since they are structural rather than contextual; and why the cycle between them is necessary rather than a failure. It also explains why trolley-problem thought experiments are structurally incapable of evaluating an ethics, which section X sets out along with my answer to the case of the person whose alternatives appear foreclosed. The distinction is testable in ordinary use by the base-two and base-three device of the companion chapter: where one is thinking in terms of good and bad, one is in a moral frame, whatever one calls it.

These two chapters give principles, together with the per-act evaluation of each choice for self, other, and world; they give no decision procedure, and they do not resolve hard cases. The level at which a person chooses is eight orders of indirection away and belongs to the three principles of right action. The two principles are derived from within the metaphysics: the theorem gives the requirement, and the Universal Law and the general communication channel argument give that there are exactly two, which the theorem alone does not give.

Two principles, and no more than two, are what the derivation delivers: one requiring that what a person expresses hold steady as the context around it changes, and one requiring that neither the channel between persons nor the availability of choice be broken involuntarily. What they ask, positively, is fairness and care, symmetry and continuity applied to persons, evaluated per act and in three directions, for oneself, for the other, and for the world. What they cannot do is prescribe the practice, which is unique to each person and each choice, and cannot be enforced by anyone on anyone.

Because the two principles cannot both be perfected, the demands they make on a person are demands that no rule can discharge in advance. That no rule can discharge the demands of the two principles in advance is the whole reason that I had to write this chapter separately from Chapter 21, the chapter that derives the two principles. The derivation ends in two principles, and the practice begins where the derivation stops. The chapter that derives them sets out why the cycle between principles and codes is permanent rather than a defect to be engineered away, and the reader who wants that argument will find it there; what this chapter has done is say what standing inside that cycle actually asks of a person, act by act, in three directions, for oneself, for the other, and for the world.

One chooses most effectively when choosing from one's deepest basis of desire, which I call love. “Such choices should express that desire as affirming all of life at all levels of being, in all worlds” (2.12-14). Choices and actions are most effective when they are the most ethical: when they preserve both symmetry and continuity as fully as the situation allows,

knowing that perfection in both simultaneously is structurally impossible, and that the attempt to force perfection destroys the very life it seeks to protect. The closing claim about love is not left as a sentiment here. It rests on the finding that values, unlike purposes, are intercompositional and do not necessarily conflict, so that the search for a choice that honors everyone's values at once is a search that the structure of value permits to succeed. The finding that values do not necessarily conflict is what makes the counsel to choose from love practicable rather than merely admirable.

The two principles are practiced in relations between persons, and the chapter that follows takes up those relations: the three connections of a self, to spirit, to world, and to other, and the community, in which care governs, as the unit that can make effective choices at scale.

KEY CONCEPTS IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Positive Specification**: an ethics must say what to choose and not only what to avoid, because a negatively defined system defines a contrast class against an infinite set and is therefore incomplete.
- **Fairness and Care**: fairness and justice are symmetry applied to persons; care and compassion are continuity applied to persons. Both are structural requirements rather than optional features of a good society.
- **Per-Act Triadic Evaluation**: an act is assessed for the self, for the other, and for the world, against both principles, without ranking totalized outcomes. The most nearly operational form I give the two principles.
- **Effectiveness**: proportional to the product of the degree to which a choice preserves the integrity of self, world, and their relation, which is static symmetry and continuity, and the degree to which it potentiates creativity and experience in all of life, which is dynamic symmetry and continuity. A product, so that either factor at zero takes the whole to zero.

- **Pain and Suffering**: pain is a perceived decrease in the potentialities available to self and joy an increase; suffering is what results when morality is applied to the outcome of an interaction. There can be pain without suffering.
- **Three Named Discontinuities**: prejudice, a discontinuity in awareness of change and interchange; selfishness, in awareness of choice and potentiality; cruelty, in awareness of actuality, cause, and consequence.
- **Proportionate Response**: one may respond with the same extent and intensity as one was affected, neither more nor less, not to diminish or to escalate but to change. The continuity ethics under conditions of high intensity, and the reason it is not pacifism.
- **Justice against Judgment**: justice as impartial equal treatment is symmetry applied to persons and a structural requirement; judgment, the evaluation of another's choice or the attempt to choose on another's behalf, is what cannot be done ethically, because the objective cannot perceive the subjective. Discernment, which never closes with a verdict, is what is called for instead.
- **Expression Public, Perception Private**: no one may be required to account for their perceptions or knowing; every expression carries an ethical aspect. One is responsible for the totality of one's own choices, neither more nor less, and never for another's.
- **Everything Is Communication**: every action and every choice is a communication with the world, so the ethics of the channel is the ethics itself in its most general register. Ethics concerns the outward flow, not the inward one.
- **The Interval Between Perception and Expression**: the pause in which choice enters. An expression becomes ethical to the degree that choice is involved, which is what distinguishes a response from a reaction.
- **Three Rights of Communication**: the right to speak, the right to be understood, and the right to know one has been understood. Voluntarily granted, never taken; irreducible, since any simplification loses something essential; the first two symmetry and the third continuity.

- **Catastrophic Theorem**: either everything is sacred or nothing is. Its warrant is the general form of a catastrophic theorem, that either every X is Y or no X is Y, together with the claim of *An Immanent Metaphysics* that everything in all domains is intrinsically significant. It is an all-or-nothing result, and so a result of a different kind from the Incommensuration Theorem, which is an incommensurability result.
- **Maturity**: the product of responsibility, wisdom, and the degree to which choices of responsibility are made in accordance with that wisdom. A product, so any factor at zero zeroes the whole.
- **Wisdom**: the integration and synthesis of both knowledge and understanding. Since knowing is symmetry-natured and understanding continuity-natured, wisdom is the name for holding both where the theorem says neither can be perfected at the other's expense.
- **React/Response Ratio**: affect over effect, best near unity; more affect than effect is frustration, more effect than affect is tyranny. A proportion within one act, since action, reaction, and response are distinct yet inseparable and nothing is purely chosen or purely deterministic.
- **Scope and Maturity in Governance**: the scope of a leadership should never exceed its degree of maturity. Note 2 to 2.14-8 of *An Immanent Metaphysics* applies the principle to numbers: governance at ratios of influence above thirty to one fails ethically in its relations with single individuals, a ceiling that is not reached, not a limit below which governance is safe.
- **Eight Orders of Indirection**: the distance from the theorem to a concrete choice. Theorem, then two principles, then three principles of right action, then individual effective choice, then group governance, these being the named layers of at least eight. The two principles are, in my own words, still too abstract for ordinary moral use.
- **The Path of Right Action**: a win-win choice always exists; such choices are contiguous, forming a path; and the degree to which no win-win choice seems available measures one's distance from it. Points, continuity, and a gradient everywhere else.

- **True Ownership, and the Fact of Choice**: true ownership is what cannot be taken from a self even in principle. The kinds of choice available to a person can be taken, by another's prior choice or by bad fortune; the fact of choice cannot, since a person living and conscious retains it even in a prison or locked into their own body, where the capacity to dream remains. Because the fact of choice cannot be taken, no situation forecloses every alternative.
- **Why a Trolley Problem Is Not an Ethical Question**: a stipulated dilemma permitting no third course puts an omniscient-modal question, one asked from the view outside with the alternatives already enumerated and closed, while ethical principles, taken as principle, in triple with practice and theory, are transcendent. Such a problem smuggles in the impression that existence has priority over reality, which I deny, holding the real more fundamental than the existing.
- **The Omniscient Bias**: the tacit presumption that there exists a complete and correct account of how things are, available in principle, which is the account of no one in particular. Named as the standing obstacle to seeing that ethics is downstream of epistemology.
- **Values Are Intercompositional**: purposes are frequently mutually exclusive, values are not, so there are no necessary value conflicts. The support for the claim that one chooses most effectively from love.



Chapter Twenty-Three

Connection, Relationship, and Care

The Three-Legged Stool and Its Civilizational Significance

ABSTRACT

I identify three kinds of connection that together constitute the fullness of a well-lived life: connection to spirit (interior, conscience, the good), connection to world (nature, causation, the true), and connection to other (relationship, community, the beautiful). These three function as a three-legged stool: any two can be used to support and develop the third. Their integration produces the capacity for effective choice at personal and civilizational scale. Their absence produces the meaning crisis: isolated individuals, extractive institutions, and a civilization unable to make its way through existential risk.

This chapter develops the three connections, the distinction between community and institution, the concept of care as an orienting compass, and the practical claim that communities, not individuals and not states, are the unit capable of making effective choices at scale. It then sets out what *An Immanent Metaphysics* and my later books hold beneath those claims: the ordering among the three connections; the three bases of relation, care, transaction, and power, from which the community and institution distinction is derived, with its two operational tests; the account in *An Immanent Metaphysics* of love, and of consensus as decision from what is loved; the structure of friendship, with trust defined; attunement, and

> the developmental sequence by which care becomes a capacity; and the three rights of communication by which all three connections are maintained.

Why does a life need connection to spirit, to world, and to others, and why can only a community, and neither a single person nor a state, choose well at the scale the present age requires? My answer is that the three connections hold one another up, and that only a group in which care governs has both the scale and the basis to choose from what its members love.

I. The Three Connections

The first connection is that of self to spirit, the interior connection. What it connects a self with is conscience, divinity, and the depth of one's own being. Deep connection with the interior yields knowledge of what is ultimately good. The connection of self to spirit is the domain of spirituality, which is singular, solo, unnamed, and about experience, in the sense of the capacity to accept and integrate intensity of experience.

The second connection is that of self to world, the external connection. What it connects a self with is nature, causation, and reality. Deep connection with the world yields knowledge of what is ultimately true. The connection of self to world is the domain of science and technology, which concern the structural relationship between self and the objective.

The third connection is that of self to other, the relational connection. What it connects a self with is relationship, community, and the between-space. Deep connection with another yields knowledge of what is ultimately beautiful. The connection of self to other is the domain of religion, understood as that which holds people together through care, and not as institutional doctrine.

These three connections function as a three-legged stool. If doubtful about one's interior, check against reality and consult other people. If doubtful about something in reality, check one's conscience and consult others. If unsure about another person, check reality and one's own spirit. Each pair of legs supports the third. Start with whatever connection is strongest, use any two to strengthen the third, and braid all three together until they climb together. That braid will be stronger than anything alone.

II. The Ordering of the Connections

Which of the three connections comes first? I give four answers, and they do not compete, because they answer four different questions.

The first answer is personal. For myself, as I say in my later book *Dialogues on Connection*, my connection to world is the primary thing, my connection to self a close second, and my connection to other a weak third; others I have spoken with hold a different one of the three as strongest. Any of the three can be the one a person holds as most ultimately meaningful, and which one it is differs from person to person. A shift in which one is held primary is what I call a *change of basis*, and in conversation in *Dialogues on Connection* I put it this way: "Somewhere along the way, there'll be a transition from, I hold this as the most ultimate meaningful thing, to I hold this other thing as the most ultimate meaningful thing". After such a shift "you are fundamentally a different character in the sense that the very basis of the meaningfulness of your essence will have changed". It is a core experience, not a therapy, and I call it an existential risk in the personal sense: a risk to the basis of who one is.

A note on names. In that book I call the interior connection "connection to self" when the three are counted from outside, as in the question of which one is primary, and "self to spirit" when the self is taken as the common subject of all three, as in the teaching of section I. I flag the naming

problem there myself, in conversation: "I could say spirit, I could say soul, I could say conscience, I could say divinity, I could say God, whatever". The two names denote one connection.

The second answer is structural, and it is the one the stool already gives. On the right ordering, my answer, as I put it in conversation in *Dialogues on Connection* (section III, "Three Legs That Support One Another"), is this: "I think it is not so much about the ordering. I think it is more about the co-supportiveness". Each pair of legs supports the third. There is one asymmetry inside the co-support, and I name it: reality is the leg one can always check against, even when one does not trust another person, because it is, in my word, non-falsifiable: "I check with reality, which is non-falsifiable". It is non-falsifiable in this sense: reality cannot be talked out of being what it is.

The third answer is developmental. The connections can be sequenced even though they are not ranked, and the sequence begins with other. Of a baby I say: "They probably experience other first and then world". The practical advice follows: "get really good at the relational practice. And then from there, you can develop skill in the interior spiritual practice and skill in the outer world practice". I add at once, in the same conversation: "That might not work for everybody". Some people come to nature before they come to other people, which is the wild orientation described below.

The developmental sequence has a deeper form in the same book, and it is the nearest I come to giving the relational connection primacy. "I can't get from third person to first person unless I pass through second person. So objective knowledge doesn't become firsthand lived experience unless you do it relationally". Knowledge of the world, in the third person, becomes knowledge of oneself, in the first person, only by way of another, in the second. In that book I state the metaphysical form of the same claim: it is not that selves make choices; the self emerges from choices, and the choices are in the betweenness, the space between self and other, not in the interior. Because the self emerges from choices, and the choices are in

the betweenness, the teaching is about relationship. For the same reason, developing skill in the relational space is, in my words there, "the essence of what it means to move with the future".

An Immanent Metaphysics itself states an ordering of a fourth kind, which is a precedence rather than a ranking. In "Gentleness" (2.48-7): "The integrity of Self (integrity/impeccability) must precede the connectedness with the world (experience). Wellness (health) must take precedence over fullness (presence)". The meaningfulness of life is "to live well and fully" (2.48-10): well is a high degree of internal integrity of self, fully is a high degree of connectedness between self and reality. Integrity does not outrank connection; it must be in place first, because the intensity of one's contact with a world must stay slightly below the integrity one has within.

Beneath all four answers is a single ground, stated in my later book *The Ladder of Friendship*: "The intersubjective relationship between self and world is more fundamental than either term alone". There is no self without a world in which it acts, and no world, as lived and known, without a self that perceives and responds. What the three connections connect is not prior to the connecting. The relation is the ground from which both terms emerge, and the four ordering questions above are questions about how a particular self comes to stand in it.

III. Good, True, and Beautiful

The classical triad of goodness, truth, and beauty maps onto the three connections: the good is known through connection to spirit, the true is known through connection to world, and the beautiful is known through connection to other. Goodness, truth, and beauty are more than aesthetic categories, since they are the three dimensions of value. In my book *On Re-Wilding Religion* (Chapter 5) I assign the three dimensions of value to the three modalities: goodness has the nature of the transcendent, truth of the omniscient, beauty of the immanent.

Each connection yields its value in a way anyone can check in an ordinary week. The good is known through connection to spirit: when I am about to say something cutting to a colleague and something in me checks the words, that inner check, conscience, is the connection to depth telling me what is good. The true is known through connection to world: when I believe the bridge on my route is open and I go and look, what I find there tells me what is true, whatever I had believed. The beautiful is known through connection to other: when a friend tells a story and the telling fits the moment so well that both of us feel it, the rightness of that fit is met between the two of us, in the meeting itself.

The more one deepens the good, the true, and the beautiful through these three connections, the more trustworthy one becomes in community and the more one can discern when to trust and when not to. A community of people with these skills can do things well beyond current capacity, not incremental improvements but fundamental advances in the capacity to make choices at scale with coherence, clarity, and wisdom holding care. By a fundamental advance I mean a change in what a group can choose at all, and not only in how fast it chooses. A town whose people can decide together how to share their water in a dry year, without a court and without a vote that leaves a resentful minority, has a capacity that no improvement in its voting procedure would give it.

IV. Community vs. Institution

In my *Delicate Fire* conversation "Connection to Self, World, and Other" I draw a sharp distinction between community and institution. Every community has something that holds it together: something the members care about. Community and care are used almost interchangeably. A community is a group in which care governs.

An institution is one in which transaction (payment) or power (hierarchy of control) governs. All three, care, transaction, and power, are present in any relation of substance; what decides the name is which of

them holds precedence when they come into conflict. If exchange and constraint together hold that precedence, it is definitely an institution. Institutions are ineffective at making their choices by care, whichever of transaction and power governs them. They can deal with economy; getting ecology right requires community.

This distinction has a direct ethical consequence. Neither individuals nor states can really make effective choices. Individuals lack scale. States are trapped by the principal-agent problem (those who act for the people, the agents, have interests of their own that differ from the interests of the people they act for, the principals), by the rules for rulers (leaders must maintain coalitions to stay in power), and by the multipolar trap (in the definition of *The Ladder of Friendship*: each actor's locally rational choice produces an outcome worse than the one every actor would have chosen, and no actor can decline unilaterally without being displaced by one who does not). People in power are just as stuck as everyone else. Money is not the enabling factor; choice is.

Communities can make choices, and therefore must. Institutions cannot because they are about transaction and power, not about care. What is needed is something centering care: a values-based organization where care is the orienting basis, love in a real sense. Utilitarian calculus cannot do it because it is ungrounded: there is no value system at its root. From a care basis, the community can discover what it is passionate about, what success looks like, and what actions are available. It can then make the choice.

V. Care, Transaction, and Power

The distinction just drawn is not a pair of labels. It is derived, in my later book *Care, Transaction, and Power*, from a claim about every relation between persons: "Every relation between persons rests on one or more of exactly three bases: care, transaction, and power". Each basis is known by the question it asks. *Care* asks: what do you need? It is the basis of relation

in which the other's wellbeing is one's own concern; value flows toward need, the other's choice matters wholly, and accounting is forbidden, because a ledger introduced into a relation of care changes what the relation is. *Transaction* asks: what is it worth? It is the basis in which each party has something the other wants and the relation exists to carry the exchange; the other's choice is respected as equal, and accounting is obligatory, since without the ledger exchange cannot be told from generosity or from theft. *Power* asks: who decides? It is the capacity to compel the alignment of another's choice; the other's choice is subordinate, and the option to decline has been removed. Three orientations toward the other's choice: paramount, equal, subordinate. "No other orientation toward the other's choice is possible".

The three are exhaustive because any flow of value between persons is either conditional or unconditional, and an unconditional flow moves either by the free choice of the giver or by the compulsion of the taker. "Three possibilities, and no more: unconditional giving, conditional exchange, unconditional taking. Care, transaction, power". That care, transaction, and power exhaust the bases of relation is a logical exhaustion of the cases, and not an empirical generalization. Duty, loyalty, honor, custom, and affection are not further bases; each, examined, is a compound of the three. Duty freely assumed out of concern for another is care; duty undertaken in exchange for a corresponding obligation is transaction; duty imposed by an authority one is not free to refuse is power.

Two principles follow, and they are the ground of the test stated in section IV. The first of the two principles is co-occurrence: all three bases, care, transaction, and power, are present in any relationship of substance. A marriage is, at its best, governed by care, and is also a transactional arrangement of labor and money, and is also a relation of power over where to live and how money is spent. "The question is never which basis exists but which basis governs, which of the three holds precedence when they come into conflict". The governing basis is not read from feeling. "Care is not a feeling that accompanies conduct; it is the basis on which conduct is selected". It reveals itself when the interests diverge, when a choice must

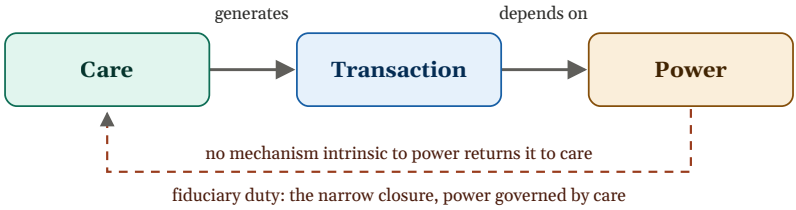
serve one basis at the expense of another. Power in a mother's care for a child is not a bad thing, as I say in *Dialogues on Connection*, because the care is stronger than the power; a family is not an institution, and what makes it a family is that care governs.

The second principle is non-substitution: no basis can do the work of another, and the attempt produces a recognizable distortion. The illustration I give in *Care, Transaction, and Power* is the friend who spends a Saturday helping you move, to whom you then offer thirty dollars. The insult is categorical, not quantitative. "A larger sum does not soften the error; it deepens it", because it makes explicit that you have reclassified the relationship, applying the question of transaction to a situation governed by the question of care. There is no right price, because the bases are not convertible currencies.

The three bases stand in a chain, and the chain is open. "Care generates transaction. Transaction depends on power. Power does not, by any mechanism intrinsic to its own operation, serve care. The chain runs in one direction. It is open". One works because one cares for those the paycheck supports; markets require law, and law requires enforcement; but nothing in the sequence returns power to the service of care. The openness is the source of a pattern of degeneration that recurs at every scale. Care is usurped by transaction through itemization: what was given freely begins to be measured, and the question what do you need is replaced by the question what is it worth. Transaction is usurped by power through compulsion: once the terms are stated, someone must enforce them, and what is it worth gives way to who decides. Medicine, which begins as the care of the sick and ends with the physician spending more time on compliance than on the patient, is the worked case in that book. The remedy is not a retreat to some time before ledgers, which never existed, but the closure of the chain, so that power itself is governed by care. Fiduciary duty, "the legal requirement that power be governed by care", is the narrow form in which that closure already exists.

Three corollaries follow from the definitions, and I state them in the same words in *Dialogues on Connection*: "Power without care is abuse. Transaction without care is exploitation. Care without power is vulnerability". *Abuse* is the use of something without the care of it; it is abuse by definition, not by accusation, and no malice is required. The third corollary matters most for what follows. Care without power is ineffective, and it is also structurally dangerous to the one who cares, because care opens one to the condition of the other, and without power one can do nothing about what one perceives. So the argument is not that power is wrong and care is right. "Power is necessary. Transaction is necessary". The argument is about which basis holds precedence when the three conflict.

	Care	**Transaction**	**Power**
The question it asks	What do you need?	What is it worth?	Who decides?
The other's choice	Paramount	Equal	Subordinate
Accounting	Forbidden	Obligatory	No ledger governs; the option to decline has been removed
The flow of value	Unconditional giving	Conditional exchange	Unconditional taking
Without care	(not applicable)	Exploitation	Abuse



The three bases of relation and their open chain. Care generates transaction, and transaction depends on power; nothing in the sequence returns power to the service of care. The dashed line is the closure that would return power to the service of care, and fiduciary duty is the narrow form of that closure that already exists. The table above gives the question each basis asks, the place of the other's choice in it, and the corollaries: transaction without care is exploitation, power without care is abuse, and care without power is vulnerability.

Which basis holds precedence when care, transaction, and power conflict is the ground of the distinction between community and institution in section IV. "An institution is fundamentally a structure of transaction and power. A community, if it genuinely earns the name, is care-based". Institutions hold their members by exchange and by constraint, and holding members in that way makes institutions durable and also makes institutions unable to generate care, which is the thing asked of institutions. "Beginning from transaction and hoping to arrive at care is hoping that a journey west will end in the east". Transaction and power contain no mechanism for producing care where it is not already present: "Paying a person to care produces, at best, a competent performance of caring behaviors, which is a valuable thing, and is also, precisely and only, a transaction". Mandating care produces, at best, compliance. And technology, which manufactures relations of power and of transaction with every advance, cannot manufacture care, because "Care arises only from consciousness attending to consciousness".

A community, then, is not a group that happens to share a space or a charter. It is "a group of people whose being together is constituted by mutual relationships of care". The care must flow in both directions; a

group in which it flows one way, from many toward one or from one toward many, is a following or a service, not yet a community. Its boundary lies where care is or is not, and its defining feature is that it is loosely held. It does not compel membership, punish exit, or demand uniformity; when it begins to, it has shifted from a care-governed structure to a power-governed one, whatever its stated values.

Two operational tests follow. The first operational test is the sickness test. When someone in the group becomes sick or falls into genuine need, what do the others do? "Do they rearrange their own choices to hold the well-being of the person in need as an end in itself, without calculating what they will receive in return". If they do, care is present, and the group is functioning as a community, whatever else it also is. If they do not, then whatever the group calls itself, it is a network, a marketplace, an audience, or an organization, but it is not a community. The second operational test is the freedom-to-leave tell: "does the group's cohesion depend on members being able to leave, or does it depend on members being unable to imagine leaving?" A group whose coherence rests on the freedom of its members to depart is held together by care. A group whose coherence rests on the foreclosure of that freedom, by material threat, social pressure, or the manipulation of identity, is held together by a weapon. Between them, the two tests decide whether the name community is earned.

VI. Care as Orienting Compass

Technology tells us what we can do; it cannot tell us what we ought to do. The "ought" dimension requires care as an orienting compass combined with wisdom and situational awareness.

Care tells you where to go, because what you care about is not the same as what you do not care about, and that asymmetry is what gives a direction. The map and your current position tell you where you are and what is relevant to care about. Without combining wisdom, care, and situ-

ational awareness, one runs blind: care alone gives a direction with no place to start from, and a map alone gives a place with no direction to go in.

Connection to spirit, world, and other is the network of sensemaking that a community needs in order to know three things: what it cares about, what success looks like, and where it is right now. Where it is right now is the accessible adjacent possible: the steps that are within reach from the present state, as distinct from everything that might someday be possible.

VII. Love and Consensus

Section IV asked for a basis centering care, "love in a real sense", and section VI made care the compass. In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I give an account of love, and a statement of how a group decides from what it loves, and both sit beneath those sections.

In "The Nature of Love" I define love as an understanding: "love is that which enables choice. The quintessential meaning of Love refers to the quality of enabling and nurturing choice, joy, connectedness, and freedom". (2.44-2) Love is the most basic and fundamental emotion, the potentiality from which all other emotions and desires are drawn (2.44-5). "Love is an inequality. Love is always (and forever) given (and received) in a unique manner, with unique qualities". (2.44-7) One cannot expect to receive it in the manner in which it is given. "Love has only the intention of giving. It is never about exchange or expectation. Love has no price, and cannot be bartered or exchanged in the marketplace". No one can earn the love of another; only respect can be earned and conditioned (2.44-10), because respect reflects what one has actually done, and love acknowledges what one could potentially be. "Love only exists when it moves" (2.44-11): one does not have love, one may only give it, and its movement is a flow of potentiality from oneself to another self.

One aphorism of that section states the distinction of section IV in the terms of *An Immanent Metaphysics*. "To the degree that one is able to give a 'reason' for their love, one is expressing a statement of purpose, rather than a statement of feeling, desire, or inherent significance (value). Defining a relationship in terms of purpose is to describe a business transaction rather than an intimate and inherently meaningful connection". (2.44-9) Love is enacted in terms of significance, not in terms of structure, purpose, reason, or value.

Love and care are related and are not the same, and I keep them apart on purpose: "The recommendation is to keep love and care distinct". Love is that which enables choice and has the nature of the transcendent; care is the immanent basis of relation defined in section V. "Love, as the enabling condition of choice, is part of what makes genuine care possible", care that attends to the other's choice as well as the other's wellbeing. So when section IV says that care is love in a real sense, the precise reading is that care rests on love, not that the two words name one thing.

What can a group share? My answer in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, in "Equanimity", is exact. "Values can be shared by all. However, it is not reasonable to believe that others will hold the same purposes as oneself (very unlikely except at especially deep layers of being). Purposes can be coordinated, but are infrequently shared". (2.23-5) A *value* is defined in terms of interdependence, one value interdependent with all other values; a *purpose* in terms of dependence, one purpose depending on other purposes; *meaning* in terms of independence, each meaning singular and unique unto itself (2.22-4). No value can be enforced or impressed upon another (2.23-7), and there are no necessary value conflicts: "It is ineffective to ask one to value something less; it is always more effective to ask one to value more". (2.23-8) "To live a value is to fully accept the being of other (another, world)". (2.23-10) Meaning is held by neither party: "Meaning is always (and only) in between". (2.23-6) A community shares its values, coordinates its purposes, and finds its meaning in the between, which is why the values-based organization of section IV is not an organization of agreed purposes.

How does a group decide from what it loves? The section "Politics" of *An Immanent Metaphysics* is the direct statement. "Politics is what happens when a group of people makes decisions based upon what they fear, rather than on what they love. Consensus is what happens when people in a group make decisions on the basis of what they love, what they all commonly desire together". (2.15-1) "The best methods of group decision making help people to know what they love, what they really care about, and to choose on that basis". (2.15-3) As long as any one person or country chooses on the basis of fear there will be strife, frustration, and pain; agreement and true peace are reached only in consensus and desire (2.15-4). To effect positive change is to help others know their real desires, and to cooperatively discover the most effective method of their realization (2.15-5). The aphorisms of "Politics" at 2.15-1 to 2.15-5 are, in the words of *An Immanent Metaphysics*, the community of section IV discovering what the community is passionate about, what success looks like, and what actions are available.

Two further aphorisms, from "Society and Emotion", are the form *An Immanent Metaphysics* gives to claims made elsewhere in this chapter. "Only that which nurtures life will continue to live (all of life, on all levels of being)". (2.46-7) That is the sentence of section IX below, in the words of *An Immanent Metaphysics*. "The deepest desires of the self are always connected with (cannot not be connected with, are never disconnected from) the deepest desires of the community". (2.46-8) Only the forms of desire can conflict; root desires never do. That only the forms of desire can conflict, and root desires never do, is the convergence of desires at depth that I state in my teaching and argue in Chapter 15 (Volume II), section II, "What Depth Is". And the section closes with the instruction that makes care the compass: "Always choose from the basis of love". (2.46-12) Choice made on the basis of love, over fear, anger, or depression, is healthier, more nurturing, and more effective, because love is more enabling of choice than any other emotion (2.46-11).

My own definition of effective choice, in "Effective Choice", follows the same line, and section XIII below relies on it. "An Effective choice is one that results in the realization (manifestation) of desire"; and "An ultimately effective choice is one which realizes (manifests) the ultimate desires of all that is making that choice (the totality of the subjective) and all that is affected by that choice (the totality of the objective)". (2.112-1) Consensus, deciding from what all commonly desire together, is effective choice at the scale of a group.

VIII. Friendship

Beneath community there is a simpler structure, and *The Ladder of Friendship* makes it the load-bearing element: "Where friendship is absent or degraded, no amount of institutional design, no sophistication of governance, no eloquence of shared vision can compensate for the missing foundation". Where friendship is well formed, almost everything else a community needs can be derived from it. So the third connection, self to other, has a structure of its own at the scale of two, and the structure is a diagnostic.

Friendship is defined by six irreducible goods, generated from two independent axes. The first axis is scope: whether a good is personal, concerning the individual friend, or collective, concerning the relationship itself or the larger field the friends share. The second axis is perspective, the three modalities: the omniscient, what is already the case; the immanent, what is present and unfolding; the transcendent, what is becoming possible. "The result is a three-by-two grid: three perspectives crossed with two scopes, yielding six cells. Each cell names a distinct good of friendship". Omniscient and personal is *support*, the recognition of what is already given in the other's life; in my phrasing in that book, support says: I see where you are, and I stand with you in it. Omniscient and collective is *encouragement*, the affirmation of shared ground: we have something real here, and it is worth sustaining. Immanent and personal is *sharing*, the

mutual disclosure of present experience: this is what it is like to be me right now, and I trust you with that knowledge. Immanent and collective is *celebration*, the joint experience of aliveness: being here with you is itself a good. Transcendent and personal is *learning*, the friend's contribution to the other's becoming: through knowing you, I become more than I was. Transcendent and collective is *values*, the shared orientation toward what matters: we are moving toward something together, and it is worthy of our movement. "The grid is generative, not summary". It is not a list compiled from observed friendships; it is produced by the intersection of two independently motivated axes, there is no seventh cell, and "A complete friendship supplies all six goods. A friendship that lacks one is incomplete in a specifiable way".

In this grid I assign each modality to a row, which is a pair of goods, and not to a cell, which is one member of that pair: the omniscient to support and encouragement taken together, the immanent to sharing and celebration taken together, and the transcendent to learning and values taken together. A cell carries a position on two axes, one of scope and one of perspective, and not a modality of its own. The assignment does not pass down from the pair to its members, because passing it down would erase the distinctness between support and encouragement, and between the members of each other pair, that gives the grid six cells rather than three.

Row (perspective), read from the foundation upward	**Personal**	**Collective**
Transcendent: what is becoming possible (emerges on top)	**Learning**: through knowing you, I become more than I was.	**Values**: we are moving toward something together, and it is worthy of our movement.
Immanent: what is present and unfolding (rests on the foundation)	**Sharing**: this is what it is like to be me right now, and I trust you with that knowledge.	**Celebration**: being here with you is itself a good.
Omniscient: what is already the case (the foundation)	**Support**: I see where you are, and I stand with you in it.	**Encouragement**: we have something real here, and it is worth sustaining.

The six goods of friendship. The modality belongs to the row, which is a pair of goods, and not to any one cell. The foundation is the bottom row, and the upper rows need the lower rows in order to function.

Arranged in rows by perspective, the six are a practice. The omniscient row, support and encouragement, is the foundation. The immanent row, sharing and celebration, rests on it, since one cannot share freely with someone who does not support. The transcendent row, learning and values, emerges on top. "The vertical structure is not a hierarchy of importance but a hierarchy of dependence. The upper rows need the lower rows in order to function". And the six are co-supporting: "Developing any one of them makes the others more possible". The co-support of the six goods of friendship is the three-legged stool of section I applied inside the third connection, the connection of self to other. That co-support makes the six-cell grid a diagnostic. When a friendship is in difficulty, ask which element has failed. A friendship in which sharing has broken down but support remains is repaired by restoring the practice of disclosure; one in which support itself has failed requires rebuilding the foundation. The diagnostic requires *discernment*, the ongoing, feeling-based reading of

what is actually so, and not *judgment*, the evaluation of another's choice or the attempt to choose in another's place. "To locate a rupture in the grid is an act of discernment. To assign blame for the rupture is an act of judgment".

The same six appear under other names in my other books. *Care, Transaction, and Power* names them need, sharing, celebration, values, learning, and presence, and claims "that nothing recognizable as friendship exists outside of these six elements or some combination of them"; if friendship is the form of relationship in which care operates between peers, the six are the channels through which care flows. *Dialogues on Connection* gives an earlier three-layer form: each would be glad to help the other meet their needs, chosen voluntarily; the friends share and celebrate the delights of their lives, which is where friendship starts; and each adopts the values of the other as worthy of attention, which is best thought of as learning, since one need not learn everything oneself.

Friendships also differ in kind, not only in degree. *The Ladder of Friendship* sets seven thresholds, as rungs: confirmation of identity, confirmation of consensus reality, shared experience and co-regulation, the commitment to appreciation, empathic curiosity past repair, the commitment to the other's becoming, and tending the collective field. The fourth is the threshold rung. What is appreciated there is being, not behavior. "Appreciation of being is unconditional in a specific sense: it is not contingent on the other's performance". "Below this rung, friendship is largely instrumental". The friend serves a function: mirroring, validating, co-regulating. Above it, the other's being is valued for its own sake, and care, in the sense of section V, becomes central. That book adds that friendship is one of the fastest paths to truth, beauty, and goodness together, because in genuine friendship these are not abstract ideals but lived realities; so connection to other yields all three; the mapping of section III names beauty as the essence of that connection, not as the only thing it yields.

The rungs above the threshold require trust, and trust is defined. "Trust is defined as the reasonable expectation that another's choices will track what one cares about". *Care, Transaction, and Power* adds what trust is

not: "It is not a feeling and not a belief; it is a condition of a relationship, built from accumulated evidence that the other's surface matches their depth". At the shallow end of relationship, trust is managed by worst-case modeling; as the relationship deepens, it shifts to giving the benefit of the doubt, not from naivety but from evidence accumulated through sustained interaction. Trust is not one thing but a family of expectations, and in *The Ladder of Friendship* I distinguish two of its members. *Continuity-based trust* is native to friendship. Its orientation is duration: the relationship will endure, and whatever imbalance arises today will be metabolized over years. "The unit of account is not the favor but the relationship". "Continuity-based trust is the soil in which care grows", because one who is not tracking debts is free to attend to the other's actual situation. *Symmetry-based trust* is native to coordination: the project, the partnership, the bounded endeavor. Its orientation is fairness within a boundary, each party contributing what was agreed and receiving benefit in proportion; its horizon closes when the project ends; and it "permits cooperation between people who are not friends". The two map onto my two orthogonal modes, *choice*, the objective expression of a consistency between two subjective contexts, and *causality*, the subjective perception of a consistency between two objective contents. "In the friendship bond, what one trusts is the consistency of the other's choices across contexts"; in the coordination bond one trusts a causal regularity, the perceivable relation between what is given and what is received. The most common breakdown between people who care about each other is applying the two accountings to the same events without first agreeing which governs; neither party lies, and each is consistent within a framework the other does not share.

The three connections are themselves a diagnostic at the scale of a partnership. *The Ladder of Friendship* gives the topology three terms, Self, Other, and World, and observes: "Every person attends to all three". What differs is the order of attention, which term is reached through which, and which term, under pressure, drops off the list entirely. Asked to write out their priorities in order, two partners characteristically produce lists each

missing a different term. One partner routes self-worth through the World, the providing partner; the other routes the World through relationship, the relating partner. The providing partner's list might read: Kids, Work, Partner, Us. The relating partner's list might read: Kids, Partner, Us, Self. "The providing partner's list excludes Self entirely. The relating partner's list excludes World entirely". The providing partner reaches the self through the world, through what that partner builds, earns, and produces; the relating partner reaches the world through the other partner and through the family. Each partner then feels de-prioritized, and each is correct, in a different register. "Without the Self/Other/World framework, each hears the other's complaint as an accusation rather than as a mirror". The corrected schema begins with the same move for both: Self near the top of the list, not as selfishness, but because "a person who has no relationship with their own interiority cannot offer genuine presence to anyone else"; and Us on the list as an explicit object of tending. The partners' lists, read against Self, Other, and World, are the three-legged stool of section I used as a diagnostic. Section I said how to use two legs to rebuild the third; this says which leg characteristically goes missing, and why.

At the scale of community the same triple appears once more. Most accounts of flourishing recognize two domains, personal growth and impersonal principle. "Community is a third domain, distinct from both, in which the other two are held together". "Personal growth, pursued alone, tends toward solipsism". "Impersonal principle, pursued alone, tends toward abstraction". Community is where the individual discovers that her growth matters to others, and where abstract principle discovers that it must be livable to be meaningful. Set against section I, personal growth is the interior leg, impersonal principle the world leg, and community the leg that holds the two together: the third connection doing at scale what the stool says it does.

IX. Toxicity, Linearity, and the Practice of Community

Technology used for comfort, entertainment, and power-seeking has side effects that harm the integrity of life, and that which does not support life will not continue to live. The word "toxic" means, at root, depleting things necessary for life or accumulating things inhibitive of life. Linearity, which is the one-way sequence of extraction, abstraction, and accumulation, cannot not create toxicity. Extraction takes things out of the ecological and cultural context in which they belong; abstraction turns actual, physical resources into virtual ones; and accumulation concentrates what has been taken in one place. Because the sequence runs one way and never returns what it takes, it depletes what life needs where things were taken and accumulates what inhibits life where they are gathered, which are the two kinds of toxicity.

A forest shows the whole sequence in one case. Trees are cut and hauled out of the valley where they grew: that is extraction. The timber is sold, and what the forest was becomes a number in an account: that is abstraction. The money is held in a city far from the valley, where it gathers with other money: that is accumulation. The valley is left short of what its life needed, soil held by roots and shade over the streams, and the city is left with a concentration that does nothing for the valley; both kinds of toxicity have appeared, each at its own end of the line.

To restore life, restore cyclicity. Cyclicity is the mirror image of linearity, with one term answering each of the three, taken in reverse order: distribution, which moves resources outward rather than concentrating them, answers accumulation; embodiment, which makes virtual resources actual and physical, answers abstraction; and recontextualization, which places things in their appropriate ecological and cultural context, answers extraction.

Linear term	Cyclic term that answers it	In the case of the forest
Extraction	Recontextualization	The timber is used in the valley, and what is taken from the forest is matched by what is returned to it
Abstraction	Embodiment	The value of the wood stays in houses, tools, and work that the people of the valley can see and use
Accumulation	Distribution	What the wood earns is spread among the people who live with the forest, rather than gathered far away

The reverse case runs the other way round the cycle. Wood cut for the valley is used in the valley, and the forest is replanted where it was cut; the value of the wood stays in houses and tools that the people can see and use; and what the wood earns is spread among those who live with the forest. Replanting, using, and sharing each need the people of the valley to agree on what they care about and to act on it together, so no step of that cycle can be done by one person alone. Hence restoring cyclicity becomes the practice of community: it is what religion, in the sense of section I, needs to be about, and what the spiritual practice of each participant must entail, which is right relationship with spirit, world, and other.

X. Wild, Domesticated, and Feral

In my *Delicate Fire* conversation "Connection to Self, World, and Other", which section IV draws on, I give a typology. A person who trusts nature first (before people or self) is *wild*. A person who trusts other first is *domesticated* or social. A person who trusts nothing (not the wild, not others, not self) is *feral*: hypervigilant, exhausting, unable to rest.

One sketch of each kind makes the typology concrete. A wild person, lost in a strange town, walks to the river and reads the land to find the way back, before asking anyone. A domesticated person, in the same town, asks the first friendly face and takes the answer as given. A feral person asks no one and trusts neither the river nor the answer nor a first guess, and so keeps checking, circling, and second-guessing until the day is spent.

The step from trusting nothing to losing joy runs in a short chain. Whoever trusts nothing must watch everything, since nothing can be left to anything else; watching everything is vigilance, and vigilance that never ends is exhausting and leaves no rest; and joy, which comes as a context of experience in which one is at ease with the world and not as a content one can pursue, has no room to arise in a life given wholly to watching. I give in full, in the chapter on the dynamics of emotion in Volume II (Chapter 12), the mechanism by which trusting nothing leaves no room for joy.

Feralness is a matter of degree, as are wildness and domestication; everybody has some of each, and nobody is purely one kind. In its fuller form the feral person is isolated, trusts nothing, and pursues safety through separation, which, as the chapter on the dynamics of emotion in Volume II (Chapter 12) shows, eliminates the possibility of joy; much of the modern population is feral in this precise sense. The antidote is not to force trust but to begin with whatever connection is available, even a small one, and use it to build the others: two legs of the stool of section I supporting the third.

XI. Attunement and the Developmental Sequence

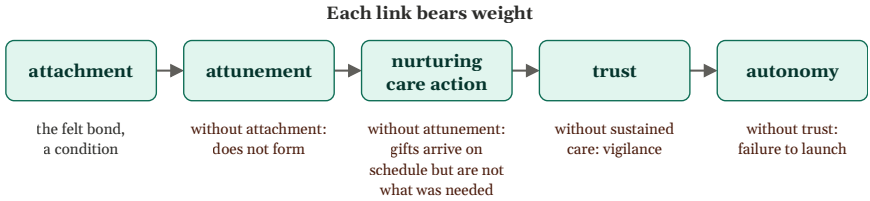
The feral condition of section X has, in my later books, a developmental account, and the account begins with a definition. *Attunement* is "The nervous-system registration of where another person is: what they feel, need, and notice. It is felt, not reasoned, and is distinct from agreement. It

is mutual: the other can feel being accurately sensed". That definition of attunement is the one I give in *Care, Transaction, and Power*, and I give the same definition in *The Ladder of Friendship*. Attunement is not a technique to be deployed but a capacity that deepens through sustained practice, and with discernment it forms the pair by which a person reads another and a situation.

Care, in the sense relevant to building or repairing community, is a capacity built in a load-bearing sequence, and *Care, Transaction, and Power* sets the sequence out from its clearest case, the mother and the infant. The sequence begins with *attachment*, a felt bond that is not itself an action but a condition, the channel through which physical care becomes psychologically meaningful. Out of attachment arises attunement. The attuned caregiver does not deduce what the child needs from a list of possibilities; she reads it directly from the child's state, and the reading depends on the bond being intact. Out of attunement arises *nurturing care action*, the meeting of the need that attunement has correctly perceived. Care that fails to land fails for lack of accurate perception, not for lack of good intention. Out of a sustained history of nurturing care arises trust, in the sense defined in section VIII: "Trust is the accumulated residue of a history of care that was offered without condition and that landed accurately". It cannot be produced by promise, by argument, or by any single act. And out of trust arises *autonomy*, the capacity of the cared-for person to become fully and safely themselves. The child who trusts that the caregiver will be there is the child who is free to leave, to wander, to explore.

Each link bears weight, and each interruption has a signature. Without attachment, attunement does not form. Without attunement, nurturing action misfires: the gifts arrive on schedule but are not what was needed. Without sustained care, trust does not form; what forms instead is vigilance, a standing readiness to assess whether this time care will come. "Vigilance is the opposite of trust. It consumes the same attentional bandwidth that trust would free". Without trust, autonomy is foreclosed, and what looks from outside like dependence or a failure to launch is the predictable consequence of a sequence interrupted at the stage of trust. A se-

quence interrupted at the stage of trust is the feral condition of section X in structural form: hypervigilant, exhausting, unable to rest, because the bandwidth that trust would have freed is spent on the problem of security. And the developmental account says why the antidote of section X is not to force trust. Trust is a residue, and a residue can only accumulate.



The developmental sequence of care, from its clearest case, the mother and the infant. Under each link after the first is the signature of the sequence interrupted just before that link. Trust is a residue of the links before it, and so it can only accumulate.

The sequence is not confined to infancy. It describes any relation in which one party attempts to care for another, and it describes groups. "An agreement can specify what will be exchanged, but it cannot manufacture attachment, and without attachment there is no channel for attunement". Organizations built on agreements, contracts, and deliverables plateau for this reason, and most community-building begins too late, with programs and governance that assume the bonds already exist; where they do not, the structures organize the absence of bonds into a more orderly form.

Care requires three things at once. *Presence* is the capacity to attend to what is actually happening rather than to what one imagines or performs; "Presence is to care what open eyes are to seeing". *Willingness* is a standing disposition toward the wellbeing of others, which persists through weariness and disagreement, unlike desire, which comes and goes. *Skill* is the practical capacity to translate presence and willingness into effective action; it is not innate, it must be learned, and our families, for the most part, did not teach it. "The three prerequisites are conjunctive". Willing and skilled but not present applies a good technique to the wrong prob-

lem; present and willing but unskilled sees the need and fumbles the response; present and skilled but unwilling sees the need, knows what to do, and chooses not to.

From this I draw, in *Care, Transaction, and Power*, the developmental diagnosis that section X states. The scale at which a person can care runs ordinally, from oneself, to those closest, to a tribe, to a community, to a nation, to humanity, to all of life; each level includes those below it, and there are no shortcuts. "It follows that most adults arrive at adulthood with some willingness, very little presence, and almost no skill in care". And then they are expected to form communities, to govern themselves, to build civilizations. Entire generations grow up inside institutions that never once ask them to practice care: schools test for knowledge and compliance, workplaces reward productivity and obedience, markets reward efficiency, governance rewards the accumulation of power. So healing is a prerequisite for community, not an afterthought. *Healing* is the restoration of presence, willingness, and skill; "Trauma diminishes presence. Neglect diminishes willingness. Isolation diminishes skill". "This establishes a necessary ordering: healing before community, community before governance, governance before civilization". Governance built without community beneath it produces institutions organized around power and transaction; community built without healing beneath it produces groups organized around shared wounding.

What the sequence produces, when it completes, has a name. *Belongingness* is, in *Dialogues on Connection*, "that sense of I can be authentic and accepted and that the relationship will continue and that I can trust that". *Care, Transaction, and Power* resolves it into three ingredients: *authenticity*, showing up as one actually is, without performance; *acceptance*, that this authenticity is received with appreciation, which is not agreement with every position; and *continuity*, the assurance that a single mistake will not mean expulsion from the relationship. Belongingness is the continuity of acceptance of authenticity. In a healthy family it is intrinsic. The mother's

statement to the child, that whatever happens I will still be your mother, is not circumstantial, not conditional, not judgmental, and not defined by any function the child serves.

Belongingness has a counterfeit, and the counterfeit is the mechanism by which institutions compel. *Dialogues on Connection* names three levers, leverage against survival, against sexuality, and against sociality; each compels behavior, and each is a kind of abuse. The third lever, leverage against sociality, is acceptance made conditional on agreeing with a proposition that is used as a coordinating tool for the group, and the third lever is the lever that people rarely point to. Conditional belongingness is not belongingness, because of the discontinuity implied should one authentically come to feel differently. *Care, Transaction, and Power* states the same: "Where any of the three is missing, belonging remains conditional. And conditional belonging is a kind of quiet coercion, a form of collective action abuse". *Collective action abuse* treats a person's need to belong as the mechanism of compliance; and since the desire to belong is close to a survival instinct, manipulating it is closer to manipulating hunger or fear than to persuasion. People who have suffered it, as I observe in *Dialogues on Connection*, move toward independence rather than interdependence with life, wanting enough money to refuse involvement in any structure at all; which is the feral withdrawal of section X seen from the side of its cause. "belonging cannot be demanded. It can only be created, together"; the choice available to any one person is to become the one who offers continuity of acceptance to the authentic other.

The Ladder of Friendship gathers the conditions into a triad. Before any of the six practices of friendship can land, three conditions must be met: *safety*, the condition in which a person can be present without bracing for harm; *dignity*, the standing of a being whose action has worth of its own; and *belonging*, the condition in which a person's authenticity is continuously accepted. "The attunement triad is not a luxury or an ideal; it is a structural prerequisite". Where any of the three is absent, the practices of friendship become performative, surface gestures that imitate the form without carrying the substance.

XII. Communication

All three connections are maintained by communication, and *An Immanent Metaphysics* states the condition of communication between people in "Representations and Commitments" (2.32-1): "The process of communication is best facilitated when each participant (freely, honestly, and fully) grants to the other these three rights": the right to speak, the right to be understood, and the right to know that one has been understood. "Communication between people does not happen unless and until all three of these rights have been (at least implicitly) granted (from each to the other). These rights of communication cannot be taken, they can only be given". The glossary of *Care, Transaction, and Power* adds the direction of the grant: each right is granted by the listener to the speaker, freely and without condition.

An Immanent Metaphysics also says what a communication consists of. "All statements (in all domains of communication) either define a representation or make a commitment" (2.32-2). A representation reflects what is, an actuality; a commitment reflects what could be, a potentiality. Forming a commitment is a change of potentialities, in the future expressions of the one making it and in the perceptions of the common future of the one receiving it (2.32-4).

Seen from the side of the one who needs them, the rights are what a person names when asked what would make them feel safer: to speak, to be heard, to be understood, and to know that they have been understood, together with parity of attunement, to receive as much as they put into attuning to others. The list of rights that a person names, when asked what would make that person feel safer, is a lived request and not a doctrine.

In *Dialogues on Connection* I state the order in which communication, relationship, and agreements rest. The agreements "are only as strong as the relationship and the relationship depends upon things like skills and communication and things like wisdom and emotional maturity". Encoding tacit agreements directly as explicit ones bypasses the negotiation and the processing around safety; tacit agreements are tacit enough to allow

the conversation that builds relational strength, and only when that strength is greater can agreements move from tacit to explicit. *Care, Transaction, and Power* states the same dependency at the scale of governance: "A policy is an agreement. An agreement is based on relationships. But people have to care enough to be in relationships, to follow agreements, to communicate". Agreements rest on relationship; relationship rests on communication; and communication rests on three rights that can only be given. The chain from agreements through relationship and communication to the three rights is the chain by which the three connections, to spirit, to world, and to other, are maintained. Like every chain in this chapter, that chain runs on choice rather than on compulsion.

XIII. The Stakes, and Why Only Community Closes the Gap

The distinction between community and institution is operationally clear: community is a group in which care governs; institution is a structure in which transaction or power governs; all three bases are present in either, and the sickness test and the freedom-to-leave tell decide which governs. The claim that communities (not individuals or states) are the unit capable of effective choice rests on my definition of effective choice: a choice that realizes desire, and ultimately the desires of all that is making the choice and all that is affected by it (2.112-1); consensus is that definition at the scale of a group. The integration of instinct, intellect, and intuition, which the last paragraph of this section names, is stated in *Care, Transaction, and Power* (Chapter 12), and not in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, as three bases of the process of choice, each needed and none able to do the work of the others, and in my teaching I add that this integration is multiplicative in cooperative groups (two people produce six to eight units of effectiveness, not four). Those units count effectiveness of choice, the degree to which a choice realizes what its choosers desire (2.112-1), and they are scaled so that one person choosing alone produces two, and

two people choosing side by side, each alone, would produce four between them. The figures six to eight are my own observations of people choosing together, as I report them in Chapter 17 (Volume II), section I, "Decision and Choice". The result exceeds four because of the principle I state at 1.65-19 of *An Immanent Metaphysics*: "The degree of individual freedom is strongly (non-linearly) proportional to the degree of cooperation and coordination among individuals". Where both diversity and unity are present, freedom of choice rises faster than the count of the people cooperating, so it is neither conserved nor additive. Both are needed, because diversity without unity supplies perspectives that cannot be combined, and unity without diversity supplies one perspective held by several people. A worked case shows the shape of the multiplication. Two people are deciding where to build a house. Each brings an instinct about the ground, an intellect that can count the costs, and an intuition about what the place will become. When the two choose side by side, each person's three faculties check only one another. When the two choose together, each faculty of each person is also checked and filled by all three faculties of the other: one person's intuition about the place is tested against the other's count of the costs, and that count is tested against the first person's instinct about the ground. The gain is in the pairings between the two people, and not in the sum of what each brings, so the effectiveness multiplies rather than adds. *Care, Transaction, and Power* also conditions the capacity of communities to choose on the developmental ordering of section XI: healing before community, community before governance.

My claim in my *Delicate Fire* conversation "Connection to Self, World, and Other", which section IV draws on, that civilization may be ten years or less from every person effectively having the capacity to end civilization, sets the stakes. The figure of ten years measures the time until the harm one person can do, with the tools then generally available, reaches the scale of civilization itself. The ground of the figure is the difference in kind stated in the rest of this paragraph, by which the capacity to do harm compounds and the capacity to govern that harm does not; the figure is

not an extrapolation of a growth rate. The level of ethical integration required is correspondingly extreme. The mechanism is not a growth-rate estimate but a difference in kind, stated in my later books. Causal competence compounds, so the capacity to make enemies grows without bound; friendship-making is not causal, so "the capacity to form genuine friendships does not compound" (*The Ladder of Friendship*, Chapter 1). "Technology amplifies power enormously. Technology amplifies transaction moderately. Technology amplifies care not at all" (*Care, Transaction, and Power*, Chapter 3). And institutions, being structures of transaction and power, do not carry the relational capacity; wisdom does not transfer by transmission but must be grown relationally through sustained contact. The gap therefore widens with every technical advance. Only communities, held together by care and equipped with the three connections, can close the gap.

That only such communities can close the gap is a structural claim and not a utopian vision: care-centered community is the only known architecture that supports the integration of instinct, intellect, and intuition at scale while maintaining the cooperative margin on which all complex life depends. The *cooperative margin* is the amount by which cooperation exceeds competition in a viable ecosystem, and the amount is slight, a fraction I put at about 50.01 to 49.99 percent, as in my book *Care, Transaction, and Power*. If non-cooperative behavior crosses that threshold, the social system undergoes a self-reinforcing phase change into collapse. A phase change is a change in the whole character of a system, as when water freezes. The figure is the balance taken over all measures together; on particular measures cooperation greatly exceeds competition. The figure measures one balance, on a scale on which zero is competition perfected, with no cooperation at all, and one hundred is cooperation perfected, with no competition (*The Architecture of Civilization*, Chapter 8, "The Balance of Cooperation and Competition"). The value in a living system sits just above fifty, and the slightest surplus matters because the balance point is a phase-transition boundary, as zero degrees is for water: a thousandth of a degree below it, and the water will freeze, however slowly; a

thousandth of a degree above it, and the ice will melt. Which way a system goes is set by the side of the boundary it is on, and not by how far it is from the boundary. The margin matters because the balance is a phase-transition boundary: equality is not a stable state, and the margin by which cooperation exceeds competition is what supplies the restoring force. Building such communities is the civilizational task. I give the structural framework; the building is a matter of practice, skill, and love.

XIV. The Mappings This Chapter Uses

The triple (spirit/world/other) maps onto self/reality/relation and transcendent/omniscient/immanent, and these are the mappings I use in this chapter. Good/true/beautiful is the assignment I make in *On Re-Wilding Religion* (Chapter 5), and section III uses it; the Table of Modality Correspondences of *An Immanent Metaphysics* has no row for it. Spirituality/science/religion I place in more than one way in *An Immanent Metaphysics*: the table places spirituality in the transcendent column and religion in the omniscient column in one row, and religion and spirituality together in the immanent column in another, and "The Six Paths" (1.91-4) has religion begin with the transcendent (ideals), transition to the immanent (action), and complete with the omniscient (community). Acceptance, knowledge, and wisdom are what three of the six paths create within the self: spirituality creates acceptance, science creates knowledge, and mysticism creates wisdom (1.91-14; Volume II, Chapter 16, section VIII); religion, the third term of this chapter's triple, creates symbols within the world, by ceremony. The row the table of *An Immanent Metaphysics* does contain is self, relation, world, and that row supports the ordering spirit, other, world. The three-legged stool metaphor captures the co-supportive structure of Axiom III (distinct, inseparable, non-interchangeable) in practically applicable form.

The mapping this chapter uses, goodness of the nature of the transcendent, truth of the omniscient, beauty of the immanent, is the mapping I use here and in Chapter 26, and the mapping of my book *On Re-Wilding Religion* (Chapter 5), where the connections to depth, to world, and to other are assigned to the transcendent, the omniscient, and the immanent respectively, and goodness, truth, and beauty are the essence of those three connections respectively. This mapping holds in the third-person frame, in which goodness goes with the self, beauty with the other, and truth with the world. In the first person the three turn one step together along the cycle of Axiom II: goodness immanent, beauty omniscient, truth transcendent; in the second person, where the relationship between persons is primary, they turn one step back: goodness omniscient, beauty transcendent, truth immanent. Chapter 26, section VII, gives the reasons for each frame. The frames are not in conflict, because in this system a modality is assigned to a term only relative to the triple in which it is considered and the frame from which it is considered. *Care, Transaction, and Power* (Chapter 4) makes this the discipline of the method: "The principal error is not to choose the wrong mapping. The principal error is to believe that only one mapping exists". To fix on one mapping as the only one would be that error; I use the row here as one mapping under one basis of consideration.

XV. How to Engage

The three connections of this chapter, to spirit, to world, and to other, are offered as a stool on which any two legs can be used to build the third, and that is the practical instruction in it. Name the one of the three you are thinnest in. Then do not work on it directly. Work on the two you have, and watch whether the third rises. The structural claim is co-support and not ranking, which is why the indirect route is the one recommended.

Then apply the two tests that tell a community from an institution. The first of the two tests is the sickness test: when a member falls into serious need, do the other members rearrange their own choices to hold that person's wellbeing as an end in itself? The second of the two tests is the freedom to leave: does the group's cohesion survive the fact that the group's members could go? Care, which asks what do you need, transaction, which asks what is it worth, and power, which asks who decides, are all present in any group of substance, and the tests ask which governs when they conflict.

Then listen for the difference between politics and consensus. A group deciding from what it fears is doing politics. A group deciding from what its members love and commonly desire together is reaching consensus. The ground of the distinction is that values can be shared by everyone while purposes can only be coordinated.

Finally, take the definition of trust offered here, which is the reasonable expectation that another's choices will track what you care about. It is not a feeling and not a belief. It is a condition of a relationship built from accumulated evidence, which means that it can be observed, and built deliberately, and lost by increments.

XVI. Summary

In this chapter I use the mapping of the third-person frame: goodness transcendent, truth omniscient, beauty immanent. In section XIV I set out the mappings I use in this chapter beside the other mappings, and in Chapter 26, section VII, I give the first-person and second-person frames.

On the ordering of the connections, section II gives four answers, and they are consistent because they answer different questions: personal primacy varies, and shifts only by a change of basis; structural ordering is co-support, not rank; the developmental sequence begins with other and runs from the third person to the first through the second; and the precedence in *An Immanent Metaphysics* is of integrity over intensity of contact,

wellness over fullness. I do not rank the relational connection first. I ground it: the relation between self and world is more fundamental than either term, and the self emerges from choices made in the between. That grounds the claim of section IV that communities can choose more firmly than any ranking of the legs would.

Community is a group in which care governs and an institution a structure in which transaction or power governs, and communities, not individuals or states, are the unit capable of effective choice, because consensus is effective choice at the scale of a group (section XIII). Civilization may be ten years or less from every person effectively having the capacity to end civilization, and since causal competence compounds while the capacity for care and friendship does not, the gap between power and the relational capacity to govern it widens with every technical advance, and only communities held together by care can close it (section XIII).

The formal derivation of the three bases of relation, care, transaction, and power, rests on first principles of the Immanent Metaphysics, and my book *Care, Transaction, and Power* presents the argument in narrative form. One premise lies beneath effective choice, and I state it in *An Immanent Metaphysics*: "It is an assertion of this metaphysics that the ultimate innermost nature of self/ soul is good". (2.112-1)

The three connections (to spirit, to world, to other) are the structural basis for a life that is good, true, and beautiful. Their integration produces the capacity for effective choice. Their absence produces the meaning crisis.

My practical teaching is that neither individuals nor states can make the choices that carry a civilization through existential risk. Only communities held together by care, equipped with the three connections as a network of sensemaking, and oriented by the non-relativistic ethics (symmetry and continuity as principles of effective choice) have the structural capacity to make choices at the scale and quality required.

That only such communities have this capacity is a structural claim and not a utopian vision: care-centered community is the only known architecture that supports the integration of instinct, intellect, and intuition at scale while maintaining the cooperative margin, the slight excess of cooperation over competition (about 50.01 to 49.99 percent) on which all complex life depends (section XIII).

A community makes its choices together, and every genuine choice is an act of creation. The chapter that follows gives the theory of creation, from which the cooperative nature of choice follows.

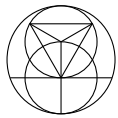
KEY CONCEPTS IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Three Connections**: self to spirit (the good), self to world (the true), self to other (the beautiful). A three-legged stool: any two support the third.
- **Change of Basis**: a shift in which of the three connections a person holds as most ultimately meaningful. Which one is primary differs from person to person; the shift is an existential event, after which the basis of the meaningfulness of one's essence has changed.
- **Community vs. Institution**: community is a group in which care governs; institution is a structure in which transaction or power governs; all three bases are present in either. Community can make choices; institutions cannot make their choices by care.
- **Three Bases of Relation**: care asks what do you need; transaction asks what is it worth; power asks who decides. All three are present in any relation of substance; the question is which governs when they conflict. Power without care is abuse; transaction without care is exploitation; care without power is vulnerability. The chain care, transaction, power is open, and must be closed by governing power with care.

- **Tests of Community**: the sickness test (when a member falls into need, do the others rearrange their own choices to hold that person's wellbeing as an end in itself) and the freedom-to-leave tell (does the group's cohesion depend on members being able to leave, or on their being unable to imagine leaving).
- **Care as Compass**: technology says what we can do; care says what we ought to do. Requires wisdom and situational awareness.
- **Love**: that which enables choice; the quality of enabling and nurturing choice, joy, connectedness, and freedom. An inequality, never exchange, without price, never earned; it exists only when it moves. Distinct from care, which rests on it.
- **Politics vs. Consensus**: politics is a group deciding from what it fears; consensus is a group deciding from what its members love and commonly desire together. Values can be shared by all; purposes can only be coordinated; meaning is always in between.
- **Friendship**: six irreducible goods generated by two axes, scope (personal or collective) and perspective (omniscient, immanent, transcendent): support, encouragement, sharing, celebration, learning, values. A hierarchy of dependence, not of importance; co-supporting; a diagnostic (which element has failed). Its threshold rung is the appreciation of being rather than behavior. The modality is assigned to the row, which is a pair, and not to the cell; a cell carries a position on two axes and not a modality of its own, and the assignment does not distribute downward, since distributing it would erase the distinctness that gives the grid six cells rather than three. The principle is stated in full in Chapter 4 (Volume I).
- **Trust**: the reasonable expectation that another's choices will track what one cares about. Not a feeling and not a belief; a condition of a relationship, built from accumulated evidence. Two kinds: continuity-based (native to friendship; the unit of account is the relationship; a trust in choice) and symmetry-based (native to coordination; fairness within a boundary; a trust in causal regularity).

- **Attunement**: the nervous-system registration of where another person is: what they feel, need, and notice. Felt, not reasoned; distinct from agreement; mutual. With discernment, the pair by which a person reads another.
- **Developmental Sequence of Care**: attachment, then attunement, then nurturing care action, then trust, then autonomy; each link depends on the one before. Interrupted at trust, the sequence yields vigilance, the feral condition. Care requires presence, willingness, and skill together; healing before community, community before governance, governance before civilization.
- **Belongingness**: the continuity of acceptance of authenticity; one can be one's whole self, that self is accepted, and the acceptance continues. Its ingredients are authenticity, acceptance, continuity. Conditional belonging is quiet coercion, a form of collective action abuse. With safety and dignity, belonging forms the attunement triad, a structural prerequisite for the practices of friendship.
- **Three Rights of Communication**: the right to speak, the right to be understood, and the right to know that one has been understood. Communication between people does not happen until all three are granted, from each to the other; they cannot be taken, only given. Agreements rest on relationship, and relationship on communication.
- **Spirituality vs. Religion**: spirituality is singular, solo, unnamed, about experience. Religion is collective, plural, named, about expression. Religion is close in meaning to community.
- **Toxicity and Linearity**: toxicity follows from linearity: extraction, abstraction, accumulation cannot not create toxicity. The antidote is cyclicity: distribution, embodiment, recontextualization.
- **Wild / Domesticated / Feral**: a person who trusts nature first is wild; one who trusts other first is social (domesticated); one who trusts nothing is feral (hypervigilant, exhausting).
- **Communities Make Choices**: neither individuals (too small) nor states (principal-agent trap) can. Communities can and must.

- **Cooperative Margin**: in viable ecosystems, cooperation exceeds competition by a fraction (about 50.01 to 49.99 percent, the balance taken over all measures together). Equality is not a stable state, and the margin is what supplies the restoring force. If non-cooperative behavior crosses the threshold, the social system undergoes a self-reinforcing phase change into collapse.



Chapter Twenty-Four

The Theory of Creation

Novelty, Cooperation, and the Structure of Origination

ABSTRACT

This chapter sets out the theory of creation of the Immanent Metaphysics: the account of how genuinely new things come into being. Unlike theories that treat creation as either a divine act or a rearrangement of pre-existing parts, I derive a structural account of creation from the same axioms and proof (the Incommensuration Theorem) that ground the metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics of the IM. Creation, in the IM, is not a secondary topic appended to the system; it is one of the three foundational modalities, structurally inseparable from interaction and existence, and its nature constrains, and is constrained by, everything else I describe in the system.

This chapter can be read on its own by a reader who has the terms of Volumes I and II.

I. The Problem: What Is Creation?

The word "creation" carries heavy connotations. In religious traditions, it typically refers to the origination of the world by a divine being. In scientific discourse, it is usually avoided altogether in favor of "emergence", "self-organization", or "transformation": terms that describe the rearrange-

ment of existing things without invoking the appearance of anything genuinely new. In philosophy, the concept has been mostly abandoned as too vague or too theological to be tractable.

Yet the question "how does something genuinely new come into being?" is among the most fundamental questions any philosophical system can ask. The question of how something genuinely new comes into being is a question about cosmic origins, and equally a question about every act of artistic production, every evolutionary innovation, every moment in which something exists that did not exist before. The question arises whenever a conversation produces an idea that neither party had beforehand, whenever an experiment yields a result that no theory predicted, whenever a child is born who is something more than a copy of their parents.

Most philosophical traditions handle creation by reduction. Materialism says that creation is rearrangement: the atoms were already there; what is "new" is merely their configuration. Platonism says that creation is instantiation: the Forms were already there; what is "new" is merely their expression in matter. Both answers dissolve the question by denying that anything genuinely new ever appears. But this dissolution comes at a price: it renders unintelligible the manifest difference between a world in which something exists and a world in which it does not. If creation is mere rearrangement, then the experience of novelty, the recognition that something is here now that was not here before, is an illusion. And if novelty is an illusion, then so is time, process, and change, which is a conclusion I reject, for the reason just given: it renders unintelligible the manifest difference between a world in which something exists and a world in which it does not.

In the Immanent Metaphysics I take this question seriously. I do not reduce creation to rearrangement, nor do I invoke a creator external to the process. Instead, I derive a structural account of creation from the foundational axioms. The account specifies what creation *is*, how creation relates to interaction and existence, why creation is necessarily cooperative, and what constraints govern any creative process.

II. Background: The Core Triple

To understand my theory of creation, one must first understand the foundational triple of the Immanent Metaphysics: creation, interaction, and existence. Creation, interaction, and existence are the three most fundamental concepts in the IM. Creation, interaction, and existence are the triple that sits at the very top of the hierarchy of domain foundations, as I set out in Chapter 3 (Volume I), section X. That hierarchy is the ordering in which a derivative domain is a narrowing or specialization of a wider domain, and the basis triple of the wider domain is the real foundation of the derivative domain. The three concepts correspond to the three modalities: creation is transcendent, interaction is immanent, and existence is omniscient.

Creation is the transcendent modality. It has the nature of potentiality, origination, the subjective, the qualitative, the generative. Creation makes novelty possible, because creation is the dimension from which new things emerge, and not only rearrangements of things that already exist.

Interaction is the immanent modality. It has the nature of process, relation, the actual event of engagement. By Axiom I, it is more fundamental than either creation or existence. You cannot have creation without a process through which creation occurs; you cannot have existence without something interacting to sustain it. Interaction is prior to both its poles.

Existence is the omniscient modality. It has the nature of actuality, structure, the objective, the knowable. It is the stable, persistent, lawful aspect of reality: what remains after the creative act, what can be observed and measured and known.

By Axiom III, these three are distinct (none is the same as either of the others), inseparable (none can occur without the other two), and non-interchangeable (none can substitute for another). This means, in particular, that creation cannot be reduced to interaction or existence. It is its own irreducible thing. Any account of reality that omits it (that tries to explain everything in terms of lawful structure and mechanical process alone) is structurally incomplete.

"Creation" in the IM sense is not equivalent to what most readers will initially associate with the word. It is not an act performed by an agent; it is a structural aspect of all process. Every event has a creative dimension (the transcendent), a processual dimension (the immanent), and a structural dimension (the omniscient). I am not claiming that the universe was "created" in a temporal sense; I am claiming that the creative dimension is an intrinsic of all process, as fundamental and irreducible as process and structure themselves.

III. The Axiom II Cycle as the Structure of Creation

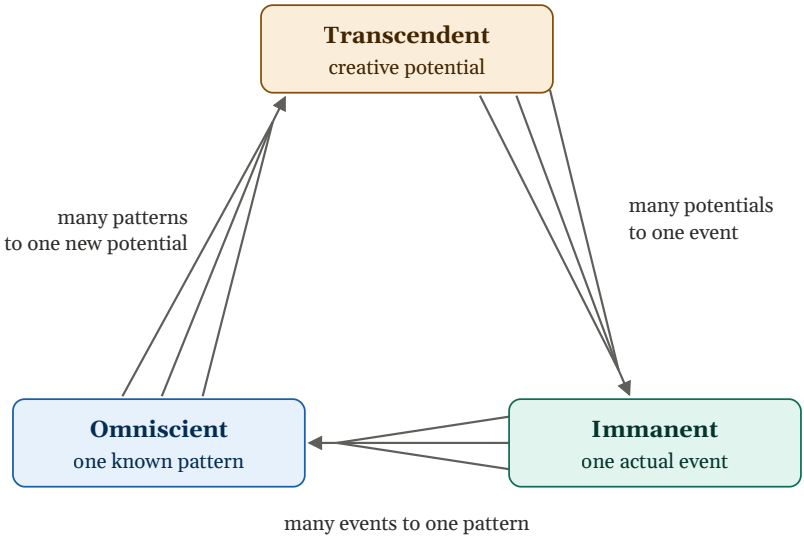
Axiom II describes a cycle of precedence, and I state it in *An Immanent Metaphysics* at 1.3-1: "A class of the transcendent will precede an instance of the immanent. A class of the immanent will precede an instance of the omniscient. A class of the omniscient will precede an instance of the transcendent". Translated into the language of the core triple, the cycle of Axiom II becomes: a multiplicity of creative potentials (transcendent) converges to produce one actual interaction (immanent); a multiplicity of actual interactions accumulates to yield one knowable pattern (omniscient); and the totality of known patterns generates the conditions for one new creative potential.

This cycle is my structural account of how creation works. It is not a temporal sequence (though it can manifest temporally); it is a logical ordering of dependency. The key features are:

Many-to-one transitions. Each step of the cycle is a many-to-one relation: many potentials converge into one event; many events crystallize into one pattern; many patterns give rise to one new potential. The many-to-one form of each step of the cycle is a structural feature of how the modalities relate, and not an accident of the description. Creation does not proceed by single causes producing single effects. It proceeds by the convergence of multiple contributions into a single new actuality.

The necessity of cooperation. Because each creative step involves the convergence of many contributions, creation is inherently cooperative. No single source, no single cause, no single agent produces a genuinely new thing by itself. Novelty arises from the coming-together of multiple potentials, each of which contributes something that the others lack. That creation is cooperative is a structural claim about how creation *must* work, as a consequence of the Axiom II many-to-one transition, and not a moral claim about how creation *should* work.

A conversation between two friends, the case of section I, shows the whole cycle in one ordinary setting. Many remarks, each carrying something that one of the two has thought, felt, or half noticed, are potentials; at some point in the conversation they converge, and one new idea is there that neither friend had when the conversation began: many potentials to one event. Many such conversations, over months, settle into a pattern that both friends can name, the known shape of how the two of them think together: many events to one pattern. And that known pattern, together with the other patterns each friend brings from elsewhere, becomes the ground from which the next new idea can come: many patterns to one new potential. At each step the next thing comes from many together, and never from one remark, one conversation, or one pattern alone.



The cycle of Axiom II in the core triple. Each arrow is drawn as many lines meeting at one point: many potentials converge into one event, many events into one pattern, and many patterns into one new potential. Cooperation is a property of this many-to-one shape, because each step needs many contributions.

The irreducibility of creative potential. The transcendent (creative potential) cannot be derived from the omniscient (known structure) alone. That the transcendent cannot be derived from the omniscient alone follows from the conjugacy established in Axiom I: the transcendent and the omniscient cannot be simultaneously perfected. Two terms are conjugate when each requires the other and yet they point in fundamentally different directions. You cannot, by knowing everything about the current state of the world, thereby *produce* the next genuinely new thing. If you could, then creativity would be reducible to computation, novelty would be reducible to prediction, and the future would be fully determined by the past. The ICT proves that this cannot be the case: symmetry (the law-

ful, repeatable, structural aspect) and continuity (the unbroken, connected, generative aspect) are incommensurable, and therefore the knowable and the creative are structurally distinct.

The claim that creation is irreducible to knowledge directly addresses the question that haunts materialist and computationalist accounts of reality: if the universe is a deterministic system, where does novelty come from? My answer is that the universe is *not* a deterministic system, and cannot be, because the creative dimension (transcendent) is structurally incommensurable with the lawful dimension (omniscient). Determinism is an idealization that attributes absolute symmetry to physical law, and the ICT proves that absolute symmetry is incompatible with absolute continuity. A fully determined universe would be a universe in which the omniscient modality had been perfected to the exclusion of the transcendent, which Axiom III declares impossible, since the modalities are inseparable.

IV. Expression Is Objective

In my theory of creation, expression is objective. This runs directly counter to the modern default assumption that expression (artistic, emotional, creative) is essentially subjective: that it is a matter of individual feeling, personal perspective, and private experience, with no structural or objective character.

The argument proceeds as follows. Expression is the process by which what is internal (subjective, potential, not-yet-manifest) becomes external (objective, actual, manifest). An artist's creative vision is internal until it is expressed in paint, sound, or words; at that point, it becomes something that exists in the world, that others can encounter, that has objective properties. The act of expression is the transition from the transcendent (the potential) through the immanent (the actual process of creation) to the omniscient (the existing result).

This transition is psychological, and it is also structural. The Axiom II cycle describes exactly this process: a multiplicity of creative potentials converges into one actual event, which then becomes part of the known world. My claim that expression is objective is a claim about the *structure* of the expressive act, and not about the *content* of what is expressed, which may be intimate and personal. The expressive act necessarily produces something that exists in the world, that can be encountered by others, and that has properties independent of the expresser's intentions.

The objectivity of the expressive act is the reason art works. A painting is more than a projection of the artist's subjective state: it is an objective structure that can produce genuine experiences in others, experiences that the artist may not have intended and that go beyond what the artist subjectively felt. The objectivity of expression is the reason why a work of art can be richer than its creator's conscious intentions, why a poem can mean things its author did not know it meant, why a piece of music can move someone who has never met the composer and shares nothing of their cultural context. If expression were purely subjective, none of this would be possible. My claim is that the structural nature of the Axiom II cycle, in which the transcendent (subjective potential) passes through the immanent (actual process) into the omniscient (objective existence), guarantees that expression always has an objective dimension, regardless of its subjective origins.

The conclusion (expression has an objective dimension) follows from the premises (expression is a process; all process involves the Axiom II cycle; the cycle necessarily produces an omniscient component, which is to say an objective one). The key premise is that expression is a process: the act of expressing something is an act, and acts are processes. The Axiom II cycle applies to every expressive process, because every expressive process involves the convergence of multiple potentials into an actual result, which is what we observe of any creative act.

V. Creation and the Problem of Novelty

My theory of creation resolves the problem of novelty. The problem of novelty, stated simply, is that if the future follows deterministically from the past (as classical physics suggests), then nothing new ever happens, because everything that happens was already fixed by the past. And if the future does not follow deterministically from the past, then the world contains an element of fundamental unpredictability that no theory can account for. Most philosophical systems are impaled on one horn or the other of this dilemma.

I dissolve the dilemma by showing that it rests on a false binary. The binary is: either the future is determined by the past (and novelty is illusory) or it is not (and novelty is inexplicable). The third option is this: the future is *constrained but not determined* by the past. Causality (the omniscient modality: the lawful, structural, repeatable dimension of process) constrains what can happen next, but it does not determine it completely, because the creative dimension (the transcendent modality) is structurally incommensurable with the causal dimension.

The third option, that the future is constrained but not determined by the past, is a precise structural claim derived from the ICT, and not a vague gesture toward "randomness" or "indeterminacy". The ICT proves that symmetry and continuity cannot both be absolute. Determinism is the claim that physical law (symmetry: the same content in different contexts) completely determines all outcomes (continuity: no gaps in the causal chain). The ICT proves that this combination is logically impossible. There must always be a gap between what law constrains and what actually happens. And that gap is where creation occurs.

A billiard table shows what each half of determinism means, the law and the gapless chain. The same laws of motion hold on every table in every hall, whoever plays and whenever: that is the symmetry, the same content (the law) in different contexts (the tables, the players, the times). After the cue ball strikes the rack, every later position of every ball follows from the position just before it, with no jump in between: that is the con-

tinuity, the unbroken chain from one moment to the next. A forecast that named in advance exactly where every ball comes to rest, for every break that will ever be played, would need both at once and both without limit: a law that holds identically everywhere, and a chain of following that has no gap anywhere, down to the smallest difference in the strike.

The Incommensuration Theorem forbids exactly that conjunction of a law without limit and a chain without gap, so a remainder always exists. On the table, the remainder is the difference between what the laws allow and where the balls actually come to rest: the laws fix the range of what can happen next, and they do not fix, from within themselves, which of the outcomes they allow is the one that happens. However small that remainder is in a given case, it is never zero, and it is the place where creation occurs. I state the same claim, that the remainder the laws leave is never zero, in different terms in Chapter 21, section X. There, determinism, the claim that the state of the world could in principle be completely specified, is symmetry-based; causality, the persistent perceived relation between events, is continuity-based; and complete determinism would require both perfect symmetry and perfect continuity. Here, physical law is the symmetry and the gapless causal chain is the continuity. The two wordings make one claim: the conjunction that complete determinism needs is the conjunction that the theorem forbids.

The gap is not empty. It is filled by the transcendent modality: creative potential, the not-yet-determined, the genuinely new. This potential is not pure randomness (pure randomness, a content found different whatever its context, would be asymmetry and discontinuity perfected together, which the theorem excludes: "Nothing anywhere at all can be both absolutely asymmetric and absolutely discontinuous", 1.43-2); it is structured by the Axiom II cycle, which specifies that creative potential arises from the accumulation of known patterns and converges into actual events through cooperative coordination.

My account of novelty is neither deterministic (the future is not fully specified by the past) nor chaotic (the future is not unstructured). It is *creative*: structured by law, enabled by the inherent openness of process, and actualized through the cooperative convergence of multiple potentials.

Jazz improvisation shows the third option in one picture. The key and the chord changes of a tune constrain every note a player can sound; they do not fix which note comes. A band in performance carries several lines at once, and those lines converge into one phrase that no player had in advance. The chord changes are the law, the phrase is the outcome, and the gap between them is filled by the creative potential of the players, converging many to one. The future of the tune is constrained but not determined by its past.

VI. Creation and the Other Theories

I now set my theory of creation beside other accounts in the philosophical tradition.

VI.1. Why Creation Is Never from Nothing

The classical theological doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* (creation from nothing) claims that God brought the world into being from no pre-existing material. The doctrine is stronger than it is often taken to be, and I state it at its strength. The world need not have existed; what need not exist does not explain its own existence; and if the world had been made out of some material that was already there, that material would need a ground of its own, and so on without end. On this view the chain of grounds can end only in a source that depends on nothing, and a source that depends on nothing did not work on a material that was already there, so the world came from no material at all. The doctrine's best case is the beginning of the cosmos as cosmology describes it: when the expan-

sion of the universe is traced backward, the description reaches a first moment, and on the usual reading there was no earlier moment and no material waiting before it.

I reject this doctrine, not on theological grounds, but on structural ones: the Axiom III inseparability of creation, interaction, and existence means that creation never occurs "from nothing". There is always a pre-existing context of interaction and existence within which creative potential operates. Creation does not bring something from nothing; it brings something from the convergence of multiple potentials within an already-existing processual field.

The claim that creation never occurs from nothing means that, whatever "beginning" might mean, the word cannot mean the absolute absence of process. The claim does not mean that I deny the possibility of a cosmological beginning. The concept of an absolute beginning presupposes a time at which there was no time, a process that precedes all process, which is self-enactingly incoherent in the same way that denying comparison is incoherent (because the denial is itself a comparison).

I can take the best case of the doctrine through the many-to-one transition of Axiom II. Whatever happened at the first moment of the cosmos, it happened, and so it was an event. By Axiom II an instance of the immanent, one actual event, is preceded by a class of the transcendent, many potentials converging into that one event. A first moment with no potentials converging into it would not be an event, and a beginning that is not an event is not a beginning of anything. So the first moment, whatever it was, was already the convergence of many potentials into one actual event, within interaction and existence, and not a passage from nothing. From the Incommensuration Theorem I take a second point. Even if the laws that held at that first moment were fully known, they would constrain what happened there and would not completely determine it, because perfect symmetry and perfect continuity cannot be conjoined; the ICT-guaranteed gap between causal constraint and actual outcome was present at the first moment, as it is at every moment since. The creative dimension did not begin with the world; it is an aspect of every process, the

first one included. I keep the true insight of the doctrine, that the world is not explained by its own known structure alone, since the transcendent cannot be derived from the omniscient. I refuse the nothing.

VI.2. What Emergence Describes and What It Leaves Unexplained

In contemporary philosophy, "emergence" is the standard term for the appearance of novel properties. I state the emergence view at its strength: a whole can have properties that none of its parts has, those properties are real because they make a difference to what happens next, and nothing is added to the parts beyond their arrangement and their interaction. The view claims no mystery: the whole depends entirely on the parts, and yet no description of any one part, however complete, predicts the property of the whole. The best cases of emergence are familiar. A flock of starlings at dusk wheels across the sky as one shape, though each bird follows only its few nearest neighbors and no bird holds the shape. A traffic jam drifts backward along a highway while every car in it moves forward. The pattern is in no single bird and in no single car, and the pattern is real.

But emergence theories typically describe the *fact* of novelty without explaining its *structure*. They observe that complex systems produce properties not predictable from their parts and call this "emergence", but they do not specify what it is about the structure of process that makes novelty possible.

My theory of creation is more precise than any emergence theory because it specifies the structural conditions under which novelty occurs: the Axiom II many-to-one transition, the cooperative convergence of multiple transcendent potentials, and the ICT-guaranteed gap between causal constraint and actual outcome. Emergence theories gesture at the phenomenon; I give its structural mechanism.

When I take the flock through the many-to-one transition of Axiom II, the flock shows the mechanism. Each turn a bird makes is one actual event, and that turn is the convergence of many potentials: the turns open to the bird, the movements of its neighbors, the wind, the light. Many

such turns, by many birds, settle into one shape that can be seen and named: many events to one pattern. And that shape, once it is there, is the ground of the next set of potentials, since each bird's next turn answers neighbors whose own turns answered the shape: many patterns to one new potential. The ICT-guaranteed gap between causal constraint and actual outcome appears in the same case. The rule each bird follows is the same in every bird at every moment, which is symmetry; the sequence of adjustments runs without a break from one moment to the next, which is continuity; and because the two cannot both be absolute, the rule constrains the next shape of the flock and does not fix it. The shape that actually forms is created in the gap between the constraint of the rule and the outcome, and the creation is cooperative, since no single bird makes the shape. Emergence names the shape. My account names the three steps by which the shape comes to be, and the place where the next shape is created rather than read off the last one.

VI.3. Why Computation Cannot Account for All of Process

Computationalism holds that all process is, at bottom, computation: the manipulation of symbols according to rules. If this were true, then creativity would be reducible to computation, and genuine novelty would be impossible (since the output of a computation is fully determined by its input and rules).

I give computationalism its strongest statement. Every process that can be described exactly can be described as a computation; a brain is a physical system; and so whatever a person does, inventing included, a machine running the right program could in principle do as well. A computationalist does not deny that programs surprise people. The computationalist's best case is a program whose output surprises the one who wrote the program. One example is a chess program that plays a move that none of its programmers foresaw and that strong players then study. Another example is a rule a few lines long that, applied over and over to a row of cells, draws a pattern so intricate that no one could have guessed the pat-

tern from the rule. The computationalist answers that surprise is not novelty: the move and the pattern were fixed by the input and the rules all along, and the writer was surprised only because the writer had not worked through every step.

The ICT provides a formal argument against this position. Symmetry (the repeatability of computational rules) and continuity (the gapless operation of those rules over all inputs) cannot both be absolute, and so no computational system can be both fully lawful and fully complete. The constraint the ICT sets, that symmetry and continuity cannot both be absolute, is wider than Gödel's result. Gödel's incompleteness theorem, that any consistent formal system rich enough to express arithmetic contains true statements it cannot prove, applies specifically to formal systems. The constraint the ICT sets is a more general structural constraint that applies to any process whatsoever. Computationalism requires that computation be sufficient to account for all process; the ICT proves that it cannot be, because the creative dimension of process (transcendent) is structurally incommensurable with the lawful dimension (omniscient).

I take the chess program through the many-to-one transition in the same way as the flock. Read as a formal object, the program maps each input to one output by a fixed rule; at each step one state goes to one next state, and nowhere in that description do many potentials converge into one event. So the computationalist can say the move was fixed in advance. But the program, when it runs, is a process in the world. Many ideas converged into the program when it was written; the opponent's moves and the program's search converge into the one move actually played; and many games settle into the pattern that the players then study. The formal description captures the omniscient aspect of that process, the lawful and repeatable rule, and it does not capture the rest. The ICT-guaranteed gap is in the same place as in the flock: the repeatability of the rule (symmetry) and its gapless operation over every input (continuity) cannot both be absolute, so the rule constrains what the running process does without completely determining it. The surprise of the program's writer is

the computationalist's best evidence, and on my account that surprise points at the gap between constraint and outcome, and not only at what the writer had failed to work out.

I can now make the comparison with Gödel exact. Gödel's incompleteness theorem limits formal systems of one kind: those that are consistent and rich enough to express arithmetic. Each such system has a true statement that it cannot prove. The theorem says nothing about a system too weak to express arithmetic (the arithmetic of addition alone is both consistent and complete), and it says nothing about anything that is not a formal system. A computationalist can therefore accept Gödel's theorem and keep the computationalist view: Gödel's theorem shows that each formal system has a limit, and it does not show that any process is more than a formal system, since a mind could be a formal system with its own unprovable statements. The ICT limits any process whatsoever, because every process is an interaction, every interaction is a comparison, and in any comparison symmetry and continuity cannot both be absolute. The scope of the ICT therefore includes a computation run as a process, and so the ICT reaches the claim the computationalist needs, that computation is sufficient to account for all process. On my account, the claim that creativity is not computation rests on the structure of process itself, and not on the separate argument that a mind can see the truth of a statement that a formal system cannot prove.

VII. Creation and Ethics: The Link

A reader may ask what a theory of how new things come to be has to do with how one should act. My theory of creation is not isolated from my ethics. The connection is direct and structurally necessary.

Choice (the transcendent modality in the domain of process) is a form of creation. Every genuine choice is an act of creation: it brings into being a state of affairs that did not previously exist. The structural properties of creation (its cooperative nature, its many-to-one convergence, its irreducibility to law) therefore apply to choice.

Because the structural properties of creation apply to choice, I define love as "that which enables choice". If choice is a form of creation, and creation is necessarily cooperative, then whatever enables effective choice must enable effective cooperation. Love, in my structural sense, is the relational quality that enables the cooperative convergence of multiple beings' creative potentials into genuinely new actualities. It is not a feeling; it is a structural condition of the creative process.

A band rehearsal shows the difference between enabling that convergence and preventing it, and the rehearsal carries forward the improvising band of section V. When each player brings a phrase and listens to the others, a song arrives that none of them had when the rehearsal began: many potentials have converged into one new actuality, which is the many-to-one transition of Axiom II. When one player dictates every note, the rehearsal produces only what that one player already had, and the potentials of the others never enter the song. The first rehearsal is characterized by love in the structural sense; the second, by domination.

A community characterized by love (in this structural sense) is one in which creative potential is maximized, because the cooperative conditions for genuine novelty are present. A community characterized by domination, coercion, or isolation is one in which creative potential is suppressed, because the many-to-one convergence of diverse potentials is prevented. My theory of creation thus provides the structural foundation for my ethical claims: right action is that which preserves and extends the conditions of effective choice, which are the conditions of effective creation, which are the conditions of cooperative convergence.

VIII. How to Engage

I recommend that a reader approaching my theory of creation begin with my paper "Reflections on the Incommensuration Theorem", which establishes the incommensurability of symmetry and continuity and therefore the structural basis for the irreducibility of the creative dimension. Then read, in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, the sections "The Three Axioms", which states the cycle of precedence, and "Interaction, Existence, Creation", which gives the many-to-one transitions that constitute the structure of creative process. Then read "Objective and Subjective" and "Representations and Commitments", which carry the claim that every expression creates and defines an objective aspect as well as a subjective one, and "Theory of Creation", which develops the cooperative nature of creation.

As you read, consider: is there a creative act you have experienced (an artwork you have made, an idea that emerged in conversation, a moment of genuine insight) that was *not* characterized by the convergence of multiple elements into something new? Was it *not* cooperative in some deep sense, requiring the coming-together of things you had learned, experienced, and absorbed from multiple sources? I expect that it was. If your experience confirms this, you have found in your own life what the theory describes. If it does not, the productive question is whether the act involved genuine foundational creation or a more derivative process. The way to tell is the domain fundamentalness test that applies to all IM domain analyses, which Chapter 3 of Volume I states in full in its section X: three concepts are the basis triple of a domain, the three from which everything in that domain is built, when each of the three is necessary, the three together are sufficient, none is definable from the other two, exactly one is presupposed by the other two, and the three stand in a cycle of precedence of three steps.

I apply the test once, to this chapter's own triple. The count: the foundation named is three concepts, creation, interaction, and existence. Necessity: any event, to be considered at all, needs something actual (existence),

something happening (interaction), and something coming to be (creation). Sufficiency: every event has a creative, a processual, and a structural dimension, as section II says, and everything in an event is some combination of the three. Distinctness: none of the three can be defined from the other two; what comes to be cannot be built out of what is and what happens, which is the irreducibility of creative potential in section III. Presupposition: interaction is presupposed by the other two, by Axiom I, as section II states. Precedence: a class of the transcendent precedes an instance of the immanent, and so around a cycle of three steps, as section III states. The triple passes all six, which is what it means to call creation, interaction, and existence the foundation of a domain rather than terms within a derivative one.

IX. Summary

IX.1. How the Theory Follows

If creation is the transcendent modality, and the modalities are governed by Axioms I, II, and III, then creation is inseparable from interaction and existence (Axiom III), is in a conjugate relationship with existence (Axiom I), and participates in the many-to-one cycle of precedence (Axiom II). The cooperative nature of creation follows from the many-to-one structure of Axiom II. The irreducibility of creation follows from the ICT's proof that the transcendent and the omniscient cannot both be absolute.

IX.2. What the Theory Explains

The theory explains why novelty is possible without being random. It explains why creation is cooperative. It explains why expression has an objective dimension. It explains why determinism fails as a complete account of reality. It explains why computationalism cannot capture all of process. And it connects naturally to the ethical framework by identifying choice as a form of creation. The resolution of the novelty problem (the

future is constrained but not determined, because law and creativity are incommensurable) replaces the determinism-vs-randomness dichotomy that has structured Western thinking about causation since Hume.

IX.3. The Scope of the Theory

The theory specifies the structural conditions under which creation occurs, and not the specific content of any particular creative act: it does not predict what will be created in any specific case. A theory of creation must specify the structural conditions of creation and not the specific content of any creative act, because the ICT guarantees that the creative dimension is incommensurable with the structural (knowable) dimension. The incommensurability means that the specific content of creation is, in principle, not fully predictable from structural knowledge. A theory of creation that predicted the content of every creative act would have to violate the ICT.

Aesthetic quality, what makes one creative expression better than another, is a separate topic: *An Immanent Metaphysics* addresses it under the theory of expression and the nature of beauty, and this chapter does not take it up. What the theory of creation provides is the structural precondition for any such aesthetic theory: the demonstration that expression is objective, that creation is cooperative, and that the qualitative dimension of reality is irreducible.

My theory of creation is compact, radical, and structurally derived. I hold that creation is one of three irreducible aspects of all reality; that it operates through the cooperative convergence of multiple potentials into new actualities; that it is irreducible to law, computation, or rearrangement; that expression is objective; and that the structural conditions of creation are identical to the structural conditions of effective choice, which are identical to the structural conditions of love.

Each of these claims follows from the Axioms and the ICT. The theory resolves the problem of novelty (the future is constrained but not determined), answers the question of why creativity is cooperative (the Axiom II many-to-one transition requires it), and connects creation to ethics through the identification of choice with creative action.

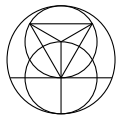
The ICT is a structural fact about the nature of knowing, and so the theory of creation is not a philosophical proposal but a structural consequence. The creative dimension of reality is as necessary, as irreducible, and as structurally specified as the lawful dimension. Any account of reality that omits it is incomplete, not by oversight, but by structural necessity.

Creation is the transcendent term of the core triple of creation, interaction, and existence. The chapter that follows takes up the immanent term, interaction, which is consciousness.

KEY CONCEPTS IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Creation / Interaction / Existence**: the foundational triple of the IM; creation is transcendent, interaction is immanent, existence is omniscient.
- **The Axiom II Cycle**: many potentials converge into one event; many events crystallize into one pattern; many patterns give rise to one new potential. The structural rhythm of all process.
- **Many-to-One Transition**: each step of the Axiom II cycle involves the convergence of a multiplicity into an instance; the structural basis for cooperation in creation.
- **The Cooperative Nature of Creation**: creation necessarily involves the convergence of multiple contributions; no single source creates alone. A structural claim, not a moral one.
- **The Irreducibility of Creative Potential**: the transcendent cannot be derived from the omniscient, because symmetry and continuity are incommensurable (ICT). Novelty is not reducible to law.

- **Expression Is Objective**: the act of expression necessarily produces something with objective properties, because the Axiom II cycle passes through the omniscient (objective, knowable) modality.
- **Constrained but Not Determined**: the IM's resolution of the novelty problem: law constrains without fully specifying; the gap between constraint and outcome is where creation occurs.
- **Choice as Creation**: every genuine choice is an act of creation; the structural properties of creation apply to choice; this links the theory of creation to the ethics.
- **Love as Enabling Creation**: since choice is creation and creation requires cooperative convergence, whatever enables effective choice (love) enables effective creation.
- **Why Computation Cannot Account for All of Process**: the ICT proves that computational process (symmetric, lawful) cannot account for all of reality, because the creative dimension is incommensurable with it.



Chapter Twenty-Five

The Theory of Consciousness

Perceiver, Perception, and Perceived: The Dissolution of the Hard Problem

ABSTRACT

This chapter sets out the theory of consciousness of the Immanent Metaphysics. Where the dominant approaches in philosophy of mind treat consciousness as either a substance (dualism), a byproduct of physical process (physicalism), or an intrinsic feature of matter (panpsychism), I treat it as *interaction itself*: the immanent modality, the actual event of engagement between perceiver and perceived, which is more fundamental than either pole. This identification dissolves the problem, rather than renaming it, by removing the premise on which the hard problem depends.

This chapter can be read on its own by a reader who has the terms of Volumes I and II; in it the Immanent Metaphysics is called the IM.

I. The Problem That Will Not Go Away

The "hard problem of consciousness", as formulated by David Chalmers in 1995, asks: why is there something it is like to be a conscious being? We can explain, in principle, how the brain processes information, responds to stimuli, generates behavior. The problems of explaining how the brain processes information, responds to stimuli, and generates behavior are the "easy problems". The easy problems are easy in the sense that we know what a solution would look like, and not in practice. A solution

would be a functional account that maps inputs to outputs through identifiable mechanisms. The hard problem is different. Even a complete functional account leaves unexplained why there is a subjective experience associated with the processing. Why does the processing *feel* like anything at all?

The hard problem has resisted solution for three decades because every major approach to consciousness presupposes a metaphysical architecture in which the problem is structurally unsolvable. Physicalism says that the physical is fundamental and consciousness must emerge from it, but no one has shown how subjective experience can emerge from objective mechanism, and there are strong arguments that it cannot: the conceivability of zombies (that a being physically identical to a conscious person, but with no experience at all, can be coherently imagined) and the knowledge argument (that a person who knew every physical fact about color, but had never seen a color, would still learn something new on first seeing red). Dualism says that consciousness is a separate substance from the physical, but then the interaction between the two substances becomes inexplicable. Panpsychism says that consciousness is a fundamental property of all matter, but then the combination problem arises: how do micro-consciousnesses combine into the unified experience of a human mind?

Each of these positions captures something real. Physicalism is right that consciousness is lawfully connected to physical process. Dualism is right that subjective experience is not identical to physical mechanism. Panpsychism is right that consciousness cannot be conjured from wholly non-conscious ingredients. But each position, by absolutizing one insight, generates a problem it cannot solve.

The pattern just described (three positions, each capturing one truth, each generating an insoluble problem by denying the others) is exactly the pattern I expect in any binary (or even trinary) debate in which each position captures one of the three modalities (the three fundamental ways of relating to any domain, set out in section II) while failing to recognize that the three are inseparable. The hard problem has therefore resisted solution because every proposed framework has been structurally incom-

plete in the same way, and not because consciousness is mysterious. The sections below identify which modality each position captures, what each position denies, and what a structurally complete account looks like.

II. The Perceiver-Perception-Perceived Triple

My theory of consciousness begins from a foundational triple: perceiver, perception, and perceived. These correspond to the three modalities: the perceiver is transcendent, perception is immanent, and the perceived is omniscient.

The modalities, and the axioms that govern them, can be stated briefly. In the IM there are three *modalities*, three fundamental ways of relating to any domain, a domain being any world or field of interaction taken as a whole. The *omniscient* is the view from outside: the structural, the objective, the already the case, that which can be described and shared. The *immanent* is the view from inside: the participatory, the relational, the present and unfolding, the mode in which the knower is within the known. The *transcendent* is the view from beyond: the creative, the generative, the becoming possible, that which exceeds every frame and every description. Three axioms govern them, and I state them in *An Immanent Metaphysics* at 1.3-1. *Axiom I*: "The immanent is more fundamental than the omniscient and/or the transcendent. The omniscient and the transcendent are in conjugate relationship to one another". *Axiom II*: "A class of the transcendent will precede an instance of the immanent. A class of the immanent will precede an instance of the omniscient. A class of the omniscient will precede an instance of the transcendent". *Axiom III*: "The (classes/instances) of the immanent, omniscient, and transcendent are distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable". Two terms are *conjugate* when each requires the other and yet they point in fundamentally different directions. The three steps of Axiom II form a directed cycle that closes on itself. And the *Incommensuration Theorem* (the ICT) holds that perfect

symmetry, the same content across a difference of context, and perfect continuity, an unbroken connection without gap, cannot both hold of one comparison.

The perceiver (transcendent) is the subjective pole: the being who experiences, the locus of perspective, the source of qualitative engagement. The perceived (omniscient) is the objective pole: the world as known, the content of experience, the lawful structure that is apprehended. Perception (immanent) is the actual event of engagement between the two: the process in which a subject encounters an object and something happens.

By Axiom I, perception (the immanent) is more fundamental than either the perceiver or the perceived. That perception is more fundamental than the perceiver and the perceived is the main move of my theory of consciousness. In every other major theory of consciousness, one pole is treated as fundamental and the other as derivative. Physicalism makes the perceived (the objective, physical world) fundamental and tries to derive the perceiver from it. Idealism makes the perceiver (the subjective, conscious mind) fundamental and tries to derive the perceived from it. Both fail, because they try to derive one pole of a relationship from the other pole, while ignoring the relationship itself.

I hold that the relationship is more fundamental than either pole. Perception, the actual event of conscious engagement, is not something that happens *between* a pre-existing subject and a pre-existing object. It is the process *out of which* the distinction between subject and object crystallizes. Before there is a perceiver and a perceived, there is perception: the raw fact of engagement, of something happening, of process. The perceiver and the perceived are aspects of perception, not the other way around.

This move is structurally parallel to Descartes' Cogito ("I think, therefore I am"), but at a deeper level. Descartes showed that the act of thinking cannot be doubted while it is occurring, because the doubt itself is an act of thinking, and he inferred from it that the thinker exists. I generalize the first step: you can doubt the nature of the perceiver, and you can doubt the nature of the perceived, but you cannot doubt that perception is

occurring, because the doubt itself is an act of perception. Perception is self-enactingly certain in the same way that thinking is for Descartes, except that perception is a broader concept than thinking (all thinking is perception, but not all perception is thinking), and therefore my result is more general than his.

III. Consciousness Is Interaction

My central claim about consciousness can now be stated precisely: consciousness *is* interaction. Not "is produced by" interaction, not "is correlated with" interaction, not "supervenes on" interaction. Consciousness is the immanent modality (the actual event of engagement between subject and object), and the immanent modality is what "interaction" means.

This identification has several consequences.

First, consciousness is not a substance. It is not a thing that exists in the way that a brain or a soul exists. It is a process: an event, a happening, a relation. Asking "where is consciousness?" is a category error, like asking "where is the dance?" when two people are dancing. The dance is not in either dancer; it is the relation between them. Consciousness is not in the brain or in the mind or in the world; it is the relation between the experiencer and the experienced.

Second, consciousness is not an epiphenomenon. An epiphenomenon is a byproduct that has no causal power, like the shadow cast by a moving object, which follows the object but does not affect it. Physicalism tends toward treating consciousness as epiphenomenal: the real work is done by the brain; consciousness just "comes along for the ride". But if consciousness *is* interaction, and interaction is more fundamental than either the physical or the mental (Axiom I), then consciousness is not a byproduct of physical process; it is the very thing that makes physical process possible. Without interaction, there is no physics. Without perception, there is no perceived. The immanent is prior to the omniscient.

Third, consciousness is not confined to brains. If consciousness is interaction, then wherever interaction occurs, some form of consciousness is present. This sounds like panpsychism, but it is structurally different. Panpsychism says that consciousness is a *property of matter*, that electrons and atoms have tiny bits of experience. I say that consciousness is a *property of interaction*, that wherever a genuine engagement between a subject and an object occurs, something experiential is happening. The difference matters, because it avoids the combination problem. Panpsychism must explain how billions of micro-experiences combine into one unified macro-experience. My account does not face this problem, because it does not begin from micro-experiences; it begins from the structure of interaction itself, which is unitary and relational from the start.

III.1. Not Only a Redefinition

A reader may ask whether calling consciousness "interaction" is mere redefinition rather than genuine explanation. We already have a perfectly good concept of interaction (physical forces, causal connections, information exchange), and attaching the word "consciousness" to it would then add nothing.

My answer is that the standard concept of interaction is *already* incomplete. When physics describes an interaction, it describes the objective, structural, lawful aspects (the omniscient modality) and ignores the subjective, qualitative, experiential aspects (the transcendent modality) and the actual processual event itself (the immanent modality). The standard physical description of interaction is an abstraction that retains only the omniscient component of a three-modal event. I am not adding consciousness to interaction; I am pointing out that the standard description of interaction has been *subtracting* consciousness from it.

The standard description of interaction is like a map of a city that shows only the streets. Such a map is incomplete, though not wrong, and someone who mistook the map for a complete description of the city would be unable to explain why people live there.

IV. The Dissolution of the Hard Problem

The hard problem asks: why is there something it is like to be a conscious being? I dissolve this question by showing that it presupposes a metaphysical architecture that I reject.

The presupposition is this: the physical world is fundamental, consciousness is derivative, and the question is how the derivative arises from the fundamental. This presupposition treats the perceived (omniscient: the objective, structural, physical world) as more fundamental than the perceiver (transcendent: the subjective, qualitative, experiential being) and asks how the one gives rise to the other.

I reject this ordering. By Axiom I, perception (immanent) is more fundamental than either the perceiver or the perceived. The question "how does consciousness arise from the physical?" presupposes that the physical is prior; I say that interaction is prior. The question "why is there something it is like to be?" presupposes that "something it is like" is an additional feature that needs to be explained on top of the physical facts; I say that "something it is like" is just what interaction *is*, from the inside.

The dissolution works as follows. The hard problem has a specific logical structure: it notes that a complete physical (omniscient) description of a system leaves out the experiential (immanent/transcendent) dimension, and it asks why. My answer: because a physical description is, by definition, an omniscient-modal description; it captures the lawful, structural, repeatable aspect of reality and omits the processual and qualitative aspects. The "explanatory gap" is not a gap in reality; it is a gap in a particular *mode of description*. The physical description omits consciousness for the same reason that a street map omits the smell of bakeries: not because bakeries are mysterious, but because smell is not the kind of thing that a street map represents.

Consciousness is real, as real as interaction, which is as real as anything can be, and so this account is not eliminativism (the claim that consciousness does not exist). It is not a mystery waiting to be explained by a more complete physical theory. It is the immanent modality of reality it-

self, visible from the inside as experience and from the outside as process. The hard problem dissolves because its premise (that the physical description is the complete description and consciousness must somehow emerge from it) is false. The physical description is one modality's worth of a three-modal reality.

The same result can be put as a distinction between knowing and understanding, which I draw sharply. Knowing (omniscient) is third-person, structural, representational: you know that fire is hot because you have a model that connects fire to heat. Understanding (immanent) is first-person, participatory, experiential: you understand that fire is hot because you have felt it. Understanding is immanent here in the sense of direct participatory contact with the thing understood, the sense of attunement. Taken instead in the triple of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom from the perspective of the self, as I take it in *An Immanent Metaphysics* at 1.57-6 (quoted in Chapter 22, section VIII), understanding has the nature of the transcendent and wisdom of the immanent. Knowing and understanding are distinct epistemic modes, structurally incommensurable by the ICT. Knowing has the nature of symmetry, since the same knowledge holds across contexts; understanding has the nature of continuity, since understanding requires unbroken contact with the thing understood.

In this section the two words name the two sides of the hard problem: knowing is the third-person description and model, and understanding is the first-person contact. In *An Immanent Metaphysics*, at 1.57-3, I use the two words by the direction of the transformation each makes: "Knowing is a transformation of outer form into inner feeling", and "Knowing is fundamentally a perceptive process"; "Understanding is a transformation of inner feeling into outer form", and "Understanding is fundamentally an expressive process". In that founding vocabulary a description is the outer form that understanding produces, and the felt contact is knowing, which is why note 2 to 1.57-4 says of that book: "Due to the nature of communication, this book can only convey understanding; it cannot convey knowing". Chapter 27 uses the two words in that founding sense. The result of this section is the same in both vocabularies: no description, however

complete, carries the felt contact with the thing described, and 1.57-4 states the incommensurability directly: "No degree (even a very large degree) of knowing is equivalent to any degree (even a very small degree) of understanding".

	In this chapter (the sense of attunement)	**Founding sense (1.57-3), used in Chapter 27**
Knowing	The third-person description and model: you know that fire is hot because you have a model that connects fire to heat	A transformation of outer form into inner feeling: perceptive; the felt contact
Understanding	The first-person contact: you understand that fire is hot because you have felt it	A transformation of inner feeling into outer form: expressive; a description is the outer form it produces
What does not change	No description, however complete, carries the felt contact with the thing described.	

The hard problem is, at bottom, the observation that knowing cannot capture understanding. A complete neurological description of pain (knowing) does not convey what pain feels like (understanding). Of course it does not, because knowing and understanding are incommensurable. The gap between them is not a gap in our scientific theories; it is a structural feature of comparison itself, proved by the ICT. No amount of omniscient-modal description will ever produce immanent-modal understanding, for the same reason that no amount of symmetry will ever produce continuity.

V. The Transcendentals: Good, True, Beautiful

My theory of consciousness makes the basic claim that consciousness is interaction, and the theory goes beyond that claim to describe the structure of conscious experience itself. The classical transcendentals (the good, the true, and the beautiful) are, in the IM, evaluative categories and also structural aspects of all conscious experience.

The good has the nature of the transcendent modality: it is the evaluative, the normative, the dimension of caring and mattering, the axis along which choices are made. The true has the nature of the omniscient modality: it is the structural, the representational, the dimension of accurate correspondence between description and described. The beautiful has the nature of the immanent modality: it is the experiential, the qualitative, the dimension of direct aesthetic engagement. The mapping of the good to the transcendent, the true to the omniscient, and the beautiful to the immanent is the mapping of the third-person frame, and I give the first-person and second-person frames beside the third-person frame in Chapter 26, section VII.

By Axiom III, these three are distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable. This means that every conscious experience, however fleeting, involves all three: an evaluative dimension (this matters, or does not), a structural dimension (this is such-and-such), and a qualitative dimension (this is experienced as thus). You cannot have a conscious experience that is purely evaluative without any structural content; you cannot have one that is purely structural without any qualitative character; you cannot have one that is purely qualitative without any evaluative significance.

When crossed with the process triple of choice, change, and causality, the transcendentals generate a nine-cell matrix that I present as a complete phenomenological structure of consciousness. Each cell of the matrix is a distinct aspect of conscious life. The good crossed with choice yields moral agency, the ethical dimension of selection. The true crossed with change yields the structural description of transitions, which is scientific

understanding of temporal processes. The beautiful crossed with change yields the aesthetic experience of temporal transition. The table below gives all nine cells.

I give all nine cells in my paper "The Consciousness-Transcendentals Conjunction", in *Collected Papers on the Immanent Metaphysics; Applications, Volume II* (section 6.1), and the table states each cell in the first sentence I give it there. The columns take the transcendentals in the third-person frame of this section: the beautiful immanent, the true omniscient, the good transcendent. The rows take choice, change, and causation in the first-person frame, with the emphasis on choice: choice is the immanent act; change, the outcome of the choice as a practical consequence in the world, is omniscient; and causation, generalized from the physical to the world of theory, is transcendent. In the third-person frame of explaining, the assignment of the three is the one I give at 1.61-3, change immanent, causality omniscient, choice transcendent, and the two assignments are one Axiom II rotation, in which all three positions turn together by one step.

	The beautiful	**The true**	**The good**
Choice	Aesthetic experience in the moment of selection	The cognitive recognition of patterns in the moment of decision	The ethical dimension of selection
Change	The aesthetic dimension of temporal transition	The structural description of transitions	The directional evaluation of transitions
Causation	The aesthetic pull of consequences	The recognition of principled connections across time	The evaluation of consequences according to transcendent standards

The nine aspects of conscious experience. Columns in the third-person frame (the beautiful immanent, the true omniscient, the good transcendent); rows in the first-person frame (choice immanent, change omniscient, causation transcendent).

I hold that this matrix is structurally derived, and that it captures the full dimensionality of what it means to be a conscious being. I propose it as a complete phenomenology on the ground that it captures all the dimensions along which conscious experience can vary.

Each transcendental corresponds to the character of its assigned modality, and the inseparability that Axiom III asserts of the three agrees with the observation that conscious experience always involves evaluation, structure, and quality together. The nine-cell matrix can be seen directly in experience: for any given conscious experience, one can ask whether it exhibits all nine aspects.

One ordinary moment shows the nine filling in. I am choosing a ripe peach at a market stall. In the moment of choice: there is the pleasure of the one my hand goes to, which is the aesthetic experience in the moment of selection; there is my recognition of the signs of ripeness, the give under the thumb and the smell at the stem, which is the cognitive recognition of patterns in the moment of decision; and there is my leaving the best one for the next buyer, or not, which is the ethical dimension of selection. In change: there is the peach softening on my counter over two days, which is the aesthetic dimension of temporal transition; there is my knowledge of how ripening proceeds, which is the structural description of transitions; and there is my judgment of whether that softening is going toward what I want or away from it, which is the directional evaluation of transitions. In causation: there is the pull of the taste to come, which is the aesthetic pull of consequences; there is my knowing that bruising follows rough handling, which is the recognition of principled connections across time; and there is my weighing of whether the meal the peach goes into will serve the people at my table, which is the evaluation of consequences according to transcendent standards. All nine are there in one small choice, which is what it means to offer the matrix as a complete phenomenology.

VI. Consciousness and Temporal Asymmetry

I claim that consciousness *is* temporal asymmetry: more than that consciousness *experiences* time as directional, that the directedness of time and the existence of consciousness are the same phenomenon described from different perspectives.

The argument proceeds as follows. The fundamental laws of physics are time-symmetric, apart from a small violation in the weak interaction (the force of nature responsible for some kinds of radioactive decay): they work equally well forwards and backwards. Yet our experience of time is radically asymmetric: we remember the past and anticipate the future; we experience causation as flowing from earlier to later; we experience change as real and irreversible. This asymmetry is one of the deepest unsolved problems in physics and philosophy of time.

A pair of films shows the difference. Film two billiard balls colliding and run the film backward: the reversed film shows a collision that obeys the same laws, and nothing in it looks wrong. Film an egg falling and breaking, and run that film backward: the shell gathers itself, the egg leaps up whole, and every viewer knows at once that the film is running the wrong way. The fundamental laws of motion allow both films in both directions, so those laws do not give the direction the viewer sees in the second film, and that direction is the asymmetry I place in the next paragraph.

My diagnosis: the asymmetry of time is not a physical fact (the physics is symmetric) but an immanent fact. It is a feature of *interaction*, not of *structure*. The structural (omniscient) description of reality is time-symmetric because symmetry is the nature of the omniscient modality. The processual (immanent) description of reality is time-asymmetric because process has a direction: the Axiom II cycle runs in one direction, not both.

If consciousness is interaction (the immanent modality), and interaction is inherently directional (Axiom II), then consciousness *is* the directionality of time. The reason we experience time as directional is not that our brains impose an illusion of direction on a directionless reality; it is

that time *has* a direction, and that direction is the direction of process, which is the direction of consciousness, which is the direction of Axiom II. The physical description of reality does not capture this direction because the physical description captures only the omniscient (symmetric, structural) aspect.

Two consequences of this identity can be seen in experience. Since consciousness is temporal asymmetry, the experience of temporal direction is a foundational feature of all consciousness (not something added by memory or computation), and systems with richer interaction (more complex engagement between perceiver and perceived) exhibit richer temporal experience. Both agree with what we observe.

The observations are ordinary ones. For the first: every experience, however brief or however simple, comes with a before and an after; even the moment of waking from dreamless sleep is met as a passage, from not yet to now. For the second: an hour of close attention, spent in conversation or in a craft, is full of sequence, of one thing leading to the next and being remembered as having done so, while an hour of dreamless sleep leaves no sequence at all; and an adult, whose engagement with the world is richer than an infant's, holds a longer and more detailed sense of what came before and what is coming. In each case, more interaction goes with more temporal experience, and less with less.

VII. Comparison with Other Theories

I now set my theory of consciousness beside the leading alternatives.

VII.1. Why the Physical Description Is Not Exhaustive

Physicalism says that consciousness is identical to, or supervenes on, physical process. I agree that consciousness is lawfully connected to physical process but deny that the physical description is exhaustive. The physical description captures the omniscient modality; consciousness is the immanent modality. The omniscient and the immanent modalities are insep-

arable (Axiom III) but distinct, so describing either modality does not thereby describe the other modality. The explanatory gap is real but is a gap between *modes of description*, not between kinds of substance. Physicalism fails because it tries to derive an immanent-modal phenomenon from an omniscient-modal description, which the ICT proves is impossible (symmetry cannot produce continuity).

VII.2. Why Consciousness Is a Modality and Not a Substance

Dualism says that consciousness is a separate substance from the physical. I agree that consciousness is not identical to physical structure but deny that it is a separate *substance*. It is a separate *modality*, a structurally distinct aspect of the same reality, not a different reality. The interaction problem (how does the mental causally affect the physical?) does not arise because I do not posit two substances that need to interact; I posit one reality with three inseparable aspects. The mental and the physical are aspects of interaction, and interaction is prior to both. There is no gap to bridge because there was never a separation.

VII.3. Why Consciousness Belongs to Interaction and Not to Matter

Panpsychism, in its usual form, says that consciousness is a fundamental property of all matter. My position is closer to panpsychism than to physicalism or dualism, but my position differs from panpsychism in one main structural respect. Panpsychism attributes consciousness to matter (the omniscient modality: the structural, the existing). I attribute consciousness to interaction (the immanent modality: the processual, the relational). This difference resolves the combination problem. If consciousness is a property of matter, then one must explain how the micro-consciousness of individual particles combines into the macro-consciousness of a brain. If consciousness is a property of interaction, no combination is needed: interaction is already relational, already involving multiple parti-

cipants, already unitary in its structure. The unity of consciousness is not something that must be assembled from parts; it is a feature of interaction as such.

VII.4. What Integrated Information Theory Captures

Integrated Information Theory (IIT) proposes that consciousness is identical to integrated information (phi) and that any system with phi greater than zero is conscious. The neuroscientist Giulio Tononi proposed the theory. *Integrated information* is the amount of information that a system's whole carries over and above what its parts carry taken separately, and *phi* is the number that measures that amount. IIT and my account share the conviction that consciousness is structurally characterizable and that it is not confined to biological brains. But IIT defines consciousness in omniscient-modal terms (information, integration, mathematical structure), and I define it in immanent-modal terms (interaction, process, engagement). My prediction is that IIT captures the structural *correlates* of consciousness (the omniscient aspect of the three-modal event) but mistakes them for consciousness itself, the same error as physicalism, expressed in information-theoretic language.

VIII. Understanding Cannot Be Deceived

I make a further claim that follows from the knowing-understanding distinction: understanding cannot be deceived. The two words are used here in the sense of section IV of this chapter: knowing is the third-person representation, and understanding is the first-person contact with the thing understood.

Knowing can be false: a belief can fail to correspond to reality, a model can be inaccurate, a representation can mislead. This is because knowing is *representational*: it involves a structural correspondence between a description and a described, and correspondences can fail.

Understanding, by contrast, is *participatory*: it involves direct engagement with the thing understood. You cannot misunderstand fire by touching it; the engagement *is* the understanding. You can, of course, form a false *belief* about fire on the basis of your experience (this is a failure of knowing, not of understanding), and you can fail to *attend* to what your understanding is telling you (this is a failure of perception, not of understanding). The mirage is the hardest case for the claim, and I answer it with the same distinction. The shimmer seen on a hot road is exactly what it is: light bent by the heated air, met directly. The belief "there is water there" is the knowing that fails. The model laid over the shimmer was false, and nothing in the contact with the shimmer was false. But the understanding itself, the direct experiential contact, is what it is, and it cannot be otherwise than what it is, because it is not a representation of something but the thing itself.

This claim is structurally grounded. Understanding (immanent) has the nature of continuity, unbroken contact between knower and known. Deception requires a gap between appearance and reality, a discontinuity between what is presented and what is the case. But continuity and discontinuity are incompatible (the ICT proves that sameness of content in sameness of context cannot be conjoined with difference of content in sameness of context). By definition, continuity is sameness of content with sameness of context, and discontinuity is difference of content with sameness of context, so in one respect of one comparison only one of continuity and discontinuity can hold. Therefore, understanding (which has the nature of continuity) cannot be deceived (which would require discontinuity in the same dimension).

The practical implication is that conscious experience, insofar as it involves genuine understanding (direct participatory engagement), provides a kind of knowledge that is immune to the skeptical challenges that plague representational (omniscient-modal) knowledge. You can doubt your beliefs, but you cannot doubt your experience, not because experience is infallible in its *interpretation*, but because the experience itself is

what it is regardless of how you interpret it. That you cannot doubt your experience is, again, a generalization of the Cogito: you cannot doubt that you are experiencing, because the doubt is an experience.

IX. How to Engage

I recommend that a reader approaching my theory of consciousness begin with the sections of *An Immanent Metaphysics* titled "The Six Intrinsics", which sets out the perceiver, perception, and perceived triple, and with "Knowledge and Understanding". The two sections establish the foundational concepts and the distinction between knowing and understanding, the epistemic distinction on which my theory of consciousness turns. Then read "Natural Consciousness" and "PanPsychism", which develop the account of consciousness and the ground on which the hard problem dissolves. Then read the sections on symmetry and continuity in my paper "Reflections on the Incommensuration Theorem", which provide the formal grounding for the knowing-understanding incommensurability.

As you read, consider your own experience. Right now, as you read these words, you are perceiving. There is a perceiver (you), a perceived (the text), and a perception (the act of reading). Which is most fundamental? Can you conceive of the perception without the perceiver? Can you conceive of it without the perceived? Now consider: can you conceive of the perceiver without any perception at all? I expect that you cannot: that a subject without any engagement is no subject at all, that consciousness *is* the engagement and not something that has the engagement. Test this against your direct experience.

X. Summary

The theory follows from the Axioms and the ICT. The identification of consciousness with the immanent modality follows from the perceiver-perception-perceived triple combined with Axiom I (perception more fundamental than either pole). The dissolution of the hard problem follows from the recognition that the hard problem presupposes the primacy of the omniscient description, which I reject. The knowing-understanding distinction and the claim that understanding cannot be deceived follow from the ICT's proof of incommensurability between symmetry and continuity.

The theory explains why the hard problem has resisted solution (every prior framework was modally incomplete). It explains why the explanatory gap exists (it is a gap between modes of description, not between substances). It explains why consciousness is unified (interaction is relational and unitary from the start). It explains why we experience time as directional (consciousness is temporal asymmetry). It explains why understanding is immune to skeptical doubt (it has the nature of continuity, which excludes deception). And it does all of this from the same small axiom set that grounds the system's metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and theory of creation.

The theory describes the structure of experience, and not the specific content of any particular experience: why red looks the way it does rather than some other way is given in the seeing of red, and not in any derivation. Describing the *structure* of experience and not the specific content of experience is consistent with my general approach. In that approach the Axioms and the ICT describe the structure of reality, not the *contingent content* of reality. The specific qualities of experience (qualia, in the philosophical vocabulary) are contingent facts about the specific character of specific interactions, and structural principles describe structure, not contingent facts. The ICT shows why this boundary falls exactly where it does: because asymmetry is incommensurable with symmetry, the specific qualitative character of each interaction (which is asymmetric, unrepeat-

able, unique) cannot be captured by the general structural description (which is symmetric, repeatable, universal). A theory of consciousness that claimed to derive the specific quality of every experience from structural principles would have to violate the ICT.

My theory of consciousness is structurally derived. It identifies consciousness with interaction itself (the immanent modality, the actual event of engagement between perceiver and perceived), and from this identification derives the dissolution of the hard problem, the unity of consciousness, the directionality of temporal experience, the objectivity of the knowing-understanding distinction, and the immunity of understanding to deception.

My theory succeeds where physicalism, dualism, the panpsychism of matter, and IIT each fail, because it does not try to derive consciousness from one modality while ignoring the others. I recognize that consciousness is one of three inseparable aspects of all reality, that no modally incomplete description can capture it, and that the explanatory gap between physical description and conscious experience is not a mystery to be solved but a structural feature of comparison itself, proved by the ICT.

The ICT is a structural fact about the nature of knowing, and so the theory of consciousness is not a philosophical proposal but a structural consequence. Consciousness is as necessary, as irreducible, and as structurally specified as physical law. The hard problem dissolves not because consciousness is explained away but because the premise on which the problem depends (that the physical description is complete and consciousness must emerge from it) is shown to be false. The physical description, which describes the perceived, is one-third of the story. The perceiver, the subjective pole, is another third. And the relationship between them (interaction, perception, the immanent), which is consciousness itself, is the most fundamental third of all.

Every choice is an interaction, and so every choice is an event of consciousness in exactly this sense. That every choice is an event of consciousness is the link between the theory of consciousness and the ethics of choice that I derive in the earlier chapters of this volume.

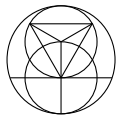
The specific quality of each interaction is unrepeatable and unique, and no general structural description can capture it. The chapter that follows takes up what lies beyond every structural description: the unknowable, the Great Mystery, and the sacred.

KEY CONCEPTS IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Perceiver / Perception / Perceived**: the consciousness triple; perceiver is transcendent, perception is immanent, perceived is omniscient. Perception is more fundamental than either pole (Axiom I).
- **Consciousness Is Interaction**: my central claim: consciousness is the immanent modality itself, the actual event of engagement between subject and object. Every choice is an interaction, and so an event of consciousness in this sense.
- **The Hard Problem Dissolved**: the hard problem presupposes that the physical (omniscient) description is complete; I show it is one-third of a three-modal reality, and the "gap" is between modes of description, not substances.
- **Knowing vs. Understanding**: knowing is omniscient-modal (representational, third-person, structural); understanding, in the sense of direct participatory contact, is immanent-modal (participatory, first-person, experiential). They are incommensurable by the ICT. Taken in the triple of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom from the perspective of the self (1.57-6), understanding is transcendent and wisdom immanent. The omniscient-modal sense of knowing and the immanent-modal sense of understanding are the senses I use for the hard problem in Chapter 25. In the founding sense of 1.57-3, knowing is the perceptive transformation of outer form into inner feeling, and under-

standing is the expressive transformation of inner feeling into outer form. In that founding sense, a text conveys understanding and not knowing.

- **Understanding Cannot Be Deceived**: understanding (continuity-natured) is immune to deception (which requires discontinuity); a structural consequence of the ICT.
- **Temporal Asymmetry as Consciousness**: the directionality of time is a feature of interaction (immanent), not structure (omniscient); consciousness *is* this directionality.
- **The Transcendentals**: the good (transcendent), the true (omniscient), and the beautiful (immanent) are structural aspects of all conscious experience, inseparable by Axiom III.
- **Physicalism and the Physical Description**: the physical description captures one modality; consciousness is another; deriving the immanent from the omniscient is impossible by the ICT.
- **Dualism and Modality**: consciousness is not a separate substance but a separate modality; there are not two realities but three inseparable aspects of one reality.
- **Panpsychism of Matter and of Interaction**: consciousness is a property of interaction, not matter; this avoids the combination problem because interaction is already relational and unitary.
- **Integrated Information Theory (IIT)**: IIT captures the omniscient correlates of consciousness (information structure) but mistakes them for consciousness itself.
- **Qualia as Contingent**: the specific quality of experience is asymmetric and unrepeatable, so by the ICT no structural principle derives a specific quale; a theory that claimed to would violate the ICT.



Chapter Twenty-Six

The Sacred, the Void, and the Great Mystery

Faith, Safety, and the Unknowable as Persistent Class

ABSTRACT

In the Immanent Metaphysics (hereafter the IM) I do not shy from the deepest questions. This chapter gives the structural account of what lies beyond knowing, and it stops where the account of the practice begins.

The sacred is defined first. It is not supernatural but structural: the recognition that reality has three aspects that matter, the omniscient, the immanent, and the transcendent, met in awe, gratitude, and love, and differing from the ordinary only in the quality of one's attention. The unknowable is then established as a persistent class, grounded in *An Immanent Metaphysics* in the nature of being itself and, in the Incommensuration Theorem (hereafter the ICT), whose proof Chapter 2 (Volume I) gives: there will always be aspects of reality beyond any structural description. The Great Mystery, that which is inherently inexplicable but which is not therefore paradoxical, is the foundation from which all reason and reasonableness arise, and mystery is neither conserved nor diminished by any degree of knowing. The void is then treated three ways: structurally there is none, since absolute nothingness is incoherent; contemplatively the formless is not the empty, since love, care, value, and potentiality are formless and are not nothing; and lived, the void is depression, from which there is nonetheless a way out. The unqualified why, the question why anything at all, is shown to be a question of the transcendent modality, answered in possibility and, tacitly, in love. There is no single ground of being and no universe; the ground is held in practice rather than in

theory, in a personal relationship with reality, and its character is love. Goodness, truth, and beauty are a foundational triple, distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable. The Catastrophic Theorem holds that either everything is sacred or nothing is, and my book *Third Resolutions in Western Philosophy* says which horn holds. Faith is not blind certainty but vision wide open, the acceptance of potentiality and creativity rather than an ignorance of actuality. Safety is found not in prevention but in the potentiality to act, and it originates inside the self. What cannot be taken away even in principle is what is truly owned. And limitation and freedom are conjugates rather than opposites, so that every limitation contains a freedom.

What this chapter supplies is the structure. What is made of that structure in a life, which is the account of spirituality and religion, of soul and of enlightenment, and of the felt dimension and the practice, is the subject of the chapter that follows this one. Nothing here presupposes anything there. A reader who wants the IM's account of the sacred entire should read the two chapters in order, but this one can be read alone by anyone who wants the architecture of the sacred and of the unknowable without the account of the life lived within it.

I. The Sacred

Is anything sacred in a world that science describes? And if something is, where is it, and how is it met?

The word *sacred* is the title term of this chapter, and it has to be said what it denotes. In my later book *On Re-Wilding Religion*, the sacred is "that which is considered ultimately meaningful", and I add there the condition on which such a meaning can rest: the possibility of an absolute. Where all truths are held as only relative and ultimately meaningless, there is no basis for the sacred to have grounded meaning; the sacred cannot mean what is ultimately meaningful if no such notion is permitted. In the same book I reserve worship for the Sacred, the whole of the Earth,

Life, and Cosmos, and hold that if God is the ultimate totality of all Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, then that ideal is worthy of genuine worship and devotion.

To say what the sacred is in the terms of the Immanent Metaphysics (the IM), the terms themselves have to be laid down. In the IM there are three *modalities*, three fundamental ways of relating to any domain, a domain being any world or field of interaction taken as a whole. The *omniscient* is the view from outside: the structural, the objective, the already the case, that which can be described and shared. The *immanent* is the view from inside: the participatory, the relational, the present and unfolding, the mode in which the knower is within the known. The *transcendent* is the view from beyond: the creative, the generative, the becoming possible, that which exceeds every frame and every description. Three axioms govern them, and I state them in *An Immanent Metaphysics* at 1.3-1. *Axiom I*: "The immanent is more fundamental than the omniscient and/or the transcendent. The omniscient and the transcendent are in conjugate relationship to one another". *Axiom II*: "A class of the transcendent will precede an instance of the immanent. A class of the immanent will precede an instance of the omniscient. A class of the omniscient will precede an instance of the transcendent". *Axiom III*: "The (classes/instances) of the immanent, omniscient, and transcendent are distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable". Two terms are *conjugate* when each requires the other and yet they point in fundamentally different directions. The three steps of Axiom II form a directed cycle that closes on itself. And there is a theorem, the *Incommensuration Theorem* (the ICT): perfect symmetry, the same content across a difference of context, and perfect continuity, an unbroken connection without gap, cannot both hold of one comparison. The three modalities, the three axioms, and the theorem are all that this chapter uses.

With these in hand the definition is direct. The sacred is the recognition that reality has these three aspects and that they matter. In my later book *Third Resolutions in Western Philosophy*, where I call the system the Epistemic Process and this chapter calls it the Immanent Metaphysics, I

make the statement in full: "The sacred is not supernatural. It is structural. It is built into the fabric of every interaction, every relationship, every moment of genuine engagement between self and world". One does not need a special building or a special ritual to encounter it; one encounters it every time one pays attention. That the sacred is met every time one pays attention intensifies the sacred, rather than diminishing it. If the sacred were confined to temples and designated moments, most of life would be profane. If it is structural, present wherever the three modalities are genuinely engaged, then the whole of life is sacred ground, and the difference between a sacred moment and an ordinary one "is not a difference in the world but a difference in the quality of one's attention". The sacred is a structure and not a being. It is not above us; it is between us, in the space of genuine interaction where self meets world, where care meets knowledge, where the creative and the structured are held together.

The three are encountered, not inferred. The awe one feels looking at the stars is a response to the omniscient modality: "the staggering structural order of the cosmos". The gratitude one feels for being alive is a response to the transcendent modality: "the generative miracle that anything exists at all". The love one feels for another person is a response to the immanent modality: "the relational care that is the most fundamental feature of interaction". Awe, gratitude, and love are not illusions projected onto an indifferent cosmos. They are perceptions of the three modalities, encountered directly, in the only way they can be encountered, through the quality of one's attention to the reality that is always already here.

The tradition found the same three under other names. Classical theism gave God exactly three attributes: omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence. Omniscience is total structural knowledge of a domain, the omniscient modality. Omnipotence is the creative and generative power that exceeds the domain, the transcendent modality. Omnibenevolence is the relational care present within the domain, the immanent modality. Goodness taken by itself, as the inward evaluation of what ought to be, is transcendent, as section VII sets out in the third-person frame; what makes omnibenevolence the immanent attribute is that its goodness is

love directed to every being, a relation to the other, and the relational is the immanent. The theologians arrived at exactly these three and no others because "these are the three fundamental ways of relating to any domain". "Their insight was genuine. Their error was specific: they projected all three onto a single being". Axiom III forbids that projection in the unrestricted sense the prefix demands: to know a domain completely from outside one cannot be a participant within it, to create it from beyond one cannot be identical with it, to care within it one cannot stand outside it in detached observation. A parent knows, shapes, and loves a child, and is not omni-anything; it is the extension to the absolute where the coherence breaks. The Axiom III argument is not a proof that God does not exist. It is a proof that the unrestricted conjunction is incoherent, and it is the reason the problem of evil has never been resolved.

Creation, in the IM, is not an event in the past; "creation is not an event in itself, but an aspect of all events". The transcendent modality is a continuous generative dynamic, and reality is being created at every moment, in every interaction. One is not a creature separated from a creator but a participant in the creative process; every choice is an act of creation. If creation is a one-time event in the distant past, then the sacred is far away and long ago. "If creation is happening now, in this interaction, in this choice", then, as I say in that book, "the sacred is as close as your next breath".

The ICT says where the sacred must fall. Any process is either continuously asymmetric or discontinuously symmetric; these are the only two valid conjunctions, complementary and not collapsible into each other. One can have wholeness, continuity, if one accepts asymmetry: genuine relationship and community, always with irreducible particularity. One can have universal law, symmetry, if one accepts discontinuity: rules that apply everywhere, always with points the rule does not reach. The vertical, the sacred, the ordering toward God, maps onto the continuous asymmetric mode; the horizontal, strategy and optimization and material management, onto the discontinuous symmetric mode. Jordan Hall, on whom *On Re-Wilding Religion* draws (Chapter 4), in his conversation with

Jonathan Pageau, "The End of Strategy", makes the case from experience, and makes it strongly: modern civilization has become pathologically horizontal, all strategy and no worship, and one cannot engineer the sacred. I agree, and the ICT shows why formally. Engineering is strategy, and strategy works by rules that apply everywhere, which is the discontinuous symmetric mode; the sacred lies in the continuous asymmetric mode; and the ICT forbids collapsing one mode into the other. So the sacred must be asymmetric: "particular, alive, organic, embodied, local" rather than universal in the way strategy aspires to be. *An Immanent Metaphysics* says the same of cultures. "Where there is an excess of a omniscient emphasis in a culture, there is a tendency to invalidate the meaningfulness and significance of life", with an over-emphasis on separation, on the isolation of man from nature, and on "valuing the mundane over the sacred".

The Table of Modality Correspondences in *An Immanent Metaphysics* places the sacred under the transcendent, with craft under the immanent and intellect under the omniscient; and the table warns that some of its correspondences "are context dependant and will shift depending on the mode of consideration". The sacred is transcendent as that which exceeds every frame; it is met in the immanent, in attention and relationship; it is described in the omniscient, as this chapter describes it. *On Re-Wilding Religion* locates the encounter in the second person. We have done third-person spirituality, the exoteric religions, and first-person spirituality, the esoteric and interior movements, and it is time "to find divinity behind the eyes of our neighbor": a religion with "the fundamental sanctity of the other as its primary element", in which the sacred is "encountered, felt, and lived", and not only believed in.

II. The Great Mystery

In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I state: "The Great Mystery refers to the unknowable as well as the unknown. “The true mystery, the deeply mysterious is that which is inherently inexplicable but which is not therefore

paradoxical (nonsense). Although elements of the Great Mystery cannot be explained or reduced to pure reason, it is that from which all reason and reasonableness arise" (2.72-1)".

"Mystery in the world is not a feature of the world. Anything that can be pointed to and described objectively will at most be something that *elicits* mystery; it will not and cannot *be* the mystery" (2.72-6). The unknowable does not have or admit measure, degree, quantity, or value. "Mystery cannot be regarded as finite" (2.72-7).

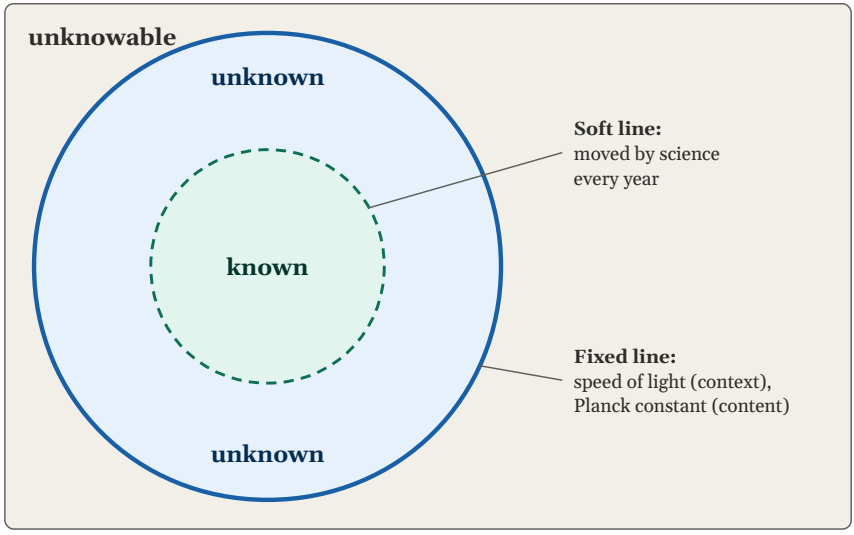
In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I ground the unknowable not in any theorem but in being itself. The section that precedes the Great Mystery, "The Known, the Unknown, and the Unknowable", opens: "As per the intrinsic and irreducible nature of being itself, with the being of knowing, and the known, there must also always be the unknown and the unknowable". The *unknowable* is that which cannot be known even in principle, as distinct from the *unknown*, which is not yet known. The three have modal natures. From the impersonal perspective, the known has the nature of the omniscient, the unknown of the immanent, and the unknowable of the transcendent; from the personal perspective the known is immanent and the unknown omniscient, and the unknowable is transcendent from either. Only the being of interactions in the immanent modality can be known; the being of interactions viewed in the omniscient modality "can only be hypothesized, never known"; and the absence of interactions between distinct transcendent domains cannot be hypothesized or known, and is unknowable.

Two further statements fix the structure. "The concept of the unknown is more basic than the concept of the known and/or the concept of the unknowable" (2.71-5). And: "There can be no firm or absolute line drawn between the known and the unknown. "There can be drawn a fixed and absolute logical line between the unknown and the unknowable" (2.71-6)". Science moves the first line; nothing moves the second. I then give the second line a concrete location. The speed of light and the Planck constant are the macroscopic and microscopic limits of a domain, and "Both of these constants define and separate that which is actually

known and potentially knowable from that which is ultimately and irreducibly unknowable". The speed of light defines what is unknowable in terms of context, of time and space; the Planck constant defines what is unknowable in terms of content, of momentum and position. In plain physics, the limit set by the speed of light is this: no signal travels faster than light, so whatever happens far enough away cannot reach us in time to be known now; the light arriving tonight from a distant star left that star long ago, and what is happening at the star tonight cannot be known here tonight. The limit set by the Planck constant is this: below a scale set by the Planck constant, where a thing is and how it moves cannot both be fixed at once, much as a photograph enlarged until only its grain is left no longer shows where an edge is, the grain playing the part of that smallest scale and the edge the part of a definite position; so at that scale a definite state cannot be known. All domains have some unexplained phenomena; even within a dream, where seemingly anything goes, there are events that go beyond the apparent creation of the dream as known to the dreamer. The two constants mark the edges of the first two of the three Mysteries named next, the speed of light the edge of the Mystery of the Horizon and the Planck constant the edge of the Mystery of the Infinitesimal; the third, the Mystery of the Subconscious, has no constant, because the limit it names is oneself.

The limits of knowing, "the boundaries of a domain and of the self, are three. These three limits or mysteries, are distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable (2.72-2)". They are the *three Mysteries*. The *Mystery of the Horizon* is the macroscopic limit of a domain, beyond which is the unknown and unknowable, "that place which is so far away in time and space as to be into the absolute elsewhere". The *absolute elsewhere* is the term of relativity physics for the region of space and time that no signal from here and now can reach, and from which no signal can reach here and now. The *Mystery of the Infinitesimal* is the microscopic limit, "that scale at which knowledge of definite state or quality becomes impossible". The *Mystery of the Subconscious* is a mesoscopic limit "in the nature of the knowledge of one's subjective self; that quality of which oneself is", *meso-*

scopic meaning at the middle scale, between the very large and the very small, which is the scale of a person. The Mystery of the Horizon has the nature of the omniscient, the Mystery of the Infinitesimal of the transcendent, the Mystery of the Subconscious of the immanent. The third Mystery, the Mystery of the Subconscious, is the most fundamental of the three Mysteries. The reason is that any consideration of the horizon or of the infinitesimal presupposes a consideration of the subconscious, since consideration presupposes consciousness, and consciousness involves also the subconscious and the unconscious. The three cycle by Axiom II: a class of the mystery of the horizon precedes an instance of the mystery of the infinitesimal, a class of the infinitesimal an instance of the subconscious, and a class of the subconscious an instance of the horizon.



The known, the unknown, and the unknowable. The line between the known and the unknown is soft and is moved by science; the line between the unknown and the unknowable is fixed, at the speed of light for context and the Planck constant for content.

Mystery	Scale	Modality	Everyday picture
The Mystery of the Horizon	Macro-scopic	Omni-scient	The edge of what light has had time to bring us
The Mystery of the Infinitesimal	Micro-scopic	Tran-scendent	A photograph enlarged until only its grain remains
The Mystery of the Subconscious	Meso-scopic	Imman-ent	Why I love the smell I love

Two more statements from the same sequence of aphorisms belong here. In the aphorism on measure I gloss Mystery as awe. And I define *Irreducible Uncertainty*: "No amount of communication or interaction (familiarity) in any domain or world will ever allow one to predict with certainty what will be said next, what will happen next. Communication and self are emergent".

My account of the Great Mystery and of irreducible uncertainty is a structural claim, and not an appeal to mysticism or anti-rationalism. My later book *Third Resolutions in Western Philosophy* calls the Great Mystery "not a romantic sentiment but a structural consequence of the ICT", and the reason can be seen in this way. The ICT proves that symmetry and continuity cannot both be perfected. Any structural description (symmetric: the same laws everywhere) must be discontinuous (there will be gaps, jumps, things it cannot capture). Any continuous engagement (unbroken participatory contact) must be asymmetric (it will be unique, non-repeatable, non-shareable in full). So the unknowable is whatever falls in the gap between these two: the qualitative, creative dimension of reality that no structural description can exhaust.

III. The Veil of Secrecy

The omniscient cannot ever contain or observe the transcendent. “The process of knowing is itself immanent; one cannot directly know the transcendent from within the perspective of the omniscient” (2.74-1). It can only be that the transcendent perceives the omniscient, never the reverse.

The picture I use in Chapter 27 for the three aspects of a self shows the one-way relation. In a dream there is the dreamer self, which creates the stage; the dreamed self, the character on the stage; and the dreaming self, apart from both, with its being in another world altogether. The dreaming self takes in the whole stage of the dream. Nothing on the stage, and no character in the dream, can turn round and see the dreaming self, because the dreaming self is not anywhere on the stage to be seen. The stage is the omniscient, the made and knowable structure, and the dreaming self is the transcendent: the relation runs from the transcendent to the omniscient, and never back. So, in section VI, the transcendent is closed to theory and open to practice: a theory is something built on the stage, and the stage cannot see past itself.

Knowing can affect the unknown but cannot affect the unknowable. The quality of the mysterious, that which is awe inspiring, in the universe is unchanged regardless of one's degree of knowing (or unknowing) of the dynamics of worldly causality: of science. Science advances; the frontier of the unknown recedes. But the unknowable does not recede. It is structurally permanent, not because we lack tools but because the tools of knowing are themselves instances of comparison, and comparison is structurally limited by the ICT.

IV. The Void

The *void* is the name for what is left when everything that has form is taken away: in the contemplative traditions, emptiness; in the modern mood, nihilism, the belief that nothing matters because nothing is there. I treat the void three ways: as a structural claim about being, as a contemplative claim about the ultimate, and as a lived state.

Structurally, there is no void as content. Where there is a context of perception there cannot not be a content of that perception. "Wherever attention is moved, one shall always find substance. Where there is the feeling of mind, there cannot not be the form of world" (2.62-1). "Mind negates absence, separation, discontinuity". No world will ever have an edge for which there is nothing beyond; where one changes scale one always finds finer details; where one looks for other possibilities one always finds other sequences. "There cannot not be other possibilities, probabilities, and potentialities" (2.62-4). Existence abhors a vacuum, the absence of mass; consciousness abhors stasis, the absence of force; spirit abhors fixation, the absence of probability. *Third Resolutions in Western Philosophy* carries the claim to its limit. Absolute nothingness would have to be perfectly symmetric, the same from every perspective, and perfectly continuous, without boundary or gap; a nothingness with a boundary is a local absence bordered by presence. The ICT forbids the perfection of both at once. "Nothingness is not merely unlikely; it is structurally incoherent". There is exactly one way to not be and always more ways to be; nothingness is not the simple default but the single, maximally constrained state. The regress of explanation "terminates not in a first cause but in the structural impossibility of the zero state". Something is structurally necessary; this argument shows that something is necessary, and which something is a further question.

Contemplatively, the formless is not the void. *On Re-Wilding Religion* makes the distinction the center of its account. What is of the omniscient mode can have form: pattern, structure, object. Love, care, value, and potentiality are not forms; they are explicitly formless. "And yet they are not

empty. They are not nothing". "The transcendent is formless but is of feeling, and feelings are not nothing". "Self is not empty of care. Self is not empty of knowing. Self is not empty of being". The seeming contradiction between form and emptiness is resolved because that which transcends form is a presence of a different kind, the presence of care, of meaning, of what matters, and is not an absence.

On Re-Wilding Religion then examines the traditions that name the ultimate as emptiness. Zen has a well-developed notion of non-duality, but Zen does not name what Zen points toward as having any structure; "It can only assert what ultimate reality is not". The formula that form is emptiness and emptiness is form equivocates: in one sense emptiness names the absence of inherent existence in any form, in the other it names the ultimate ground itself, what remains when all form has been dissolved; "These are not the same concept". "Emptiness, taken as the whole story, is a conclusion that stops too soon". The cost is stated exactly. "When Zen frames the ultimate as emptiness, it removes from the picture precisely this axis of potentiality and love". The practitioner may reach extraordinary equanimity, deep stillness and non-attachment, but has no framework in which to experience the ultimate as loving. Experiencing the ultimate as loving makes the most difference in the extremity of grief or pain, pain so intense that it no longer matters why or how one came to feel it. In that extremity pain becomes simply true, unconditionally, as a totality of sensation; "And feeling loved in that state" is "the difference that matters". That emptiness cannot supply this axis of unconditional love "is not a minor omission. It is a structural absence". The conclusion is not that Zen is wrong that the ultimate exceeds predication (that no statement of the form "the ultimate is such and such" can capture it), but that it is wrong to conclude that the ultimate has no structure. "Process is not empty. It is knowable, as much as it is knowing, and a knowledge of the known".

Third Resolutions adds where the traditions and the system meet. Emptiness says that no phenomenon possesses independent existence; the unknowable says that structural description and participatory engage-

ment cannot both be perfected. "Both arrive at the same conclusion: reality exceeds description". The one arrives by dialectical analysis, the other by formal derivation; the practitioner realizes emptiness through meditative insight, I identify the unknowable through formal analysis; they point at the same irreducible residual from different modal positions and for different purposes. And in the IM itself emptiness has a positive sense that is not the void. "To be clear is to allow creation" (1.73-17). The degree of creation in an event is proportional to clarity and transparency, which I gloss in *An Immanent Metaphysics* as emptiness, that is, potentiality; and creation "is like the silence between the words, the space between the letters; always present within looking, but never (available to be) directly observed".

Lived, the void is depression. The account of the dynamics of emotion in *An Immanent Metaphysics* describes depression as two blockages: inwardly between soul and self, outwardly between self and world. "In contrast to love, which is energy and potentiality that moves in all directions, depression is a cessation of energy and an actuality which moves in no direction at all". It is marked by the empty feeling of powerlessness or deep apathy (2E34). The depressed person feels perpetually isolated and alone, cut off from the world, from other people, and from spirit, from personal dreams and innate significance. The transition into it occurs when the loss of something loved is regarded as actual and permanent rather than as potential and transient, and it is the result of a belief that no amount of action will make any difference. It also describes how one gets stuck there. A person who responds to loss with the decision never to love again moves toward total independence, and "Total independence is eventually realized to be equivalent to total isolation"; "the absence of interaction negates the potentiality for change; there are no opportunities for realizing anything new". My book *On Re-Wilding Religion* (Chapter 3, section XII) gives the same descent its structural cause: the more continuity is replaced with symmetry, the more painful lives become, and to believe that nothing matters, that life is not inherently meaningful, "that is the road to nihilism, and the more we believe it, the more we are led to utter

meaninglessness and social chaos". *An Immanent Metaphysics* does not leave the void as a terminus. "Even a person who is in a depressed state can find resolution and again attain freedom of choice and significance of life" (2E35). The way out is the one the Catastrophic Theorem below requires: the recognition of other potentialities for significance in life.

V. The Unqualified Why

Every why that is asked in a life is qualified: why this, why now, why me. The *unqualified why* is the same question with the qualification removed: why anything, why at all. *On Re-Wilding Religion* names it exactly. Working down the stack of concepts, each of which tacitly imports others, one arrives at three final root questions: the root question of ontology, "what is?"; of epistemology, "how do we know?"; of axiology, the domain of value, "why should we care?" Answering any one of the three requires tacitly answering the other two; they are about being, becoming, and doing. Beneath them is a root event, a source from which all other concepts descend, prior even to the split between being and knowing, or between these and care: "the ultimate reason", tacitly, love, "for the universe itself, in total. It is the ultimate “why even bother?” of anything and everything at all". And I notice there what the asking already contains: "To even ask such things is to imply that we somehow care about the answer".

In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I give the question its structure. "Within a language domain (within communication), there are exactly six classes of question", known in English as how, why, who, what, where, and when. "Questions of why are resolved in terms of an instance of a subjective context" (1.92-3). Questions of why, how, and who are always relative to a particular self; questions of what, where, and when to a particular world. "Questions of why and how have the nature of the transcendent modality" (1.92-6). An answer to a question of why always refers to an abstraction; a why type assertion, given a specified instructed X, provides an abstract Y. For example, given the specified act "water the garden" as the X,

the why type assertion supplies "so that the plants live" as the Y, and that Y is an abstraction: a purpose that refers to a possibility, and not to anything that can be pointed at in the act itself. And "A why type question corresponds to a consideration of possibility". Physics, as explanation, is an answer to a why question; technology, as prediction, to a how question; metaphysics to a what question; and "The essential question of science is Why".

Put the two together and the unqualified why has a definite kind of answer. A why is transcendent, relative to a self, and answered in possibility. Remove every qualification and what remains to be considered is the totality of possibility, which *On Re-Wilding Religion* identifies, as the section that follows shows, with God and with love. The omniscient cannot supply this answer. "The omniscient cannot ever provide a justification of, or an explanation for, the nature of that which is transcendent". "Love and choice are inherently unreasonable and illogical (non causal). One cannot ever be expected to give a reasonable or ultimate logical basis for one's values, desires, or creative decisions" (2.44-9). To the degree that one can give a reason for one's love, one is stating a purpose rather than a feeling, and defining a relationship by purpose describes a business transaction rather than an intimate connection. The unqualified why is therefore not a request for a purpose. Physics answers qualified whys and does not touch this one; it is met, as *On Re-Wilding Religion* says, by the care that the asking already implies.

VI. The Ground of Being

The phrase *ground of being* names that on which all being is supposed to rest. The Western tradition sought it as a foundation, something that exists independently and depends on nothing else: substance, God, the thinking self, the thing in itself, matter, mind. I deny that any such single ground exists. "There is no single fundamental ground of being". "There is no single context that encompasses all other contexts and contents. There

is no single domain that encompasses all other domains". "The idea of 'a universe' cannot be fully realized, even in principle. Any attempt to formulate such will result in paradox. The transcendent cannot be contained within the omniscient" (1.71-5; 1.71-2; 1.71-4). The reason is the ICT applied to totality: "In that the concept of perfect symmetry and the concept of perfect continuity are themselves fundamentally incommensurate, so must the class of existence be itself incomplete and non-absolute". *An Immanent Metaphysics* joins the Veil of Secrecy to the theorem here. What there is instead of a universal context is a universal content: "There are universal symbols (the three modalities)". *Third Resolutions* finds the same denial in the Buddha: "The Buddha's insight was that this search for an unconditioned ground is the search for something that does not exist". "To be is to be conditioned". There is no substrate beneath the arising, no ground below the groundlessness; what I add is a derivation of why the conditioned arising is directed, involves exactly three moments, and closes rather than regressing, which is Axiom II.

So the ground is not a thing that could be found by looking. How, then, is it met? *On Re-Wilding Religion* gives the route, and it is the positive complement of the Veil. "The right meta is immanent. And from the immanent, the transcendent becomes accessible", whereas from the omniscient alone it cannot be reached. "This is itself an instance of the triadic structure at work: mystery is transcendent; practice is immanent; theory is omniscient. We hold the mystery in practice, not in theory". The transcendent is closed to theory and open to practice.

The practice is a relationship. I have said what follows in conversation, and the quoted words keep their spoken form. Reality "actually is capable of relationship"; reality "is relational in its nature, and therefore you can be in a relationship with it". That relationship is not impersonal; it is not I-it but I-thou, in Martin Buber's terms, where I-it is the relation of a subject to an object it uses or describes, and I-thou the relation in which one whole being addresses another as a whole being; and it has to be I-thou for one to have a whole relationship with reality: the whole of oneself with the whole of the other. "So when we say a personal relationship with

reality", or a personal relationship with God, "which from this perspective are the same thing", the question becomes what it means to have the whole of oneself able to be in full relationship with the whole of reality. Any world, as distinct from a universe in the physics sense, "is defined by the fact that it is available for relationship". And the posture toward what is at the base is fixed by the mystery there: as one approaches it, "it is actually above your pay grade. Not only must you have a fundamental relationship of humility toward it; you cannot possibly understand it in any kind of episteme way", episteme being the Greek word for reasoned knowledge. It is something with which one can come into some quality of relationship; to think one can grasp it with an ideology is already to be in the wrong category.

On Re-Wilding Religion (Chapter 5, sections IV and V, and Chapter 7, section II) also says what the ground is, formally. For every way in which something is finite there are two ways in which it is infinite, the countable and the uncountable. A ruler imagined to run on without end shows the difference. The marks on it, 1, 2, 3, and on, can be counted one after another without end: that is a countable infinity. The points along its edge cannot be listed one after another at all, since between any two of them there are always more: that is an uncountable infinity, the continuum, and it is a different kind of infinity, not a larger count. "The countable infinity is associated with the totality of the objective", the universe as the enumerable aggregate of all that has actually occurred. "The uncountable infinity", the continuum, "is associated with the totality of the subjective, which is to say, with God directly". Actuality, properly understood, is the past, the accomplished; the present moment is the real, "the finite intersection of the actual and the potential"; and potentiality is associated with the totality of the subjective, with God. The actual universe stands to the potentiality of God as the already determined stands to the as yet undetermined, a structural relation, not a temporal one. God, so conceived, is a context, as the universe is a context: the self is a content held in two contexts, the countable infinity of the universe and the uncountable continuum, the unity of spirit. Because God is a context and the self is a content held in that con-

text, a self cannot know God completely while remaining a self: a content cannot completely know its context without itself becoming total, final, and complete. It is the Veil again, now from the side of the one veiled. To enter even the process of knowing God, one must know and accept all that is in one's subjective, in its totality; "We must fully accept our animal, our child, our wild selves, as much as the wise essence that ultimately motivates us all". "To know God we must realize that we are God as embodied, as much as God is also out there, eternal, and ultimately Other". There I name this panentheism, not pantheism. *Pantheism* holds that God and the world are one and the same; *panentheism* holds that the world is in God, and that God also exceeds the world: the subjective whole contains and exceeds each finite self as the objective whole contains and exceeds each finite object.

And the ground has a character: it is love. In the IM love is defined as that which enables choice. Choice requires a range of possibilities, a selection, and a consequent actuality. If love is what enables choice, then love is what creates more potential; it is the potentiating of potential, potentiality applied to itself. As a vector it points toward the totality of all potential, which has just been identified with God. "God is love", I conclude there, "not as a poetic sentiment, but as a defined structural truth". *An Immanent Metaphysics* itself states the ground's mode of being. Divinity aligns with creation, not existence, and with the subjective, not the objective: "As such, the divinity of the soul is real, but it does not exist and it is not objective". *Third Resolutions* explains the sentence. "No scientific experiment can detect divinity, not because divinity is hidden but because existence is the wrong modality. Asking whether divinity “exists” is like asking whether a melody has a weight". "The sacred is real without being a thing in the world". The contemplative traditions of every religion agree that the divine is not a being among beings but the ground of being; the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart prayed God to rid him of God. The mystic who reports experiencing the ground of being is not hallucinating. "They are perceiving", in the immanent mode, "the same structural features that the philosopher identifies in the omniscient mode and that the creative artist

expresses in the transcendent mode". And *An Immanent Metaphysics* had already placed creation there: "Creation is unobservable, totally unique, and isomorphic with a totality of self (i.e., a concept of God)". The ground of being, then, is not beneath. It is the totality of the subjective, potentiality, love, met in practice and in relationship, above one's pay grade and as close as the next breath.

VII. The Transcendentals

The *transcendentals*, in the classical sense, are goodness, truth, and beauty: the three that the tradition held to belong to being as such. *On Re-Wilding Religion* ends its account of the ground with them: God is "the perfected eternal essence of all being, which is at once Good, True, and Beautiful". I treat the three as a foundational triple, one of the triples that express the modalities as ordered by the axioms, and so as distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable. *Third Resolutions* gives the three tests. Distinct: a true statement can be unkind, a good intention can rest on false premises, a beautiful form can serve a harmful purpose. Inseparable: truth without goodness is dangerous, knowledge wielded without care; goodness without truth is delusional, care based on false beliefs; beauty without either is decoration at best, seduction at worst. Non-interchangeable: knowing the correct answer does not make one caring, caring deeply does not make one's beliefs accurate, and elegance does not compensate for inaccuracy or cruelty.

The mapping I use throughout this book is that goodness has the nature of the transcendent, truth of the omniscient, and beauty of the immanent. It comes from the three connections of a self. *On Re-Wilding Religion* gives three structurally irreducible kinds of connection. Self to depth: from the surface of consciousness through the deep self toward what the traditions have called soul, spirit, or divinity; this connection is the transcendent. The asymptotic limit of the connection of self to depth is the total unity of the subjective. Self to world: from the personal center out-

ward toward the totality of the objective, the universe; this is the omniscient. Self to other: peerage, dialogue, presence, whose ultimate extent is not an infinite abstraction but personal intimacy, "the immanent, which is finite", "the irreducible between". "The early mystics were not imposing an arbitrary number on the nature of God; they were tracking the irreducible threefold character of the relation between self and being". If one connects between self and world, self and other, and self and God, and elects to have no artificial barriers in any of the three, one arrives at a practice of clearing the channel in all three ways, and "This practice of direct clarified contact is itself a practice of connection with truth, beauty, and goodness, understood as the essence of the three connection types respectively". Truth is the essence of the connection to world, and so omniscient; beauty of the connection to other, and so immanent; goodness of the connection to God, to depth, and so transcendent.

The three are zero-positive: each has a zero, which is its absence, and any positive degree above that zero, with no negative opposite below it. I have let go of dualism here, and so I do not need falsity as an absence of truth, badness as an absence of goodness, or ugliness as an absence of beauty, because these are all absences of connection: "there is zero truth, as falsity, but there are infinitely increasing levels of truthfulness, goodness, and beauty". "One can have a closed channel, and any degree of openness beyond that".

My *Third Resolutions in Western Philosophy*, in its chapter on the three, gives the same mapping in its own words: "Truth has the character of the omniscient modality. Truth is structural, repeatable, shareable". "Goodness has the character of the transcendent modality". "Beauty has the character of the immanent modality". "Beauty is relational". "It is fitting and contextually specific". In this chapter the three are considered as the essences of the three connections of a self, and the basis of consideration is the direction of each connection: toward depth, toward world, toward other. Taking goodness, truth, and beauty as the essences of the three connec-

tions of a self is the frame of the third person, in which goodness goes with the self, beauty with the other and the conversation, and truth with the world.

When the frame changes from one person to another, the three assignments turn together, one step along the cycle of Axiom II. In the first person, where the self is not an abstraction like the soul, goodness is immanent; beauty is omniscient, as a judgment one personally makes regarding how one thinks of another person; and truth is transcendent, as what applies as an abstraction beyond what one thinks. An everyday case shows the first-person frame. A friend shows me a painting she has just finished. Goodness is how I take part: whether I meet her and her work with care, here, in the act of looking and of speaking to her, and in this frame goodness is immanent. Beauty is the judgment I form of the painting, and of her in it, a judgment I make and hold as my own, and in this frame beauty is omniscient. Truth is the general standard beyond anything I happen to think about the painting, what holds of good painting whether or not I see it, and in this frame truth is transcendent.

In the second person, where the relationship between persons is primary, beauty is transcendent, because the emphasis is on the connection as a continuity, and continuity is held as transcendent; goodness is omniscient, as something one has to believe about oneself, as an idea, as a truth; and truth is immanent, as "that which is". A long conversation between two people who trust each other shows the second-person frame. What matters most in that conversation is the connection itself, kept unbroken across the hours, and that unbroken connection is the beauty of the conversation, transcendent in this frame. The goodness of each person is held as an idea about oneself, something one believes of oneself and keeps true to in the other's presence, and in this frame goodness is omniscient. And truth is simply what is there between the two of them, said and heard, "that which is", and in this frame truth is immanent. The first-person frame stands one step forward from the third-person frame along the cycle of Axiom II, and the second-person frame one step back.

In *Third Resolutions* I also give an alternate assignment under a different triple: the three channels of interaction, self to self, self to world, and self to other, in which the three are considered as the dimensions of a single act of choice. In that frame goodness is immanent, truth omniscient, and beauty transcendent, and the basis of consideration is the channel whose integrity each quality is: goodness the integrity of the channel of self to self, truth the integrity of the channel of self to world, and beauty the integrity of the channel of self to other. Seen from the first person, goodness stays immanent, and truth and beauty, which are conjugate, exchange: the first-person frame set out above has beauty omniscient and truth transcendent, and the frame of the three channels has truth omniscient and beauty transcendent.

Frame	**Basis of consideration**	**Goodness**	**Truth**	**Beauty**
Third person: the connections of a self (this chapter)	The direction of each connection: toward depth, toward world, toward other	Transcendent	Omniscient	Immanent
First person	The self as one acts, where the self is not an abstraction like the soul	Immanent	Transcendent	Omniscient
Second person	The relationship between persons, taken as primary	Omniscient	Immanent	Transcendent
The three channels of a single choice	The channel whose integrity each quality is, in one act of choice	Immanent	Omniscient	Transcendent

Each row is one frame; moving from the third-person row to the first-person row turns all three one step along the cycle of Axiom II, and moving from the third-person row to the second-person row turns all three one step back.

In this system a modality is assigned to a term only relative to the triple it is taken in and the frame from which it is considered. The correspondence table of *An Immanent Metaphysics* says of its rows that some "will shift depending on the mode of consideration", and a note to the aphorisms on meaning, purpose, and value adds that "The specific associations between these concepts and the modalities depend to some extent on the context of consideration in which they are used". Truth itself shows the point inside *An Immanent Metaphysics*. In the triple of truth, fact, and myth, "Truth has the modality of the immanent. “Fact has the modality of the omniscient. Myth has the modality of the transcendent” (2.24-3)". The same aphorism records the felt cost of knowing: "The more one comprehends this world (in terms of laws and facts) the less one finds significance and meaningfulness in life".

On every point about goodness, truth, and beauty that I need in this chapter, I say the same here as in my book *Third Resolutions* in Western Philosophy. The three are distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable in both. Both hold that connection to self or depth deepens goodness, connection to world deepens truth, and connection to others deepens beauty; *Third Resolutions* says so in as many words. Both hold that a fully effective choice has all three. "A fully effective choice has all three transcendental dimensions". It is true, resting on an accurate understanding of the situation; good, serving the genuine values of all parties affected; beautiful, fitting the specific moment with a rightness that goes beyond what logical analysis or moral principle can predict. "Remove any one and the choice is diminished". And both hold that truth and beauty pull apart under the ICT: they cannot both be perfected, so that the perfection of one is at the expense of the other, without their being opposites. Truth, in the triple of a choice, is characterized by symmetry, the same content regardless of context; beauty by continuity, an unbroken and contextually appropriate connection between the expression and its situation. Beauty carries continuity in the second-person frame given above, where the connection is primary and continuity is held as transcendent. "No single act, no single choice, no single expression can be simultaneously perfectly true (invari-

ant across all contexts) and perfectly beautiful (fitted to each specific context)". Because no single expression can be at once perfectly true and perfectly beautiful, art and science seem to pull in different directions. For the same reason, the most powerful human achievements hold art and science in tension: "the degree of integration is the measure of the achievement". For the same reason, effective choice is a skill and not a formula. The beauty component is unpredictable from prior logic, and the specific choice in the specific moment is an act of creativity that cannot be mechanized or delegated. *Third Resolutions* draws from the mapping, by Axiom I, that beauty, the right relation between self and other, is more fundamental than either truth or goodness, and that truth and goodness are conjugate; and it puts the priority of care in four words: "To compare is to care". *On Re-Wilding Religion* reaches the priority of care by another route. Axiology is co-originary with ontology and epistemology, and "There is no being without knowing and no knowing without caring".

VIII. The Catastrophic Theorem

“Either everything, at all scales of being, in all worlds, at all times, is sacred; or nothing is” (2.14-3). To negate the significance of any life is to negate the significance of all life.

The Catastrophic Theorem is a structural observation and not a moral injunction. In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I state the theorem at 2.14-3, and its warrant is in the same book: the general form of any catastrophic theorem, in note 1 to 2.14-3, together with the premise at 2.11-3 that everything in all domains is intrinsically significant. Chapter 22, at its section VII, met the theorem first, in the ethics, and gave that warrant there; my aphorisms on value support it further, as the next paragraphs show. Effectiveness, meaningfulness, and life are best realized when regarding all as sacred and significant.

The theorem's own text is fuller than the summary above. "The Catastrophic Theorem: To negate the significance (the meaningfulness and value) of any life, is to negate the significance of all life. Either everything, (at all scales of being, in all worlds, at all times) is sacred, or nothing is". And, after the sentence on effectiveness: "Heaven opens to all that know all is sacred. Hell imprisons all who think that nothing is sacred". My note to 2.14-3 in *An Immanent Metaphysics* gives the form of any catastrophic theorem: a derived statement that either every X is Y or there are no X which is Y.

The supports are my aphorisms on value in *An Immanent Metaphysics*. "All the universe values all experiences and creations equally; it has no favorites. Everything (all eventities in all domains) is/are intrinsically significant". An *eventity*, in my coinage, combines the meanings of an entity and an event; each interaction, comparison, and being is one. Experience and creation cannot not be meaningful, valuable, and purposeful. "Significance (meaningfulness) is zero positive. Everything (every perception and expression) has (cannot not have) significance". "In absolute essence, all values are equal. Each value mutually supports every other value on the same level of being". No single value excludes or precludes any other; "Only by having all values may one have any values". "Where considered as an absolute (actual, impersonal, objective), no particular scale of interaction is any more important, specific, or meaningful (purposeful or valued) than any other". And the reason for the clause at all scales, in all worlds, at all times: "Significance is scale, position, and direction invariant". It does not matter what size, what duration, how permanent or impermanent something may be; "The significance of a life does not depend on where they live, who they know, what they have, or what they do. Innate significance is independent of all state and function, worth and means". "It is possible and reasonable to value everything, to consider all life and all aspects of life as sacred". "All that is life, all that is alive, is valued and sacred".

I can try the Catastrophic Theorem as a thought experiment. Try to draw the line where significance stops: a person, a dog, a bee, a single cell, a stone. Every reason offered for leaving something out (it is small, it does not last, it does not know that it matters) applies also to some part of one's own life: one's life is small against the stars, it does not last, and much of it goes on without knowing itself. So wherever the line is drawn, it runs through oneself. The aphorism that significance is scale, position, and direction invariant rules out each of these reasons, and the theorem's form follows: either every life is significant, or none is.

The joining of the Great Mystery to the sacredness of all things is made in the aphorisms on panpsychism. The appearance of consciousness is defined "via a product of the degrees of the known, the unknown, and unknowable", and since that product "cannot ever be identically zero (and is therefore always positive for any subjectivity)", panpsychism, all as alive, as intentional, is everywhere applicable, at every scale. Panpsychism here is the sense of the aphorisms: consciousness as a property of interaction, whose appearance has a degree that is never zero. It is not the panpsychism of matter, which Chapter 25, section VII.3, sets aside because it attributes consciousness to matter rather than to interaction. "Everything from atoms to universes have non-zero and positive degrees of meaningfulness, purpose, and value" (2.53-3). So long as anything is partly unknown and partly unknowable to any perceiver, it has positive significance; and the Great Mystery guarantees that it is.

A pebble run through the product of the known, the unknown, and the unknowable shows how that guarantee works. Something of the pebble is known: its weight in the hand, its color, the stone it is made of. Its full history is unknown: which river turned it, and for how long. Its innermost nature is unknowable: what it is, apart from every comparison anyone can make of it. Each of the three degrees is above zero, so the product of the three is above zero, and the pebble, like everything else, has positive significance.

The theorem is a disjunction, and my later book says which side holds. *Third Resolutions* states that meaningfulness is structurally irremovable, and that the theorem, either everything is meaningful or nothing is, "resolves in the direction of meaningfulness". If everything is meaningful, then the impulse to recognize the sacred, to respond to depth, to reverence, to awe, is not a projection onto an indifferent universe but an accurate perception of a structural feature of reality; and the sacred is not a rare feature of special moments but a pervasive feature of reality as such, encountered more or less vividly depending on the quality of one's attention.

IX. Faith

All choice is uncertain. One can never know all the consequences that will result from one's least action. Reason can provide only a partial basis for effective choice. It is also necessary to make a careful and deep evaluation of the totality of one's feelings.

“Reason is when one uses a fullness and completeness (accuracy) of thinking as the primary basis of one's choices. Faith is when one uses a fullness and completeness (precision) of feeling as the primary basis of one's choices. No effective choice can be made only on the basis of reason or only on the basis of faith” (2.17-2 to 2.17-4). All natural choices involve some elements of both, typically in intimate mixture.

Faith is not blind. It is vision wide open. “Faith is an acceptance of potentiality and creativity rather than an ignorance of reality and actuality” (2.17-9). To have faith is to embrace the mythic rather than to reject the factual. To have faith is not to have certainty, but to allow trust; faith and reason are complementary: conjugates, not opposites. “Faith has no reason of its own, and yet all reason implies faith” (2.17-7).

The pairing of accuracy with precision is deliberate. An archery target shows the two measures. Accuracy is how near the arrows fall to the center; precision is how fine and consistent the grouping is, wherever it falls.

A tight group far from the center is precise and not accurate; a loose scatter around the center is accurate on average and not precise. The two are different measures of one act of shooting, as reason, the accuracy of thinking, and faith, the precision of feeling, are different measures of one act of choosing. The correspondence table of *An Immanent Metaphysics* places precision under the transcendent, with feeling and quality, and accuracy under the omniscient, with form and quantity, as it places faith under the transcendent and reason under the omniscient. The remaining aphorisms of the section complete the account. "When one is whole, healthy, knows fully (with clarity), and accepts unreservedly the totality of one's feelings and thoughts on all levels of being, then the choices which one makes in accordance with those feelings and thoughts will be at once wholly ethical and wholly effective". "To have faith in a world (universe) is to have wisdom, knowledge, peacefulness, and insight. To have faith in oneself is to have security, skill, creativity, and playfulness". "Faith cannot be constructed or possessed (2.17-3 to 2.17-8). Faith is not a commodity". Never finite or constrained, it is necessary to all commerce and creativity; it contributes to confidence and is involved in all practicality.

On Re-Wilding Religion gives faith a second definition, which the aphorisms of *An Immanent Metaphysics* already contain. Plato distinguished three forms of belief: *doxa*, opinion, the root of orthodoxy; *episteme*, reasoned knowledge, the root of epistemology; and *pistis*, which "has to do with the embodied, with a deeply intimate relationship to some real domain, some real reality". "Unfortunately, pistis was later translated as “faith” by some Christians into English, losing Plato's original sense". The three are assigned: "pistis as immanent, doxa as omniscient, and episteme as transcendent". "Faith is exactly not nominalist belief", nominalist belief being assent to a stated proposition, held apart from any lived relationship to what it names. In recent decades, faith came to be identified as maximally delusional belief; the real concept is almost the exact inverse: "Faith is an existential commitment. It is faith as livingness". Pistis "is the actual embodied cultivation of a capacity for relationship with reality, and an ongoing expansion of that". Skill in life is embodied faith: "So when

someone claims both that they have lived without faith and that they are skillful in life, they are in misunderstanding. The fact of their skill is embodied faith". It is one's willingness to put oneself and the things one loves at risk on the basis of cultivated capability; "It is not reckless". The two definitions are one faith seen from two sides. The aphorisms of *An Immanent Metaphysics* already say that faith in oneself is security, skill, creativity, and playfulness, and that faith is involved in all practicality; *On Re-Wilding Religion* develops that side under Plato's word, and assigns it to the immanent because it is practiced, where *An Immanent Metaphysics* assigns faith to the transcendent because it is felt. One further sense should be kept apart. *Third Resolutions* uses the word in the ordinary sense, belief without demonstration, when it says that its resolutions of freedom, immortality, and divinity are "neither scientific reductions nor articles of faith"; I ask for no belief without grounds, and neither of my definitions of faith is that.

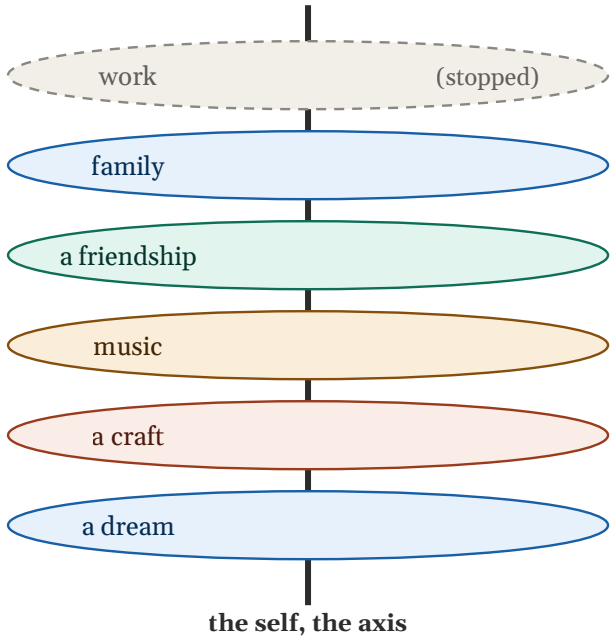
X. Safety

Safety is defined in terms of interaction, not in terms of prevention. Safety is not found in the ability to prevent something from happening. It is found in the potentiality to act regardless of what could happen or has happened. Safety originates from inside the self.

Creation is safe. “The feeling of safety is found in one's knowing of their freedom of choice” (2.183-2). One cannot become entrapped in a domain of one's own imagination. “It is always possible to transition to another world” (2.183-2). The core of self does not belong to any single domain; it is always part of the process of many domains. “The self is an axis upon which many worlds turn” (2.183-4).

A world, here, is a domain of interaction, and not a planet. A person confined to a hospital bed has lost most of the physical world that his days used to turn in: the work, the walks, the errands. He keeps the capacity to move into another world. A long conversation with a friend, a piece of

music, a problem in a craft he can still think through, each is a world in which he can be fully engaged, and the move into it is his to make. The hospital bed shows what it means that it is always possible to transition to another world.



The self as an axis upon which many worlds turn. When one world stops, the axis still turns the others, and the move into another of them is always possible.

"To be safe is not the same as to be protected" (2.183-7). To attain absolute protection requires absolute isolation (no interactions, no connectedness), which can never be obtained even in principle. Absolute security requires the absence of all love and life. Real safety is found only in the truth of one's ever-continuing ability to choose.

The section's remaining aphorisms join safety to the sacred. "There is no single domain or universe. No single domain (world) is more fundamental than any other". "In that choice is Truly Owned, all selves are ulti-

mately safe in all worlds. No physical boundaries can protect one from the innermost nature of spirit" (2.183-3 to 2.183-5). *Truly Owned* is my term, defined in the next section, for what cannot be taken away even in principle. The note to that aphorism reads: "One does not have to protect oneself from spirit. “There can be no Fear of God(des(es” (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, the section “Safety”))". The potentiality to transition to another world is Truly Owned, and "Safety is the stability and sacredness of that spiritual core of self. It is intrinsic to self; it cannot be found in any world and it cannot be taken away". "The greatest safety is in the potential to act, rather than in the prevention of possible events (2.183-6; *An Immanent Metaphysics*, the section “Safety”)". Behind this stands my denial of control. "No form of control is absolute; all process has some aspect of a cooperative nature. There is no control, there is only influence" (1.81-4). Ultimately there is never control of that which is internal to self; desire has no reason and cannot be permanently constrained; creation itself is not controllable. Safety cannot be prevention because prevention would be control, and there is none.

XI. True Ownership

The Law of True Ownership: none can take from you that which you truly own. If someone or something can take it away, even in principle, then it was never truly owned. “Those things which are not Truly Owned are not owned at all” (2.18-2).

Experience, choice, time, and validity are my examples in *An Immanent Metaphysics* of what is Truly Owned; elsewhere I add one's evolution and the three aspects of self. True ownership is not control. It is not commercial. One cannot acquire, give away, or trade it. A right refers to the potential to exercise any choice that is a direct enactment of true ownership. A privilege refers to a potential that requires the accommodation of another, willingly granted.

I can run the inventory on a concrete list. A house can be taken, by fire or by debt; it was not Truly Owned. A job can be taken by the one who gave it; a reputation, by the ones who hold it; health, by illness or by age. Even memories can be taken, by injury or by time. When the list has been struck through, the capacity to choose is left, and the capacity to choose cannot be taken, since a person living and conscious retains it even in a prison or locked into his own body, where the capacity to dream remains, as Chapter 22, section X, sets out. I can show the right and the privilege each in one example. Speaking my mind is a right: it is a direct enactment of what I truly own, my choice and my experience, and it needs no one's leave. Being listened to is a privilege: it requires that another make room for what I say, and only that person can grant it.

Self is always sovereign. “The nature of deity is within” (2.18-4). The being of self cannot be conditioned or constrained by anything external. No amount of external acceptance or validation will ever contribute to self-acceptance. “To feel peace, one must accept oneself totally, fully, and unconditionally” (2.18-5).

XII. Limitation and Freedom

Limitation is conjugate with freedom. Freedom has an intrinsic aspect that is limitation; limitation has an aspect that is freedom. “Never does a limitation occur without a freedom, and never does a freedom occur without a limitation” (2.19-5). One cannot "transcend" limitation but one can work with it, adding other levels, dimensions, and qualities.

The conjugacy of limitation and freedom, which lets one work with a limitation rather than "transcend" the limitation, is my alternative to both nihilism and absolutism. The unknowable is not a counsel of despair (nihilism: nothing can be known, so nothing matters). It is a structural fact that coexists with the known and the unknown, all three forming a foundational triple (Axiom III), of which the unknown is the most basic. The

sacred is not an escape from limitation (absolutism: the divine transcends all finitude) but the recognition that limitation and freedom together constitute the texture of being itself.

The section's other aphorisms give the unknown its positive value. "One cannot have freedom, but only give it. One does not own love or freedom; one may only participate in its flow and unboundedness". "Limitation is as necessary as freedom (beingness requires focus). Diversity, separateness, limitation, the unknown, and forgetfulness, are all to be valued as much as singularity, oneness, freedom, limitlessness, and knowing". "There is nothing (no eventity) absolutely free and there is nothing which is absolutely limited and fixed". "The limitations, patterns, and forms created or defined by the self are not limitations/patterns/forms of the self" (2.19-1 to 2.19-8). Self has being in many domains other than the one where its patterns and limitations are manifested. My own example of a limitation that frees is discipline: "Within the discipline of the path (a seeming limitation), a true freedom of life is found". And the unknown is constitutive of the self that knows. "Some degree of unconsciousness, unawareness, unknown, must always be present to ensure a separation of identity, individuality, and a uniqueness of one self" (2.71-1). Because some degree of the unknown must always be present in a self to keep that self separate and unique, the Mystery of the Subconscious is the most fundamental of the three Mysteries. The practical face of the Mystery of the Subconscious is wildness. "To be truly and vibrantly alive, some element of wildness, an absence of conditioning, constraint, and control, is necessary. When (and where) wildness ceases, the most vital and dynamic aspect of life and creation also dies" (1.66-15). The wild is "that place for which there is no map, and little understanding", where the subconscious rules more strongly than the conscious.

XIII. How to Engage

The definition at the head of this chapter asks for something you can try rather than something you can believe. The sacred here is not the supernatural. It is the recognition that reality has three aspects that matter, met in awe, in gratitude, and in love, and a sacred moment differs from an ordinary one only in the quality of attention brought to it. Take an ordinary object or an ordinary hour and bring all three attentions to it in turn, and notice what the quality of attention changes.

Then locate the three limits of knowing in your own case. The limit of the horizon is what lies beyond the reach of your perception. The limit of the infinitesimal is the scale at which your knowledge becomes indeterminate. The limit of the subconscious is what you do not know about yourself. I hold the third to be the most fundamental, and I hold that it is what the word soul refers to. Ask which of the three you spend your effort on.

Then take the conjugacy of limitation and freedom and use it on a constraint you resent. I hold that every limitation contains a freedom and every freedom a limitation. Name the freedom inside the constraint.

One inventory is worth making slowly. What is Truly Owned is what cannot be taken from you even in principle. List what you take yourself to own, and strike out everything that could be taken. What remains is what this account says is actually yours, and the remainder is shorter and stranger than most readers expect.

XIV. Summary

My account of the sacred and of the unknowable differs from other metaphysics in three ways, one for each modality from which the transcendent is usually approached. It does not dismiss the transcendent, as the reductive traditions do from the omniscient, concluding that what analysis cannot capture does not exist. It does not personalize it, as theology does from the transcendent. And it does not leave it ungrounded in

anything beyond the experience, as phenomenology (the study of experience as it is lived) does from the immanent. My account itself stands in the immanent, the relational ground from which the other two derive, consistent with both realism and idealism and a proponent of neither. It locates mystery precisely: the unknowable is a persistent class, found in being itself and, by the ICT, in comparison, structurally guaranteed to be present in every domain, and present not as a deficiency of knowing but as an intrinsic feature of comparison itself.

In *An Immanent Metaphysics* I ground the unknowable in being itself, in modality, and in the domain constants, and that grounding is complete on its own; the ICT is a second route to the same result, independent of the first. The location of the fixed line between the unknown and the unknowable at the speed of light for context and at the Planck constant for content is mine, in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, and it is a literal placement at two named constants of physics, not a figure of speech. The Catastrophic Theorem I state at 2.14-3, and its warrant is the general form of any catastrophic theorem, in note 1 to 2.14-3, together with the premise at 2.11-3 that everything is intrinsically significant; and my aphorisms on value support it: the universe has no favorites, significance is zero positive, all values are equal in absolute essence, significance is scale, position, and direction invariant, and the appearance of consciousness is never identically zero. With that warrant and these supports the theorem is a statement about significance, and my later book *Third Resolutions in Western Philosophy* says which horn holds.

Beside *An Immanent Metaphysics*, this chapter draws on two of my later books: *Third Resolutions in Western Philosophy*, which is written against the Western canon, problem by problem, and calls the system the Epistemic Process; and *On Re-Wilding Religion*, a work of theology written from the system. Both map the transcendentals as goodness transcendent, truth omniscient, and beauty immanent, and section VII states that mapping as the mapping of the third-person frame, with the first-person and second-person frames beside it, the three frames being one turn of the cycle of Axiom II; this is an instance of the rule that a modality belongs to a term

only relative to a triple and the frame from which it is considered. The void as a descent into nihilism, and the possibility of getting stuck in it, is treated structurally, contemplatively, and in the dynamics of depression, which is where *An Immanent Metaphysics* gives the descent its account.

I have said in this chapter where the Mystery is, in three places, one of them oneself, and that the acceptance of it is where freedom is found. Saying where a mystery is locates the mystery without dispelling it, and so the mystery remains a mystery. What is to be done with the structure is the subject of Chapter 27, "Spirituality, Practice, and the Felt Dimension", which gives the practice. The disposition that follows from the structure, which is to attend to what can be known without assuming that what can be known is all there is, and to attend to what exceeds knowing without abandoning the discipline of structure, which is to say to hold both: the known and the unknowable, limitation and freedom, reason and faith, in the same act of living, is stated in *An Immanent Metaphysics* as a path of right action defined by win-win choice, in its words the claim that "It is always possible to choose in a manner that is win-win for all involved". The account of spirituality, of soul, and of the felt dimension belongs to the chapter that follows this one. The path itself, and the practice by which the disposition is lived, belong earlier in the series, to the chapters of Volume II on effective choice, on the self of choice, and on choosing well, and to Chapter 22, on what the two principles demand in practice. This chapter is the structure alone, and it is the structure that the account of practice in Chapter 27 builds on.

I hold that everything is sacred or nothing is. Everything before this sentence in the chapter has been the work of making it mean something exact. The sacred is not a being and not a place. It is the recognition that reality has three aspects that matter, and it is met in the quality of attention that a person brings to an ordinary moment. Nothing needs to be added to the world for the sacred to be there. Something needs to be added to the attention.

Mystery is not diminished by knowing. The frontier of the unknown recedes as science advances, and the unknowable does not move, because the limit is not a limit of instruments but a limit of comparison, and every act of knowing is an act of comparison. The line between the known and the unknown is soft and is moved every year. The line between the unknown and the unknowable is fixed, and *An Immanent Metaphysics* locates it: the speed of light for context, the Planck constant for content. To call the unknowable a persistent class rather than a temporary embarrassment means that the line between the unknown and the unknowable is fixed.

The void does not survive the analysis. Structurally there is nowhere for it to be, since wherever attention moves it finds substance, and absolute nothingness would have to be perfectly symmetric and perfectly continuous at once, which the theorem forbids. Contemplatively the formless is mistaken for the empty, and the mistake costs the practitioner the axis on which the ultimate can be experienced as loving. Lived, the void is real, and it is depression, and even there the way out is the one the Catastrophic Theorem requires: the recognition that other potentialities for significance exist. The void is thus refused three times over, and refused in a way that concedes everything true in the experience of it.

What is left in the place where a foundation was expected is not a foundation. There is no single ground of being and no universe, and the ground is met in practice rather than found in theory, in a relationship with reality that is I-thou and not I-it. Its character is love, love being what enables choice and therefore what creates more potential. The unqualified why is answered there and not elsewhere, tacitly, and in the care that the asking already implies.

And the practical residue of the whole is small enough to carry. Faith is vision open, not blind, and it is the conjugate of reason rather than its enemy. Safety is the potentiality to act, which is why it cannot be taken away and why prevention was never the right place to look for it. What cannot be taken away even in principle is what is truly owned, and choice is on that list. Limitation and freedom are conjugates, so that the discipline of a path is a freedom and the unknown is a condition of being

someone in particular. The self, at its core, is sovereign and ultimately safe, truly owned by choice rather than owning it, not because nothing bad can happen but because the capacity to choose cannot be taken away. What I have set out in this chapter is the structural account, and I build the account of the practice, in Chapter 27, on the structural account.

KEY CONCEPTS IN THIS CHAPTER

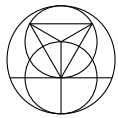
- **The sacred**: that which is considered ultimately meaningful; not supernatural but structural, the recognition that reality has three aspects that matter. Met in awe (a response to the omniscient), gratitude (a response to the transcendent), and the love one feels for another person (a response to the immanent, the relational care within the domain; love itself, as what enables choice, has the nature of the transcendent). A sacred moment differs from an ordinary one only in the quality of attention. Placed under the transcendent in the correspondence table of *An Immanent Metaphysics*; cannot be engineered.
- **The three modalities**: the omniscient (the view from outside; structural, describable), the immanent (the view from inside; participatory, relational), and the transcendent (the view from beyond; creative, exceeding every frame). Distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable (Axiom III); the immanent most fundamental (Axiom I); cycling by precedence of class over instance (Axiom II).
- **The Great Mystery**: the unknowable as well as the unknown (2.72-1): inherently inexplicable but not paradoxical. The foundation from which reason arises. Not finite; not diminished by knowing. Knowing can affect the unknown but cannot affect the unknowable.
- **The known, the unknown, and the unknowable**: a foundational triple grounded in being itself. The unknown is the most basic. No firm line between known and unknown; a fixed logical line between unknown and unknowable, located by the speed of light (context) and the Planck constant (content).

- **The three Mysteries**: the limits of knowing are three: the Mystery of the Horizon (macroscopic; omniscient), the Mystery of the Infinitesimal (microscopic; transcendent), and the Mystery of the Subconscious (mesoscopic; immanent; "that quality of which oneself is"), the last being the most fundamental.
- **The Veil of Secrecy**: the omniscient cannot contain or observe the transcendent; it can only be that the transcendent perceives the omniscient, never the reverse. Its positive complement: from the immanent the transcendent becomes accessible; the mystery is held in practice, not in theory.
- **The void**: what is left when form is taken away. Structurally there is none: wherever attention moves one finds substance, and absolute nothingness is incoherent. Contemplatively the formless is not the empty: love, care, value, and potentiality are formless and not nothing. Lived, the void is depression, a cessation of energy that moves in no direction; and even from it there is a way out.
- **The unqualified why**: the question why anything at all. A why is transcendent, relative to a self, and answered in possibility; the ultimate why of everything is answered, tacitly, by love, and the asking already implies care. The omniscient cannot justify the transcendent.
- **The ground of being**: there is no single fundamental ground and no universe; the transcendent cannot be contained within the omniscient. The ground is met in practice, in an I-thou relationship with reality. Formally, God is the totality of the subjective and of potentiality, which is love; the divinity of the soul is real but does not exist and is not objective, the soul here being the transcendent aspect of self, a pure formless quality, which the chapter on the practice defines in full.
- **Catastrophic Theorem**: either everything is sacred or nothing is. Significance denied to any life is significance denied to all life. Stated at 2.14-3 of *An Immanent Metaphysics*; its warrant is in the same book: the general form of any catastrophic theorem (note 1 to 2.14-3) with the premise that everything is intrinsically significant (2.11-3); supported

by the aphorisms on value (no favorites, significance zero positive, all values equal, significance scale invariant); resolved in the direction of meaningfulness.

- **The transcendentals**: goodness, truth, and beauty as a foundational triple. Mapping used in this book: goodness transcendent, truth omniscient, beauty immanent (the essences of the connections to depth, world, and other), which is the third-person frame. In the first person, one step forward along the cycle of Axiom II: goodness immanent, beauty omniscient, truth transcendent. In the second person, one step back: goodness omniscient, beauty transcendent, truth immanent. A modality is assigned relative to the triple and the frame from which it is considered. Zero-positive (each has a zero, its absence, and any positive degree above it, with no negative opposite); a fully effective choice has all three; truth and beauty cannot both be perfected, by the ICT.
- **Faith**: fullness and completeness (precision) of feeling as basis for choice. Not blind but vision open. Not certainty but trust. Conjugate with reason, not its opposite.
- **Pistis**: Greek, one of Plato's three forms of belief with doxa (opinion) and episteme (reasoned knowledge); translated as faith, losing its sense. The embodied cultivation of a capacity for relationship with reality; existential commitment; skill in life is embodied faith. Immanent.
- **Safety**: defined by potentiality to act, not prevention. Originates inside the self. The self is an axis upon which many worlds turn. The stability and sacredness of the spiritual core of self; there can be no Fear of God.
- **True Ownership**: that which cannot be taken away. Experience, choice, time, validity (my examples in *An Immanent Metaphysics*); also one's evolution and the three aspects of self. Self is always sovereign; Self is Truly Owned by Choice, not the reverse.

- **Limitation ↔ Freedom**: conjugates, not opposites. Every limitation contains a freedom; every freedom contains a limitation. The unknown and forgetfulness are to be valued as much as knowing; some wildness is necessary to be alive.



Chapter Twenty-Seven

Spirituality, Practice, and the Felt Dimension

Soul, Enlightenment, and the Life These Principles Ask For

ABSTRACT

The preceding chapter gave the structure. It defined the sacred as the recognition that reality has three aspects that matter, established the unknowable as a persistent class, and set out the void, the unqualified why, the ground of being, the transcendentals, the Catastrophic Theorem, faith, safety, true ownership, and the conjugacy of limitation and freedom. This chapter is about what is made of that structure in a life.

The words are given the meanings of *An Immanent Metaphysics* first. Spirituality is the integration of a world into oneself: perceptive, and therefore subjective, always found and never made, referring to what is within the self, and having no name. Religion is the integration of oneself into a world: expressive, and therefore objective, always made and never found, referring to what is outside the self, and always named. Neither can be escaped, since no life is lived without perception or without expression, and a named philosophy is therefore a religion. Mysticism is placed alongside them as one of six paths whose integration is a metaphysics, which is why a metaphysics is not the opposite of a mysticism but contains one. From that placement I state my position on whether the system is itself a religion. It cannot be just a religion, since religion is one of the six paths and the metaphysics stands at the union of all six; it does provide the core of the inner mysticism of any religion; and, because knowledge not embodied in community life does not pass between the generations, any teaching of this kind must either become core to at least

one long lasting religion or become a set of practices that carries the teaching forward. It is not a religion, and it can function as the core of one, of several, or of all of them. I ask you to believe nothing. The soul is the transcendent self, a pure formless quality without size, composition, or locus, not observable and out of reach of science, and it is what the Mystery of the Subconscious refers to. Enlightenment is to become full of light, which is neither escape nor completion but full and balanced consciousness in all three modalities within a world, approached asymptotically and never wholly attained.

On the felt dimension, *An Immanent Metaphysics* says of itself that it can convey understanding but not knowing, that its aphorisms are points of departure for meditation, and that only a synthesis of intuition and intellect gives a true knowledge of the nature of being. At that point the chapter takes up a question the structure raises about itself, which is how a system derived from first principles stands to the inquiry, intuition, and feeling by which any such structure is found, and answers it with the ordinary distinction between a proof and its discovery, on the analogy of a scientific method, an immanent process, becoming scientific knowledge, an omniscient one. Then I set out what practice can and cannot do. States of mind and body, a content of experience, can be attained by effort; emotional and spiritual dynamics, a context of experience, cannot, so that joy, happiness, and love can be nurtured but never produced on demand. The practice itself is integration, the taking in of the world's discontinuity without loss of wholeness, and its direction is inward. The chapter is written to be read alone. Every term it inherits from the structural account is restated where it is first used here.

Terms Carried In from the Structural Account

In this chapter I continue Chapter 26, and I carry in from Chapter 26 the terms that I restate in this section. In the Immanent Metaphysics (hereafter the IM) there are three *modalities*, three fundamental ways of relating to any domain, a domain being any world or field of interaction taken as a whole. The *omniscient* is the view from outside: structural, ob-

jective, describable, already the case. The *immanent* is the view from inside: participatory, relational, present and unfolding. The *transcendent* is the view from beyond: creative, generative, exceeding every frame. The three are distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable. Two properties of any comparison are used below. *Symmetry* is sameness of content across a difference of context, and its complement, *asymmetry*, is difference of content with difference of context. *Continuity* is an unbroken connection without gap, and its failure is *discontinuity*. The *Incommensuration Theorem* holds that the two cannot both be perfected in one comparison, which is why perfect consciousness is only approached and never reached.

Four terms of the structural account recur here in the words of *An Immanent Metaphysics*. The *unknowable* is what cannot be known even in principle, as distinct from the unknown, which is not yet known; the *Great Mystery* is the unknowable together with the unknown, inherently inexplicable but not therefore paradoxical, and it is that from which all reason and reasonableness arise. The *Mystery of the Subconscious* is the limit of knowing that falls in one's own subjective self, "that quality of which oneself is", and it is the most fundamental of the three limits of knowing. What is *Truly Owned* is what cannot be taken away even in principle, experience, choice, time, and validity being my examples. And *limitation and freedom* are conjugates rather than opposites, so that no limitation occurs without a freedom and no freedom without a limitation. The full derivations of all of these are given in the companion chapter, "The Sacred, the Void, and the Great Mystery" (Chapter 26).

I. Spirituality, Religion, Soul, and Enlightenment

What does a life lived from this structure look like, and what can practice do in it?

I.1. Spirituality and Religion

Before anything can be said of a life lived from this structure, the words spirituality and religion have to be given the meanings of *An Immanent Metaphysics*. "Spirituality relates to the integration of a world into oneself, while religion relates to the integration oneself into a world" (2.55-1). *Spirituality* is about how one integrates the experiences of one's life into oneself, how one reflects upon and learns from the events of one's days; it is a philosophy about the role that a world plays within oneself. *Religion* is about how one expresses, together with others, for the common good, in the social and natural environment in which one lives; it is a philosophy about the role that oneself plays within a world. The defining difference is that spirituality is a perceptive, and therefore subjective, process, and religion an expressive, and therefore objective, process. "One feels and knows one's spirituality, but describes, defines, understands, and expresses one's religion. Spirituality is about being, whereas religion is about doing" (2.55-2). Spirituality is always found and never made; religion is always made and never found. "Spirituality always refers to what is inside (within) the self and has no name, whereas religion always refers to what is outside (without) the self and is always named" (2.55-4). One can join a religion; one cannot join a spirituality. Spirituality has no name; only religions have names. "A named philosophy is a religion. If a philosophy (way of life) has neither name nor a socially recognized form, it is, in essence, spiritual (2.55-4)".

Neither can be escaped. In that life cannot be lived without perception, one cannot not be to some degree spiritual; in that life cannot be lived without expression, one cannot not be to some degree religious. "There can be no spirituality without a self (soul). There can be no world without a religion" (2.55-8).

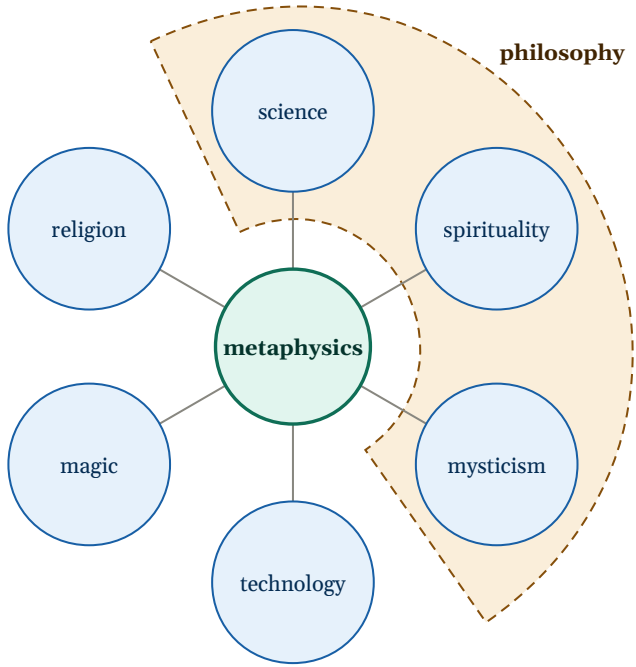
The depth of each is a matter of capacity. "The depth of one's spiritual nature is proportional to the capacity and ability to accept and integrate all experience" (2.55-9). The depth of one's religious nature is proportional to the capacity to integrate personal expressions and choices into the world and the community.

What the divine is to a self follows from the same pairing. Worship is not respect: worship is the behavior of one who believes there is some irreducible difference in the basic nature of the being of self and the being of what is worshiped; respect assumes a basic sameness. "The imperfect and the temporary are as important, as valued, and as valuable as the perfect and the eternal" (2.55-11). "All of life is valid. The validity of one's own life is intrinsic; it is Truly Owned and cannot be diminished or taken away". "Deity (spirit, soul) acts only in a personal manner; never in a social one. To be truly spiritual is to trust oneself and one's own experience (2.55-12 to 2.55-13)". Theology is organized thinking about the nature of the divine and of the relationship of self with the divine. "The highest spirituality (divinity, enlightenment) is within. The inner nature of self is inherently good" (2.55-13). *On Re-Wilding Religion* adds the other half of the pairing. To be spiritual but not religious leaves one with a first-person solo-spiritual life devoid of what can be cultivated in community, "yet another form of lonely and indifferent isolationism. Spirituality must be bound to religion, and religion is always one of community".

I.2. Mysticism

Mysticism is placed as well. The totality of the relationship between self and reality is understood in terms of six paths: spirituality, religion, science, technology, mysticism, and magic. "Philosophy is a combination of science, spirituality, and mysticism. Metaphysics is the integration (and unifying basis) of all six paths into a common whole" (1.91-2). The greatest ideas of an age have equal components of all three: a scientific perspective, in discipline, rigor, and clarity of thinking; spirituality, in high degrees of acceptance and openness, a beginner mind; and "deep in-

sight, intuition, and the qualities of feeling, dreaming and the unconsciousness of a mystic, as much as it does of thought and work". Mysticism itself is "a way of perceiving which begins with the omniscient modality (body technique), transitions to the transcendent modality (diffusion of self), and completes with the immanent modality (realization/enlightenment)". So a metaphysics is not the opposite of a mysticism; it contains one, as it contains a science and a spirituality.



the center joins all six and is not one of them

The six paths, with metaphysics at their union. Philosophy, the dashed region, combines science, spirituality, and mysticism. What lives at the union of a set is not a member of that set: the center is not one of the six circles, which is the whole of the argument of section III.1 that the metaphysics cannot be just a religion.

I.3. The Soul

The *soul* is one of the three meanings of the word self. "Soul; (Transcendent Self): refers to that which is purely internal, subjective, and which consists of a pure formless quality" (2.51-7). Mind is the immanent self, the boundary and dynamics between the internal subjective quality and the external objective form; body is the omniscient self, the objective symbol projected into a world. "The soul of self IS potentia, choice, and desire", potentia being the Latin word for potentiality. The soul does not have size, composition, or locus. The soul is integral; it cannot be analyzed, decomposed, or considered in terms of parts. "Transcendent self (soul) is free, undefined, and indefinable" (2.51-13). Only the body has structure; the soul has only quality, without pattern. "Soul is not observable. “Soul is out of reach as a subject of science, technology, or experiment” (2.51-14)". No amount of knowledge about the body equates to any knowledge about the soul. "As subjective context, soul is, soul is everywhere (soul has no position, location, or structure of being), and soul is everywhere unique" (2.51-16). Its essence is a specific and exact quality, a color or a timbre, which I call its signature pattern. The exact quality of the soul, which I call the soul's signature pattern, is what the Mystery of the Subconscious refers to: "that quality of which oneself is". Among the three limits of knowing that Mystery is the immanent one; among the three aspects of self, what it refers to, the soul, is the transcendent one. And it is what the resolution of divinity is about. My three resolutions of the concerns of religious philosophy are that the inner self, the soul, is chosen and free, while the outer self, the body and world, is causal and fixed, with change between them; that the soul is atemporal, and immortality is an isomorph of timelessness; and "That the nature of divinity is an isomorph of the innermost nature of soul and is real". An *isomorph* is the same structure in a different medium.

The first resolution answers the old question of free will: am I free, if my body obeys the laws of physics? Whoever asks the question assumes that the self is one thing, wholly inside the causal order or wholly outside

it. My resolution is that the inner self, the soul, is chosen and free, while the outer self, the body and the world, is causal and fixed, with change between them. I take the step from the structure of the self. The soul is the transcendent self, and the transcendent is the modality of potentiality and choice; the body is the omniscient self, and the omniscient is the modality of lawful structure; and mind, the immanent self, is where the one meets the other, as change. So the body obeys physics and the soul is free, and neither fact cancels the other, because they are facts about two aspects of one self, which are distinct and inseparable.

The second resolution answers the question whether I survive death. Whoever asks the question assumes that survival is continuation in time: more moments after the last one. My resolution is that the soul is atemporal, and immortality is an isomorph of timelessness. I take the step from the same structure of the self. The soul is the transcendent self, and the soul has no position, location, or structure of being, in time as in space; what has no position in time has no last moment in it. So the immortality of the soul is timelessness, and not endless duration: the structure that endless duration has in time, carried into a medium that has no time, which is no position in time at all, and not more time.

The third resolution answers the question whether the divine is real. Whoever asks the question assumes that to be real is to exist as an object somewhere, findable by observation. My resolution, in my own words, is "That the nature of divinity is an isomorph of the innermost nature of soul and is real". Again I take the step from the structure of the self. The innermost nature of soul is transcendent, a quality and not an object; divinity has the same structure at the scale of the whole, as the totality of the subjective; and what is transcendent is real without existing, since existence is the omniscient modality.

Hence, once more, the divinity of the soul is real, does not exist, and is not objective; and, as I state in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, "It is an assertion of this metaphysics that the ultimate innermost nature of self/ soul is good".

I.4. Enlightenment

Enlightenment is defined without escape. "The nature of enlightenment is to become full of light. To be full of light one must have clarity and be clear" (2.56-8). The purification and clarification of self allows the divine nature of the innermost self to shine through. "Reality and Self are inseparable, regardless of one's level of spiritual evolution or enlightenment". "Enlightenment is a full realization of the nature of life, in all worlds. It has little to do with 'departure from the cycle of life'" (2.56-9). One does not transcend self or world, enlightenment is not escapism, so much as one evolves with and within; there is always a life and a context of life, however evolved one may be. Nor is it ever complete. In that perfect consciousness and pure spirit, as perfect continuity, are conjugate with actuality, which is symmetry and therefore some discontinuity, "there can be no purely undivided (whole) consciousness, only the asymptotic approach of such". And its structure is the three modalities in their fullness. In any event of dreaming, and in all dynamics of life, three natures of self are involved: the dreamer self, which creates the stage, omniscient; the dreamed self, the character on the stage, immanent; the dreaming self, apart from both, with its being in another world altogether, transcendent. "In any domain, these three aspects of self are intrinsic, always implicit (2.61-2). They are Truly Owned". "To come to full and balanced consciousness in all three aspects, all three modalities of being, is to be, and become, enlightened, within the context of that world" (2.61-4). That sentence is my own statement, in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, of the sacred as the three modalities encountered. The sacred, on the account given in the companion chapter, is the recognition that reality has three aspects that matter, the omniscient, the immanent, and the transcendent, met in awe, in gratitude, and in love; that account is set out in "The Sacred, the Void, and the Great Mystery" (Chapter 26), section I. To be conscious in all three at once, within a world, is enlightenment there. Happiness, I add there, cannot be sought; "One cannot look for happiness; one must remain receptive to it".

II. The Felt Dimension and the Practice

The IM is not only to be understood. *An Immanent Metaphysics* says so in its instructions for reading it. It "represents a personal search and research into those concepts believed to be of maximum value in understanding key areas of metaphysics and philosophy", and its aphorisms are "points of departure for deeper consideration, meditation, and evolution". It is not an attempt to convince anyone of anything; readers looking to be convinced "will need to do their own work to determine, prove, and validate their own ideas of truth". The sections one chooses to read "should be read very slowly and with total feeling and thoughtfulness". "Approach each statement with full attention and when you are otherwise at peace of mind". "It is a good practice to meditate for a short interval both before and after attempting to read any portion of this book" (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, the section “How to Read this Book”). And: "Due to the integrative nature of this metaphysics, some of the deeper and more mystical aspects and implications will only become apparent on multiple meditative reflections and re-readings". It also says what it cannot do, distinguishing understanding, which can be conveyed, from knowing, which is one's own. "Due to the nature of communication, this book can only convey understanding; it cannot convey knowing. The reader must (and will) already have a knowing of innate being, to or from which no text (such as this one) could ever add or diminish" (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, the section “Knowledge and Understanding”).

The essay in *An Immanent Metaphysics* on the observation of metaphysics makes the same claim from the other side. "Metaphysics is at once the most abstract and theoretical form of study imaginable, and yet also the most concrete and practical form of knowledge possible" (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, the essay “The Observation of Metaphysics”). Its principles apply to every choice made by everyone, everywhere, and "In that choices are involved in all aspects of life, a true knowledge of metaphysics is inherently and eminently practical". They apply to any assertion of experience "regardless of how rarified, special, spiritual, or mystical that experi-

ence may be". And they cannot be reached by one faculty alone. Some things can only be known by personal experience, by a non-reasoned, non-intellectual direct intuition of the nature of nature; others can only be known by analytic and abstract methods. "Neither empiric or analytic knowledge by itself is enough to completely understand the essence of the nature of experience. Only a complete synthesis of intuition and intellect can provide a true knowledge of the nature of being". "Therefore, to be fully effective, personal experience, intuition, and deep insight must be combined with the techniques of analysis and logic" (*An Immanent Metaphysics*, the essay "The Observation of Metaphysics"). *On Re-Wilding Religion* describes the system at its Chapter 6, "The Rosetta Stone", section II, "The A/B/C Model", where the system is given the name A and set against C, an existing wisdom tradition, and B, the correspondence literature that mediates between them. Of A I say there, "A is not a tradition", and then I describe it as "a formal system", "derived from first principles, expressed in precise language, and structured so as to be verifiable independently of any particular cultural inheritance", whose content "corresponds to the deepest insights of multiple traditions, because it addresses the same foundational structures that those traditions discovered experientially". The formal system and the experiential traditions meet in the same structures; the one derives what the others found.

A question follows from that description, and the answer belongs here rather than in a note. If the system is a formal system derived from first principles, what place do inquiry, intuition, and feeling have in it? The answer is the ordinary distinction between a proof and its discovery. A derivation describes the finished structure and the ground on which it rests; an inquiry describes how a structure is found. The two descriptions answer different questions, so they are not in competition, and both are true, in that order. The Immanent Metaphysics as it now stands is derived from first principles.

Intuition does not supply a derivation. It supplies the passion, the time, and the energy under which the means of a derivation can be found, and the finding is afterwards a matter of work. Insights found in that way

are logically co-supporting, each standing in a relation to the others such that the whole is better founded than any of its parts taken alone, which is the ordinary mark of a structure that has been found rather than assembled.

I put the point by an analogy with science. The scientific method is an immanent process, something done, participatory, present and unfolding. Scientific knowledge is omniscient content, a body of theories that can be stated, inspected, and checked from outside. The one eventually becomes the other, and no one holds that a theory is the less derived for having been arrived at by people working over time. A metaphysics is the same, and the movement from inquiry to derivation is that movement.

The distinction between a proof and its discovery matters here for a particular reason. A reader who takes a derivation for the history of its finding will look for a first principle held before the inquiry began and will not find one. A reader who takes the history for the whole story will treat the structure as the report of one person's experience and will not test it, when the structure is offered to be tested.

The felt relation to the Mystery is set out in the essay of *An Immanent Metaphysics* on the origins of worlds, the one place in that book where Mystery, acceptance, and limitation and freedom are joined in a single argument. The popular notions of the Big Bang and of a creation event agree in one implication: that all of creation happened once, very long ago, and very far from the here and now, and that nothing can be personally added to it. I give the reason the idea is held. "In that creation, by definition and in its essence, is neither observable nor repeatable, it is also inherently unknowable, illogical, unreasonable, and unpredictable. As may be expected, many people fear the unknown and the unknowable, and anything else which is regarded as capricious, arbitrary, or random" (1M3). So creation and personal creativity are disowned, placed as far away from the here and now as possible, and with them the responsibility for one's own choices. Against this: "True creativity, and creation, is, and must be, inherent in all choice". "Regardless of how much one may know and may see, there will always also be the unknown and unknow-

able" (1M8). In recognizing that love is also, in its essence, inherently and naturally unrepeatable, illogical, unreasonable, and unpredictable, one may transcend the emotion of fear and acknowledge its larger basis in the potentiality of love. "As such, in the acceptance (spirituality) of the unknown and unknowable (of awe and of Mystery), there is freedom from limitation and potentiality to enrich the quality of life". "Like responsibility, creation is ongoing, participatory, and a freedom from limitation" (1M8; 1M9). In my own words, the thesis of the essay on the origins of worlds is that the acceptance of the Great Mystery is spirituality, and that this acceptance is where limitation becomes freedom.

What can and cannot be practiced is stated in the aphorisms on joy. Connection, continuity, and communion are cooperative processes and cannot be forced, only strengthened, so "one cannot force, guarantee, or ensure an experience of joy. “One's ability to experience joy is proportional to the strength of one's willingness to remain present in the potentialities of the unknown” (2.47-9)". Mental and physical states, a content of experience, can be attained as the target of a goal driven activity; "They can be achieved with practice and effort". Emotional and spiritual dynamics, a context of experience, cannot be attained or realized as the target of any goal driven activity, technology, process, or technique; "They cannot ever be achieved by any amount of practice and effort". "Joy, happiness, and love, cannot ever be a goal. They cannot be made, they can only BE". "That which has the aspect of the transcendent cannot be conditioned. No religion, tradition, (or practice thereof), no technology (or magic), can ever specifically 'create', force, or guarantee, that one will experience joy, bliss, satisfaction, or happiness, or that one will not ever experience pain, suffering, sudden change, or loss" (2.47-11 to 2.47-12). What practice can do is nurture: an increase of influence, not a condition of control. "Spirituality (acceptance) and the enactment of love (nurturance) are enabling (increase the potentiality) for one to experience increased joy" (2.47-12).

The practice itself is integration, and I call the life that practices it soulful. The being of the world is realized, as actuality, in symmetry and discontinuity; the being of the self, as potentiality, in continuity and asym-

metry. The more that one lives a worldly life, as in business, the more perfectly one must practice symmetry, as in government, and the more one must eventually find extremes of discontinuity, disconnectedness and isolation; "The more that one lives a soulful life (in hermitage), the more perfectly one must practice continuity (as equanimity), and the more that one must eventually find greater and greater extremes of asymmetry (messianic enlightenment)". *Messianic enlightenment*, in that sentence, names the extreme of asymmetry on the soulful side: an enlightenment so singular that it sets the one who has it apart from everyone else. To the extent that one is well connected to the deep world, its discontinuity is carried inward toward the self; when the self can accept and integrate that experience and remain whole, one will be at peace. "Integration is the effective practice of spirituality" (2.48-5). When the experience of the deep world cannot be integrated, the self becomes disconnected and isolated, and the experience of the world becomes one of pain and suffering; so the development of one's spiritual qualities reduces suffering. I add why the world must look like suffering. Perception and worldly existence are defined by symmetry and discontinuity, and pain is defined in terms of discontinuity, so it must appear, as a literal fact, that all the experience of any world is one of pain; "Joy, comfort, and connectedness (continuity), although these are equally Real, cannot be seen or known objectively (literally/factually); they must always be (seem to be) invisible, unseen, and subjective (as a part of the Self)". A toothache shows why joy, comfort, and connectedness stay unseen. One notices the one tooth that aches and never the thirty-one that do not; the news reports the bridge that fell and never the thousands that stood. The ache and the fall are breaks, discontinuities, and a break is what perception picks out; the teeth that do not ache and the bridges that stand are continuity, which is equally real and does not show. The direction of the practice is inward. "Bring awareness inward to increase significance in life". "When the nature of soul works in divine, direct, and intimate cooperative (loving) participation with all of life, optimum significance is attained" (2.48-9). The meaningfulness of life is "to live well and fully": well, a high degree of internal integrity of self;

fully, a high degree of connectedness between self and reality. "Spirit is known best by (divinity only asks for) both love and gratitude" (2.23-15). Love gives potentiality to the world; gratitude receives it; "The action of love and gratitude is the action of spirituality, of connecting oneself with the divine".

An Immanent Metaphysics collects the practice into aphorisms of its own, under the heading of an aesthetic basis, saying that its principles, "when applied as a practice, result in a philosophy with a strong aesthetic basis in maturity and wisdom". To be truly effective in life, one needs to be able: "To desire choice, rather than just comfort or security". "To deeply feel, as well as to quickly think". "To focus on how one already has freedoms, rather than on what are one's (seeming) limitations". "To focus on the sacred, rather than on just the mundane". "To focus on the myths, rather than on just the facts". "To focus on the unknowable, rather than on just the known". "To focus on attaining joy, rather than on just avoiding pain" (2J).

My later books say the same of the system as a whole. *On Re-Wilding Religion*, listing goodness, truth, and beauty and animal, mind, and soul among the triples that express the modalities, notes that its concepts will be construed as abstract, because abstraction is a process of the omniscient mode and pedagogy habitually works in that mode; yet there is also a mythopoetic knowing (a knowing made through myth and story), as from gnosis (knowledge by direct inner acquaintance), which takes the content of the IM as metaphorical and allegorical. The system "should not merely be understood but also felt (immanent) and actually lived, related to, from, and as (transcendent). Learning the Immanent Metaphysics is largely an intrinsic art". The frame of that sentence is the triple of the ways a learner holds a teaching, understood, felt, and lived, in which understanding by abstraction is the omniscient member and being felt is the immanent member; in the triple of thought, feeling, and emotion, *An Immanent Metaphysics* states at 2E11 that "feeling is transcendent, emotion is immanent, and thought is omniscient". Of my own method I say this: the method does not replace the lived encounter with freedom, mortality, and

the sacred. It provides the structural skeleton. The flesh is experience. No structural analysis can substitute for the first-person engagement with one's own freedom, one's own mortality, or one's own sense of the sacred. The system provides the framework within which these encounters can be understood; it does not provide the encounters themselves. *Third Resolutions* says of the problem of evil that it "is not an academic puzzle. It is a wound", and the structural analysis does not console the grieving parent or answer the survivor's cry. *Third Resolutions* reads the contemplative traditions of every religion as "describing genuine contact with the three modalities"; their practices, meditation, prayer, ritual, community worship, are genuine methods for cultivating attention to the three modalities. The structural account provides a ground from which their value can be understood without commitment to any specific theological claim, and it dismisses none of them.

III. Whether the Immanent Metaphysics Is a Religion, and How a Teaching Passes On

A reader who has followed the definitions may ask whether this metaphysics is itself a religion, and what it would take for a teaching like it to last.

III.1. Whether the Immanent Metaphysics Is a Religion

The placement of religion among the six paths, in section I.2, also settles a question a reader may ask: whether the Immanent Metaphysics is itself a religion. My answer has a definite shape, so it is given here in the order that shape requires. In one sense, the sense of impossibility, it cannot be. Religion is one of the six paths, spirituality, religion, science, technology, mysticism, and magic, and it is one of them as an instance, one member of a list of six. My answer in *The Divine, Faith, and Religious Life; The Immanent Metaphysics Answers* (Chapter 13, "What Religion Is") is that religion is one of the six paths: it is neither knowledge nor morality but an

irreducible mode of human activity, the expressive integration of self into world, that produces moral codes as one of its outputs and may be informed by knowledge but is not constituted by it. The IM is itself living at the level of the union of all six paths. What lives at the union of a set is not a member of that set, so the IM is not just a religion and cannot be just that. It is something more, and a good deal more, since the other five paths account between them for quite a lot. Science and technology are two of the five, and nobody supposes those to be religions.

I state the conclusion of the impossibility argument twice in my books, and the two statements do different work. In *The Divine, Faith, and Religious Life* (Chapter 1, "Whether There Is a God") I state it as a decoupling rather than as a disclaimer. There I decouple the ethics from any particular religion: the metaphysics is not a religion, nor can it or the ethics be based in any religion; it can only be the basis of one or many religions. *Conversations on the Immanent Metaphysics* (Chapter 1, "What is Wisdom? An Inquiry", section VI, "Conclusion") gives the same result as the closing sentence of its opening chapter, and there it is drawn as a consequence rather than asserted: because the ethics is derived from the nature of being itself, and not from any tradition, no tradition can be its ground. "Hence also one can see why the metaphysics is not a religion, nor can it, or the ethics, be based in any religion. It and they can only be the basis of one or of many religions". That book also states what the core is that the paths are being distinguished from, under the name the IDM core (IDM standing for Immanent Domain Modality, the name I give this metaphysics in *An Immanent Metaphysics*: "The IDM or Immanent Domain Modality metaphysics"): "The IDM core is an articulation (non-revelatory, derived from first principles) of the nature and principles of choice itself, and of its foundation, on a completely non-causative basis". *Non-revelatory* is the operative word, since a revelation is precisely what a religion has and a derivation does not.

What follows positively is the more interesting half. The IM does provide what I call the core code for the inner mysticism of basically any religion. By *inner mysticism* is meant the perceptual practice that a religion

holds at its center and expresses outwardly as doctrine, ritual, and common life; by *core code*, the structure that practice runs on, whether or not the tradition has ever stated that structure to itself. The IM core, and much of what that core supports, stands outside religion and outside community. And the IM does support religion and community. I put both halves of this in a few lines. "The metaphysics is not a religious body of work: it asks you to believe nothing. It gives you tools of clarity that enable vision". And: "The work supports religion (community practice) and spirituality (individual integrity: know thyself)". The reach claimed for the core is not a modest one: "Understanding the metaphysics is understanding the innermost essence of every religion and body of knowledge the world has ever known". My book *The Questions of Global and Indigenous Philosophical Traditions* (below, *Global and Indigenous Philosophical Traditions*; section V, "South American and Mesoamerican Philosophy") states the same reach as a claim about the traditions themselves: "the metaphysics is adjacent to the inner mysticism of every tradition (Sufi, Catholic, Aramaic, eastern, western, and all indigenous) and because of the core foundation all traditions become coordinated through it to each other, making the transcendent accessible across them". The claim of a core code is therefore a claim about what each tradition holds at its center, which anyone can set beside that tradition's own inner practice, and not a claim of authority over the traditions.

III.2. How a Teaching Passes Between Generations

A usage has to be stated before the next step can be followed. I have come to take it as common practice to treat religion and community as basically interchangeable concepts, and in what follows the two words carry the one referent. It is not a usage adopted for convenience in this chapter alone. *Personal Spiritual Inquiry; Conversations on the Path of Understanding* (Chapter 3, "Spirituality and Awareness") states the identification in both directions, as I put it there in conversation: "And every religion is a community, and every community is a religion in the sense of having some co-

dification of how individuals become groups". The ground of the identification is given in that sentence and is worth marking: what makes a community a religion is not belief but codification, the having of some settled way by which individuals become a group. The usage is consistent with the definitions already given. Religion is the integration of oneself into a world; it is expressive, objective, always made, and always named; and a named philosophy, held in common by the people who practice it together, is a community under another description.

The interchange matters because of a problem about time. A body of knowledge does not persist by having been written down. It persists by being lived by people who teach it to the people who come after them. Unless there is some embodiment of a teaching in actual practical community life, in a way that continues intergenerationally, the knowledge it carries will pass from this earth, and this holds of the teachings of the IM as of any other, because the condition follows from how knowledge is transmitted at all. The general form of it is given in *Wisdom, Intelligence, and Judicial Process* (Chapter 21, "Teacherly Authority and the Decline of Civilization", section V, "The Mechanism of Civilizational Decline"): "Civilization depends on the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, skill, and wisdom". The particular form, applied to a teaching that has reached enlightenment in one person, is given in *Global and Indigenous Philosophical Traditions* (section V), and it adds a step the passage above does not have, which is that writing the teaching down is not the last insufficiency but the second of two: "individual enlightenment does not further the world after one has passed unless the teachings survive, and even that is still an intellectual thing; what is needed is embodiment in community: a living tradition that is effectively alive in its connection with nature, with each other, and with spirit". The first insufficiency is the person, who dies. The second insufficiency is the record, which survives and does not transmit. Only the third thing, the living tradition, does the work. In *Personal Spiritual Inquiry* (Chapter 14, "Community and Civilization") I name the same thing a succession problem: the question of how a teaching gains the longevity it needs. A community is the answer, because

no business has that kind of persistence, and no legal system and no government has it either, but religions do. The persistence mechanism cannot be just a single person, and it cannot be just a book on the shelf. The persistence mechanism has to be grounded in life, and it cannot be grounded in anything other than a living renewal. The argument there is comparative. The candidate carriers of a teaching across centuries are enumerated, the business, the legal system, the government, each is found to lack the required persistence, and the religion is what is left standing.

III.3. Existential Risk and the Three Worlds

Why that loss cannot be allowed to happen I give in my own terms. The concern is existential risk, which is the class of risks that would end the human prospect rather than merely damage it, and which the companion chapter "Technology, Pattern Replication, and Existential Risk" (Chapter 28, Volume IV) treats at length. I say why existential risk matters to me, and then why it matters in itself. My position is that it is basically only by using the tools of the IM that our species has any realistic possibility of addressing these ultimate risks, and of civilization design with them, *civilization design* being the deliberate design of how a civilization makes its choices. My own motive is love: I am strongly motivated, by my love of this Earth, to act in its defense, in the defense of life itself. And to do that I must enroll the humans, because in no other way will conscious choice within humanity be balanced against the two unconscious powers now acting alongside it, technology, which is unconscious though intelligent, and the motion of nature, which is unconscious and proceeds by evolution. The three compose a triple. Nature is the transcendent term, humanity the immanent, technology the omniscient. That the three are a triple, and not a list, is established in *Evolution, Design, and the Ethics of the Possible* (Chapter 6, "Technology in Service to Nature", section VII, "The Triad Beneath the Triad"), and it is established by referring the three worlds to a deeper triple. "The three worlds (nature, humanity, and technology) are not an arbitrary classification. They correspond to a more fun-

damental triad that lies at the base of the metaphysics", which is the triple of change, choice, and causation, distributed one to each world. "Change is the modality of the natural world". "Choice is the modality of the human world". "Causation is the modality of the technological world". That book also states the consequence for practice, which is that the deeper triple is the one that can be worked on: to resolve change, choice, and causation into right relation is what creates the capacity to resolve the three worlds.

The modal assignment just given, nature transcendent, humanity immanent, technology omniscient, is made from a standpoint. A *standpoint* is the basis of consideration: the position from which a triple is regarded, which here is either from within the human world looking outward, or from outside the three worlds looking inward. In this metaphysics every modal assignment is made relative to a triple and a standpoint, and this triple follows that rule as every other does.

The view this chapter takes is the inside out view, and my account of it runs as follows. The choosing under discussion is ours. I think of it from my own perspective, as a human, and "we" and "us", in this account, mean humans collectively. Humanity is therefore the immanent term, since the immanent is the modality of the one who is doing something, and what is being done here is the making of choices. Nature is the transcendent term, since nature is the before from which we came: we are animals, arising out of prehistory, and the transcendent is the modality of that which precedes and is not itself conditioned. Technology is the omniscient term, since technology comes from us, as ideas in mind and in machine, and is the causative consequence of our choices, and the causative consequence of choices is what the omniscient carries.

Take instead the outside in view, regarding the three worlds from beyond them rather than from the human place within them, and the assignment rotates. Nature becomes immanent, as change, the ongoing motion of a world that is simply proceeding. The human world becomes omniscient, as the transactional world in which persons meet and give account

to one another. Technology becomes transcendent, since technology regarded from outside is about power, and power in this system conditions without being conditioned.

Standpoint	**Nature**	**Humanity**	**Technology**
Inside out: from within the human world (this chapter)	Transcendent	Immanent	Omniscient
Outside in: from beyond the three worlds	Immanent	Omniscient	Transcendent

The two standpoints on the three worlds. One standpoint is one step of the cycle of Axiom II from the other: all three assignments turn together.

Both assignments are valid, and each answers the standpoint it is made from. I take the first, and I give my reason for taking it. The primary action under emphasis here is our taking of responsibility for our own choices, and one cannot take responsibility for a choice without being the one who makes it. That requires that we humans operate as immanent, doing something, and within our own context: that nature came before us, and that machines have come because of us. The assignment follows the emphasis, and the emphasis in this chapter is responsibility.

The outside in view is the view in which nature is change, and there change is immanent, as *An Immanent Metaphysics* places it at 1.61-13 ("The concepts of change, interaction, and comparison share the same modal class (immanent)"). The inside out view takes a different triple, nature, humanity, and technology from the human standpoint, and a different triple is a different domain, with its own assignment. The rule is that a modality belongs to a unit of conjunction taken from a standpoint, and not to a word, so that a change in what is conjoined, or in the standpoint from which it is conjoined, is a change of domain and therefore of assignment; "Comparison and the Six Intrinsics" (Chapter 4, Volume I), section III, states it in full. In the note to the section "Wisdom and Maturity" of *An Immanent Metaphysics* I name the mechanism: a shift in the basis intro-

duces Axiom II dynamics, which alter any prior Axiom I modality assignments, and the passage between the two views of the three worlds is such a shift. Balance among the three worlds is required: the Axiom II flow of precedence, the fixed cyclic order in which the modalities succeed one another, must be restored among them, since where one term of such a triple overruns the other two the cycle does not complete, and it is the restoration of that flow, and not the removal of any of the three terms, that the position asks for. *The Applied Metaphysics* (Chapter 5) gives technology as the omniscient modality, as the inside out view does.

III.4. What Follows for a Teaching of This Kind

From the condition of transmission a consequence follows for any teaching of this kind, and so for this one. A teaching that is to persist must either become accepted as core in at least one active and long lasting religion, or become one itself, in at least some practical sense, as a set of practices that persist the vitality of the teachings from one generation to the next. There is no third course that preserves the knowledge. The duty of whoever carries such a teaching is therefore a duty about transmission and not a wish for a following: it is not only to teach the teaching but to make sure that people can continue to teach it. The core is not altered by the uses that are made of it, since the core transcends all of those uses.

The conclusion is exact. The IM is not a religion, but it can function as the core of one, or of several, or of all of them. I say as much in *Dialogues on Connection* (Chapter 14, "On Conscience, Covenant, and Justice"): although the metaphysics is not a religion, it would serve as a good, solid basis of principle on which to make one. The condition that makes the plural in the conclusion do work is that what is founded on it has to be "a high enough umbrella that it can welcome people coming from many different faiths", and that condition is "already built into the metaphysics", designed in with that in mind from the beginning. I give the same result

in a shorter form: "The metaphysics is not a religion but a religion construction toolkit: a basis for assessing whether the cultural practices of any community (stories, symbols, beliefs, choices) are healthy".

Four uses follow for a reader deciding what to do with this metaphysics, and I set them out as an addendum to the whole position. I ask you to believe nothing. The metaphysics can be a religion construction toolkit. It can equally be the basis of one's own personal spirituality, which on this account means practices of health and integrity and not practices of belief. It can be a means of understanding science and technology, by way of the scientific method, which is itself a kind of epistemic process, a process by which knowing is established rather than a body of things already known. And by way of its extensions it can be a means of creating valid assessments of whether the cultural practices of a community are healthy, which is to put to that community a single question: do its morals represent the ethical principles? *Morals* here are the particular practices a community actually holds, and *ethical principles* are the general requirements that I derive rather than stipulate; the distinction between the two is drawn, and the principles themselves derived, in "Non-Relativistic Ethics" (Chapter 21), sections I and IV. Because the principles are derived and the morals are observable, the question is answerable, and is not a matter of taste.

IV. How to Engage

The two definitions given here are meant to be applied to oneself. Spirituality is the integration of a world into oneself, which is perceptive and therefore subjective, always found and never made, and unnamed. Religion is the integration of oneself into a world, which is expressive and therefore objective, always made and never found, and always named. Since no life is lived without perception and none without expression, no one is wholly unspiritual and no one wholly irreligious. Ask what your own is, in each of the two senses. A reader who answers that they have neither has answered too quickly.

Then be exact about what a practice can reach. States of mind and body are a content of experience and can be attained by effort. Emotional and spiritual dynamics are a context of experience and cannot be, because a target is a limit and these work by choices that increase potentiality. Joy, happiness, and love can be nurtured and cannot be produced on demand. Check any practice you take up against that line.

Then work with the practice that is named, which is integration. A world is realized in discontinuity, so connection to a world carries discontinuity inward, and where a self can take that in without loss of wholeness the practice is doing its work. The direction is inward, and the test is wholeness rather than serenity.

One expectation should be corrected before starting. No exercise, sequence, or technique is prescribed anywhere here, and that follows from the position rather than being an omission. What is offered is a ground and a direction for attention. The structure all of this rests on, which defines the sacred and establishes the unknowable, is given in the chapter immediately before this one.

V. Summary

The definitions in the first section follow from the foundations; they are not stipulations. Spirituality and religion are separated by a distinction already drawn in the foundations: perception is subjective and expression is objective, so a philosophy of the role a world plays within oneself and a philosophy of the role oneself plays within a world are two things and not one thing seen twice. Everything else about the pair follows from that: that one is found and the other made, that one has no name and the other is always named, that neither can be escaped, and that a named philosophy is therefore a religion. The account of soul is built the same way, since soul, mind, and body are given as the transcendent, immanent, and omniscient aspects of a single self, and the properties of soul are read off the transcendent modality rather than asserted about a substance.

I mark one claim in this chapter's territory as asserted rather than derived, in the words of *An Immanent Metaphysics*: "It is an assertion of this metaphysics that the ultimate innermost nature of self/ soul is good". The goodness of the innermost self is a commitment I make and declare, and not a theorem.

Section III carries my position on whether the system is itself a religion, and the argument there has two kinds of step. The impossibility is formal. Religion is one of the six paths; a metaphysics is the integration of all six; what stands at the union of a set is not a member of it; so the IM cannot be just a religion, and this holds whatever anyone's opinion of the system may be. The steps after that are practical: that the core supplies the inner mysticism of any religion, that knowledge which is not embodied in community life does not survive between generations, and that a teaching of this kind must therefore either become core to a lasting religion or become a set of practices that carries the teaching forward. The formal result stands on the definitions alone; the practical steps stand on how knowledge passes between generations.

Soul is defined as not observable and out of reach of science, so what is said of it here is said of the transcendent self, which observation does not reach. Enlightenment is defined asymptotically, which means I say what is approached, and, since the approach is never completed, I name no one as having arrived. The account of practice is drawn from the aphorisms of *An Immanent Metaphysics* and from two of my later books, and it is an account of what practice is for rather than a set of instructions; no exercise, sequence, or technique is prescribed anywhere in it, and this follows from the position, since what has the aspect of the transcendent cannot be conditioned.

The account offers a ground from which the value of the contemplative practices can be understood without commitment to any particular theological claim, and a direction for attention. A ground from which to understand the contemplative practices, together with a direction for attention, is more than a description and less than a path. The encounter itself is given by experience and not by the account. As I put it in section II

of this chapter, the account provides the structural skeleton, and the flesh is experience. My account does not console, and I make no claim that it does. I make no joy, love, or enlightenment the result of any method, and I say so in the strongest terms I have, since the transcendent cannot be conditioned by any practice whatever.

The account of spirituality and practice that I give in this chapter is the spiritual foundation of the Immanent Metaphysics. That foundation is a set of definitions exact enough that a person can tell what they are doing when they do it, and not a creed or a discipline. Spirituality is the integration of a world into oneself, religion the integration of oneself into a world, and since no life is lived without perception or without expression, everyone is doing both already. What I offer is not an invitation to begin but an account of what is being done.

By the definitions of *An Immanent Metaphysics* this foundation is not thereby less than a religion or a mysticism. "A named philosophy is a religion" (2.55-4). Mysticism is one of the six paths that a metaphysics integrates, alongside spirituality, religion, science, technology, and magic. And what is spiritual in the account has no name, being what each reader finds within, in the integration of it into a life. The Immanent Metaphysics does not stand outside the categories it describes, and it says where it stands among them. As a named philosophy it is, by the definition just given, a religion in that sense; as a metaphysics it contains a mysticism, as every metaphysics does; and since it lives at the union of all six paths, and what lives at the union of a set is not a member of that set, it is not just a religion.

The soul, on this account, is the transcendent self: formless, integral, without position or structure, free and undefined and indefinable, out of reach of science not because it is hidden but because observation is the wrong modality for it. Enlightenment is not departure from anything. It is full and balanced consciousness in all three modalities of self within a world, approached and never completed, because perfect consciousness

and actuality are conjugate and something must always remain unknown for there to be a particular someone at all. The Mystery of the Subconscious is not a defect in self-knowledge. It is the condition of being a self.

In this chapter I also answer a question that the system raises about itself, which is how a system derived from first principles stands to the inquiry by which any such system is found. The system is derived from first principles, and a derivation is found by inquiry; both descriptions are true because they answer different questions, the one about the finished structure and the other about how any structure is reached. I hold that the felt and the formal are not rivals and that only a synthesis of intuition and intellect gives a true knowledge of the nature of being.

And the practice, in the end, is small and hard. It is integration: taking in the discontinuity of the world without breaking, and without closing. Joy cannot be made a goal and neither can love, because they are a context of experience and not a content of it, and what is a context cannot be produced by aiming at it. What can be done is to nurture the conditions, to bring awareness inward, to give potentiality by love and receive it by gratitude, and to remain present in the potentialities of the unknown. The structural account said where the Mystery is. In this chapter I say what it is like to live where the Mystery is, as far as any account can say it, and then I hand the rest over, because the flesh is experience and no book has ever been able to supply experience.

The thread of this volume ends where it began, in choice. Every choice is an act of creation and an interaction, and the Catastrophic Theorem, which joins the two ends of the thread, says what is carried in each one: to negate the significance of any life is to negate the significance of all life, and "Effectiveness, meaningfulness, and life, are best realized when regarding All as sacred and significant". A life lived from the structure is a life of choices made from that regard, one at a time, and nurtured rather than commanded. Yet no one chooses alone, and the choices that now decide the most are made at a scale far beyond any one life. How can a community, a civilization, and the technology it builds come to choose in a

way that regards all as sacred and significant? This question is the question of Volume IV, which begins with "Technology, Pattern Replication, and Existential Risk" (Chapter 28).

KEY CONCEPTS IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Spirituality**: the integration of a world into oneself. How one integrates the experiences of one's life into oneself, and reflects upon and learns from the events of one's days; a philosophy about the role that a world plays within oneself. Perceptive, and therefore subjective. Always found and never made. Refers to what is within the self and has no name. Its depth is proportional to the capacity to accept and integrate all experience. One cannot join a spirituality.
- **Religion**: the integration of oneself into a world. How one expresses, together with others, for the common good, in the social and natural environment in which one lives; a philosophy about the role that oneself plays within a world. Expressive, and therefore objective. Always made and never found. Refers to what is outside the self and is always named. A named philosophy is a religion. Spirituality must be bound to religion, and religion is always one of community.
- **Why neither can be escaped**: no life is lived without perception, so no one is wholly unspiritual; no life is lived without expression, so no one is wholly irreligious. There can be no spirituality without a self, and no world without a religion.
- **Worship and respect**: worship is the behavior of one who believes there is some irreducible difference in the basic nature of the being of self and the being of what is worshiped. Respect assumes a basic sameness. The distinction is why I place the imperfect and temporary as equal in value to the perfect and eternal.
- **The six paths**: spirituality, religion, science, technology, mysticism, and magic, which together make up the totality of the relationship between self and reality. Philosophy is a combination of science, spir-

ituality, and mysticism. Metaphysics is the integration and unifying basis of all six into a common whole, which is why a metaphysics contains a mysticism rather than opposing one.

- **Whether the metaphysics is a religion**: it cannot be just a religion, because religion is one of the six paths and the metaphysics lives at the level of the union of all six, and what stands at the union of a set is not a member of it. Positively, it provides the core code of the inner mysticism of basically any religion, while the core itself, and much of what it supports, stands outside religion and community. It is not a religion, but it can function as the core of one, of several, or of all of them. Grounded in *The Divine, Faith, and Religious Life*, Chapter 13, for religion as one of the six paths, and in *Conversations on the Immanent Metaphysics*, Chapter 1, section VI, for the conclusion that neither the metaphysics nor the ethics can be based in any religion and that both can only be the basis of one or of many. The claim about the inner mysticism is stated in *Global and Indigenous Philosophical Traditions*, section V, as an adjacency claim about what each tradition holds at its center.
- **Religion and community as interchangeable**: my usage in this connection, consistent with the definitions, since a named philosophy held in common by those who practice it together is a community under another description. Stated in both directions in *Personal Spiritual Inquiry*, Chapter 3: every religion is a community and every community a religion, in the sense of having some codification of how individuals become groups. What makes a community a religion on this account is codification and not belief.
- **The intergenerational condition**: knowledge persists by being lived by people who teach it to those who come after them, so unless the teachings are embodied in practical community life in a way that continues intergenerationally, the knowledge does not survive. Hence the consequence for any teaching of this kind: it must either become core to at least one long lasting religion or become a set of practices that persist the vitality of the teachings between generations. The general form of the condition is in *Wisdom, Intelligence, and Judicial Process*, Chapter 21, section V. The particular form is in *Global and Indigenous Philosophical*

Traditions, section V, which adds that the surviving record is a second insufficiency and not a remedy, and in *Personal Spiritual Inquiry*, Chapter 14, which names it a succession problem and eliminates the business, the legal system, and the government as carriers before arriving at the religion.

- **Nature, humanity, technology**: a triple. That the three are a triple, and their correspondence one to each to change, choice, and causation, is established in *Evolution, Design, and the Ethics of the Possible*, Chapter 6, section VII. Their modal assignment depends on the standpoint the three are taken from, and both available assignments are valid. Taken from inside the human world, humanity is immanent, because the choosing is ours and the taking of responsibility for it is what is being asked; nature is transcendent, as the before from which we came; technology is omniscient, as the causative consequence of our choices. Taken from outside the three worlds, nature is immanent as change, the human world is omniscient as the transactional world, and technology is transcendent because it is about power. This chapter uses the first, because its emphasis is our taking of responsibility for our choices, which requires that we operate as immanent, doing something. The second assignment, taken from outside the three worlds, is the assignment I state in *An Immanent Metaphysics* at 1.61-13, where I place change in the immanent class. The two do not conflict, because a change of the unit of conjunction or of the standpoint is a change of domain and therefore of assignment, which is the principle of Chapter 4 (Volume I), section III. *The Applied Metaphysics*, Chapter Five, also gives technology as omniscient.
- **Standpoint**: the basis of consideration, the position from which a triple is regarded. Modal assignment is made relative to a standpoint, so the same three terms can carry different and equally correct assignments as the standpoint moves. *An Immanent Metaphysics* names the mechanism as an Axiom II rotation introduced by a shift of basis, in the note to "Wisdom and Maturity".

- **Balance among the three worlds**: what the position asks for is that the Axiom II flow among nature, humanity, and technology be restored, so that conscious choice within humanity is balanced against technology, unconscious though intelligent, and the motion of nature, unconscious and proceeding by evolution. Axiom II states the precedence, the fixed cyclic order in which the three modalities succeed one another as a logical ordering of dependency; it is set out in "The Three Axioms" (Chapter 1, Volume I), section III. Where one term overruns the other two the cycle does not complete, and the remedy is restoration of the flow and not removal of any term.
- **The four uses**: I ask you to believe nothing, and the system can serve as a religion construction toolkit; as a basis for personal spirituality, understood as practices of health and integrity; as a way of understanding science and technology by way of the scientific method, itself a kind of epistemic process; and, through its extensions, as a means of assessing whether a community's cultural practices are healthy, which is to ask whether that community's morals represent the ethical principles.
- **Mysticism**: a way of perceiving that begins in the omniscient modality as body technique, transitions to the transcendent as a diffusion of self, and completes in the immanent as realization. One of the six paths, and one of the three components of any philosophy.
- **Soul**: the transcendent self; that which is purely internal, subjective, and consists of a pure formless quality. Distinguished from mind, the immanent self, the boundary and dynamics between inner quality and outer form, and from body, the omniscient self, the objective symbol projected into a world. Soul is potentia, choice, and desire. It has no size, composition, or locus; it is integral and cannot be decomposed; it is free, undefined, and indefinable; it is not observable and is out of reach of science, technology, or experiment. It is everywhere and everywhere unique, and its essence is an exact quality I call its signature pattern. Soul is what the Mystery of the Subconscious refers to.

- **The three aspects of self in any event**: the dreamer self, which creates the stage, omniscient; the dreamed self, the character on the stage, immanent; the dreaming self, apart from both and with its being in another world, transcendent. In any domain these three are intrinsic and always implicit, and they are Truly Owned.
- **Enlightenment**: to become full of light, which requires clarity. Not escape and not departure from the cycle of life, but evolution with and within; there is always a life and a context of life however evolved one may be. Never complete, since perfect consciousness is conjugate with actuality, so that only the asymptotic approach of an undivided consciousness is possible. Its content is full and balanced consciousness in all three modalities of self within a world.
- **Understanding and knowing, as An Immanent Metaphysics bounds itself**: *An Immanent Metaphysics* states that by the nature of communication it can convey understanding but cannot convey knowing, and that the reader already has a knowing of innate being to which no text can add. Because a text can convey understanding and cannot convey knowing, I offer the account in *An Immanent Metaphysics* as points of departure for meditation rather than as an argument meant to convince.
- **Intuition and intellect**: some things can only be known by direct personal experience and others only by analytic and abstract methods, and neither alone is enough to understand the essence of experience. Only a synthesis of the two gives a true knowledge of the nature of being. The need for a synthesis of intuition and intellect is the sense in which a metaphysics is at once the most abstract study imaginable and the most eminently practical.
- **Derivation and discovery**: a derivation describes the finished structure and the ground on which it rests; an inquiry describes how a structure is found. The two answer different questions, and both are true, in that order. Intuition supplies the passion, the time, and the energy under which the means of a derivation can be found; insights found in that way are logically co-supporting. The Immanent Metaphysics as it now stands is derived from first principles. The analogy is

with science: the scientific method, an immanent process, becomes scientific knowledge, an omniscient one, and nothing different should be expected of a metaphysics.

- **Content and context of experience**: mental and physical states are a content of experience and can be attained as the target of a goal driven activity, achieved with practice and effort. Emotional and spiritual dynamics are a context of experience and cannot be attained by any goal driven activity, technology, process, or technique. Joy, happiness, and love cannot ever be a goal; they cannot be made, they can only be. What has the aspect of the transcendent cannot be conditioned.
- **Nurturance**: what practice can do in place of control. Spirituality as acceptance and the enactment of love as nurturance increase the potentiality for joy without guaranteeing it. An increase of influence, not a condition of control.
- **Integration**: the effective practice of spirituality. The world is realized in symmetry and discontinuity and the self in continuity and asymmetry, so connection to the world carries discontinuity inward; where the self can accept and integrate that experience and remain whole, one is at peace, and where it cannot, the self becomes isolated and the experience of the world becomes one of pain. Hence the development of spiritual qualities reduces suffering. The direction of the practice is inward: bring awareness inward to increase significance in life.
- **Love and gratitude**: love gives potentiality to the world and gratitude receives it from the world; the action of the two together is the action of spirituality, of connecting oneself with the divine. To live well and fully is a high degree of internal integrity of self together with a high degree of connectedness between self and reality.
- **The aesthetic basis**: the practical form the whole takes when applied as a practice, given in *An Immanent Metaphysics* as a list of abilities to cultivate: to desire choice rather than just comfort or security; to deeply feel as well as to quickly think; to focus on how one already has freedoms rather than on seeming limitations; on the sacred rather than

just the mundane; on the myths rather than just the facts; on the unknowable rather than just the known; and on attaining joy rather than just avoiding pain.

- **The three modalities** (carried in from the structural account): the omniscient, the view from outside, structural and describable; the immanent, the view from inside, participatory and relational; the transcendent, the view from beyond, creative and exceeding every frame. Distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable. Full derivation in the companion chapter, "The Sacred, the Void, and the Great Mystery" (Chapter 26), section I.
- **The sacred** (carried in): that which is considered ultimately meaningful; not supernatural but structural, the recognition that reality has three aspects that matter, met in awe, gratitude, and love, and differing from the ordinary only in the quality of attention. Defined in the companion chapter, section I.
- **The Great Mystery and the unknowable** (carried in): the unknowable is what cannot be known even in principle, as against the unknown, which is not yet known; the Great Mystery is the unknowable together with the unknown, inherently inexplicable but not paradoxical, and that from which all reason and reasonableness arise. The acceptance of it is spirituality, and it is where limitation becomes freedom. Established in the companion chapter, sections II and III.
- **The Mystery of the Subconscious** (carried in): the limit of knowing that falls within one's own subjective self, "that quality of which oneself is"; the most fundamental of the three limits of knowing, and the one that soul refers to. Established in the companion chapter, section II.
- **True Ownership** (carried in): what cannot be taken away even in principle. Experience, choice, time, and validity are my examples; the three aspects of self are added here. The validity of one's own life is intrinsic and Truly Owned. Established in the companion chapter, section XI.

- **Limitation and freedom** (carried in): conjugates rather than opposites, so that no limitation occurs without a freedom and no freedom without a limitation. In the acceptance of the unknown and the unknowable there is freedom from limitation. Established in the companion chapter, section XII.
- **Symmetry, continuity, and their limit** (carried in): symmetry is sameness of content across a difference of context and continuity an unbroken connection without gap; the Incommensuration Theorem holds that both cannot be perfected in one comparison. Because symmetry and continuity cannot both be perfected in one comparison, consciousness can only be approached asymptotically. For the same reason, the world must appear as pain, while joy and connectedness, equally real, cannot be seen objectively. Established in the companion chapter, sections I and II.

Glossary

A reference of the key terms this volume introduces, drawn from each chapter's Key Concepts list and given here in alphabetical order, each followed by the number of the chapter it is drawn from. Where two chapters give a term two different senses, each entry names the chapter whose sense it is. Terms this volume uses but does not define are listed separately at the end, under Terms Inherited from Earlier Volumes.

A

Action, Reaction, Response: three modes of engaging with events; response involves the full Axiom II cycle and represents the fullest exercise of choice. (19)

The aesthetic basis: the practical form the whole takes when applied as a practice, given in *An Immanent Metaphysics* as a list of abilities to cultivate: to desire choice rather than just comfort or security; to deeply feel as well as to quickly think; to focus on how one already has freedoms rather than on seeming limitations; on the sacred rather than just the mundane; on the myths rather than just the facts; on the unknowable rather than just the known; and on attaining joy rather than just avoiding pain. (27)

Attunement: the nervous-system registration of where another person is: what they feel, need, and notice. Felt, not reasoned; distinct from agreement; mutual. With discernment, the pair by which a person reads another. (23)

The Axiom II Cycle: many potentials converge into one event; many events crystallize into one pattern; many patterns give rise to one new potential. The structural rhythm of all process. (24)

B

Balance among the three worlds: what the position asks for is that the Axiom II flow among nature, humanity, and technology be restored, so that conscious choice within humanity is balanced against technology, unconscious though intelligent, and the motion of nature, unconscious and proceeding by evolution. Axiom II states the precedence, the fixed cyclic order in which the three modalities succeed one another as a logical ordering of dependency; it is set out in "The Three Axioms" (Chapter 1, Volume I), section III. Where one term overruns the other two the cycle does not complete, and the remedy is restoration of the flow and not removal of any term. (27)

The basal motivations: the most basic desire inherent in all consciousness, stated at 2.11-1 as the maximization of the degree, diversity and intensity of experience and of creativity. (20)

Belongingness: the continuity of acceptance of authenticity; one can be one's whole self, that self is accepted, and the acceptance continues. Its ingredients are authenticity, acceptance, continuity. Conditional belonging is quiet coercion, a form of collective action abuse. With safety and dignity, belonging forms the attunement triad, a structural prerequisite for the practices of friendship. (23)

C

Care as Compass: technology says what we can do; care says what we ought to do. Requires wisdom and situational awareness. (23)

Catastrophic Theorem: either everything is sacred or nothing is. Significance denied to any life is significance denied to all life. Stated at 2.14-3 of *An Immanent Metaphysics*; its warrant is in the same book: the general form of any catastrophic theorem (note 1 to 2.14-3), that either every X is Y or no X is Y, together with the claim of *An Immanent Metaphysics* that everything in all domains is intrinsically significant (2.11-3); supported by

the aphorisms on value (no favorites, significance zero positive, all values equal, significance scale invariant); resolved in the direction of meaningfulness. It is an all-or-nothing result, and so a result of a different kind from the Incommensuration Theorem, which is an incommensurability result. (22) (26)

Change of Basis: a shift in which of the three connections a person holds as most ultimately meaningful. Which one is primary differs from person to person; the shift is an existential event, after which the basis of the meaningfulness of one's essence has changed. (23)

Channel integrity: the symmetry and continuity of the relation between a self and a world: that content survives the crossing, and that change of content is proportional to change of context. (20)

Choice as Creation: every genuine choice is an act of creation; the structural properties of creation apply to choice; this links the theory of creation to the ethics. (24)

Choice, Change, Causality: the three irreducible components of all process; the fabric of reality in the IM. (19)

Communities Make Choices: neither individuals (too small) nor states (principal-agent trap) can. Communities can and must. (23)

Community vs. Institution: community is a group in which care governs; institution is a structure in which transaction or power governs; all three bases are present in either. Community can make choices; institutions cannot make their choices by care. (23)

Confused desire: the condition, at 1.65-18, in which internally conflicting desires divide a self into two smaller selves, each with less freedom of choice than the undivided one would have had. (20)

Consciousness Is Interaction: my central claim: consciousness is the immanent modality itself, the actual event of engagement between subject and object. Every choice is an interaction, and so an event of consciousness in this sense. (25)

Constitutive condition: a condition without which the thing in question does not exist at all. Establishing one settles a modal question and not a normative one. (20)

Constrained but Not Determined: the IM's resolution of the novelty problem: law constrains without fully specifying; the gap between constraint and outcome is where creation occurs. (24)

Content and context of experience: mental and physical states are a content of experience and can be attained as the target of a goal driven activity, achieved with practice and effort. Emotional and spiritual dynamics are a context of experience and cannot be attained by any goal driven activity, technology, process, or technique. Joy, happiness, and love cannot ever be a goal; they cannot be made, they can only be. What has the aspect of the transcendent cannot be conditioned. (27)

Continuity Principle: where the objective external content differs and the subjective internal content is the same, the context of expression shall be the same. A principle of equal valuations. Encompasses prohibitions against violence, involuntary creation or destruction of life, and abrupt disconnection from community. It fails in two directions: total change of content for infinitesimal change of context, and no change of content at all, which is a channel carrying no signal. (21)

Cooperative Margin: in viable ecosystems, cooperation exceeds competition by a fraction (about 50.01 to 49.99 percent, the balance taken over all measures together). Equality is not a stable state, and the margin is what supplies the restoring force. If non-cooperative behavior crosses the threshold, the social system undergoes a self-reinforcing phase change into collapse. (23)

The Cooperative Nature of Choice: the structural observation that choice, as an instance of the transcendent modality, is inherently cooperative rather than unilateral. (19)

The Cooperative Nature of Creation: creation necessarily involves the convergence of multiple contributions; no single source creates alone. A structural claim, not a moral one. (24)

Creation / Interaction / Existence: the foundational triple of the IM; creation is transcendent, interaction is immanent, existence is omniscient. (24)

The Criterion of Right Action: right action is that which preserves and extends the structural conditions of effective choice for all beings affected, which is neither a consequentialist nor a deontological test. *An Immanent Metaphysics* measures it by the two principles, at 2.12-15: choices are most effective when they preserve both symmetry and continuity. (19)

The Cycle: principles lead to practices, practices to rules, rules fail, and one returns to principles. Permanent and necessary. (21)

D

Deep desire and surface want: the distinction on which effectiveness rests, made by the location of what is sought rather than by its intensity: a desire is located within the self, a want outside it. (20)

Derivation and discovery: a derivation describes the finished structure and the ground on which it rests; an inquiry describes how a structure is found. The two answer different questions, and both are true, in that order. Intuition supplies the passion, the time, and the energy under which the means of a derivation can be found; insights found in that way are logically co-supporting. The Immanent Metaphysics as it now stands is derived from first principles. The analogy is with science: the scientific method, an immanent process, becomes scientific knowledge, an omniscient one, and nothing different should be expected of a metaphysics. (27)

Developmental Sequence of Care: attachment, then attunement, then nurturing care action, then trust, then autonomy; each link depends on the one before. Interrupted at trust, the sequence yields vigilance, the feral

condition. Care requires presence, willingness, and skill together; healing before community, community before governance, governance before civilization. (23)

Dualism and Modality: consciousness is not a separate substance but a separate modality; there are not two realities but three inseparable aspects of one reality. (25)

E

Effective Choice: a choice that results in the realization (manifestation) of desire, as *An Immanent Metaphysics* defines it at 2.112-1, independently of and prior to the channel derivation (20); its marks are internal coherence and cooperative coordination, and freedom is its presence (19).

Effectiveness: proportional to the product of the degree to which a choice preserves the integrity of self, world, and their relation, which is static symmetry and continuity, and the degree to which it potentiates creativity and experience in all of life, which is dynamic symmetry and continuity. A product, so that either factor at zero takes the whole to zero. (22)

Eight Orders of Indirection: the distance from the theorem to a concrete choice. Theorem, then two principles, then three principles of right action, then individual effective choice, then group governance, these being the named layers of at least eight. The two principles are, in my own words, still too abstract for ordinary moral use. (22)

Enlightenment: to become full of light, which requires clarity. Not escape and not departure from the cycle of life, but evolution with and within; there is always a life and a context of life however evolved one may be. Never complete, since perfect consciousness is conjugate with actuality, so that only the asymptotic approach of an undivided consciousness is possible. Its content is full and balanced consciousness in all three modalities of self within a world. (27)

The Ethical Requirement: what actually follows from the theorem, namely that a sound ethics must honor both poles while recognizing that they cannot both be absolute. The two principles are the canonical form this requirement takes; the Universal Law and the conditions of a communication channel complete the derivation of the pair, and the step from the theorem alone is a bridge. (21)

Ethics: principles of effective choice, internal to self, independent of any domain. A commitment originating in a self and directed at all worlds. Natural laws; they cannot be enforced. (21)

Ethics vs. Morality: ethics as the universal structural conditions of effective choice; morality as the culturally specific expression of those conditions. (19)

Everything Is Communication: every action and every choice is a communication with the world, so the ethics of the channel is the ethics itself in its most general register. Ethics concerns the outward flow, not the inward one. (22)

Expression Is Objective: the act of expression necessarily produces something with objective properties, because the Axiom II cycle passes through the omniscient (objective, knowable) modality. (24)

Expression Public, Perception Private: no one may be required to account for their perceptions or knowing; every expression carries an ethical aspect. One is responsible for the totality of one's own choices, neither more nor less, and never for another's. (22)

F

Fairness and Care: fairness and justice are symmetry applied to persons; care and compassion are continuity applied to persons. Both are structural requirements rather than optional features of a good society. (22)

Faith: fullness and completeness (precision) of feeling as basis for choice. Not blind but vision open. Not certainty but trust. Conjugate with reason, not its opposite. (26)

The Four Primary Operators: continuity, sameness of content with sameness of context; discontinuity, difference of content with sameness of context; symmetry, sameness of content with difference of context; asymmetry, difference of content with difference of context. Four cells of one square, exhausting two binary axes. (21)

The four uses: I ask you to believe nothing, and the system can serve as a religion construction toolkit; as a basis for personal spirituality, understood as practices of health and integrity; as a way of understanding science and technology by way of the scientific method, itself a kind of epistemic process; and, through its extensions, as a means of assessing whether a community's cultural practices are healthy, which is to ask whether that community's morals represent the ethical principles. (27)

Friendship: six irreducible goods generated by two axes, scope (personal or collective) and perspective (omniscient, immanent, transcendent): support, encouragement, sharing, celebration, learning, values. A hierarchy of dependence, not of importance; co-supporting; a diagnostic (which element has failed). Its threshold rung is the appreciation of being rather than behavior. The modality is assigned to the row, which is a pair, and not to the cell; a cell carries a position on two axes and not a modality of its own, and the assignment does not distribute downward, since distributing it would erase the distinctness that gives the grid six cells rather than three. The principle is stated in full in Chapter 4 (Volume I). (23)

G

The General Communication Channel: the two principles are the two assumptions necessary for a general communication channel to persist, that messages keep their content integrity and that no message crashes the language. Ontological rather than technical, because the relation between a self and a reality is such a channel. (21)

The Great Mystery and the unknowable: the unknowable is what cannot be known even in principle, as against the unknown, which is not yet known; the Great Mystery is the unknowable together with the unknown (2.72-1), inherently inexplicable but not paradoxical, the foundation from which all reason and reasonableness arise. Not finite; not diminished by knowing. Knowing can affect the unknown but cannot affect the unknowable. The acceptance of it is spirituality, and it is where limitation becomes freedom. Established in Chapter 26, sections II and III. (26) (27)

The ground of being: there is no single fundamental ground and no universe; the transcendent cannot be contained within the omniscient. The ground is met in practice, in an I-thou relationship with reality. Formally, God is the totality of the subjective and of potentiality, which is love; the divinity of the soul is real but does not exist and is not objective, the soul here being the transcendent aspect of self, a pure formless quality, which Chapter 27 defines in full. (26)

H

The Hard Problem Dissolved: the hard problem presupposes that the physical (omniscient) description is complete; I show it is one-third of a three-modal reality, and the "gap" is between modes of description, not substances. (25)

I

The Incommensuration Theorem: symmetry and continuity cannot both be simultaneously and fundamentally applied to any one comparison. Argued expositorily four ways: as conjugate modal demands under Axiom I, as a reductio that erases two intrinsics, as an unbalanced count of samenesses against differences, and as a constraint that binds only at the perfected limit. (21)

Inseparability of Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology: my structural claim that fact, knowledge, and value are intrinsic to comparison and therefore cannot be isolated from each other. (19)

Integrated Information Theory (IIT): IIT captures the omniscient correlates of consciousness (information structure) but mistakes them for consciousness itself. (25)

Integration: the effective practice of spirituality. The world is realized in symmetry and discontinuity and the self in continuity and asymmetry, so connection to the world carries discontinuity inward; where the self can accept and integrate that experience and remain whole, one is at peace, and where it cannot, the self becomes isolated and the experience of the world becomes one of pain. Hence the development of spiritual qualities reduces suffering. The direction of the practice is inward: bring awareness inward to increase significance in life. (27)

The intergenerational condition: knowledge persists by being lived by people who teach it to those who come after them, so unless the teachings are embodied in practical community life in a way that continues intergenerationally, the knowledge does not survive. Hence the consequence for any teaching of this kind: it must either become core to at least one long lasting religion or become a set of practices that persist the vitality of the teachings between generations. The general form of the condition is in *Wisdom, Intelligence, and Judicial Process*, Chapter 21, section V. The particular form is in *Global and Indigenous Philosophical Traditions*, section V, which

adds that the surviving record is a second insufficiency and not a remedy, and in *Personal Spiritual Inquiry*, Chapter 14, which names it a succession problem and eliminates the business, the legal system, and the government as carriers before arriving at the religion. (27)

The Interval Between Perception and Expression: the pause in which choice enters. An expression becomes ethical to the degree that choice is involved, which is what distinguishes a response from a reaction. (22)

Intuition and intellect: some things can only be known by direct personal experience and others only by analytic and abstract methods, and neither alone is enough to understand the essence of experience. Only a synthesis of the two gives a true knowledge of the nature of being. The need for a synthesis of intuition and intellect is the sense in which a metaphysics is at once the most abstract study imaginable and the most eminently practical. (27)

The Irreducibility of Creative Potential: the transcendent cannot be derived from the omniscient, because symmetry and continuity are incommensurable (ICT). Novelty is not reducible to law. (24)

The Is-Ought Gap (Hume's Guillotine): the claim that no "ought" can be derived from an "is"; dissolved in the IM by showing that ontology, epistemology, and axiology are structurally inseparable. (19)

J

Justice against Judgment: justice as impartial equal treatment is symmetry applied to persons and a structural requirement; judgment, the evaluation of another's choice or the attempt to choose on another's behalf, is what cannot be done ethically, because the objective cannot perceive the subjective. Discernment, which never closes with a verdict, is what is called for instead. (22)

K

Knowing vs. Understanding: knowing is omniscient-modal (representational, third-person, structural); understanding, in the sense of direct participatory contact, is immanent-modal (participatory, first-person, experiential). They are incommensurable by the ICT. Taken in the triple of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom from the perspective of the self (1.57-6), understanding is transcendent and wisdom immanent. The omniscient-modal sense of knowing and the immanent-modal sense of understanding are the senses I use for the hard problem in Chapter 25. In the founding sense of 1.57-3, knowing is the perceptive transformation of outer form into inner feeling, and understanding is the expressive transformation of inner feeling into outer form. In that founding sense, a text conveys understanding and not knowing. (25)

The known, the unknown, and the unknowable: a foundational triple grounded in being itself. The unknown is the most basic. No firm line between known and unknown; a fixed logical line between unknown and unknowable, located by the speed of light (context) and the Planck constant (content). (26)

L

Limitation and freedom: conjugates rather than opposites, so that every limitation contains a freedom and every freedom contains a limitation, and no limitation occurs without a freedom and no freedom without a limitation. The unknown and forgetfulness are to be valued as much as knowing; some wildness is necessary to be alive. In the acceptance of the unknown and the unknowable there is freedom from limitation. Established in Chapter 26, section XII, and carried into Chapter 27. (26) (27)

Love: that which enables choice; the quality of enabling and nurturing choice, joy, connectedness, and freedom. An inequality, never exchange, without price, never earned; it exists only when it moves. Distinct from care, which rests on it. (23)

Love and gratitude: love gives potentiality to the world and gratitude receives it from the world; the action of the two together is the action of spirituality, of connecting oneself with the divine. To live well and fully is a high degree of internal integrity of self together with a high degree of connectedness between self and reality. (27)

Love as Enabling Creation: since choice is creation and creation requires cooperative convergence, whatever enables effective choice (love) enables effective creation. (24)

Love Is That Which Enables Choice: a structural definition derived from the IM's foundations, not a sentimental claim. (19)

M

Many-to-One Transition: each step of the Axiom II cycle involves the convergence of a multiplicity into an instance, many elements into one; the structural basis for cooperation in creation, and the basis of the cooperative nature of creation and choice. Also defined in Volume I, Chapter 3. (24)

Maturity: the product of responsibility, wisdom, and the degree to which choices of responsibility are made in accordance with that wisdom. A product, so any factor at zero zeroes the whole. (22)

The Mixing of Incommensurable Domains: collapsing a relationship governed by continuity and an exchange governed by symmetry into one channel, which asks that channel to perfect both. The theorem says it cannot be done without corruption. (21)

Modal Assignment Tracks Conjunction: modality attaches to the unit of conjunction and does not distribute to its parts, because a domain is defined purely on the basis triple involved. The six intrinsics are three pairs, and it is the pairs that carry the assignments. Stated in full in Chapter 4 (Volume I). (21)

Morality: an externally defined set of rules for a particular domain. A command originating in a world and directed at all selves. Civil laws; they can be enforced. Heuristic simplifications of ethical principles, and a base-two simplification of a base-three reality, so that thinking in terms of good and bad is the mark of being in a moral frame rather than an ethical one. (21)

The Mystery of the Subconscious: the limit of knowing that falls within one's own subjective self, "that quality of which oneself is"; the most fundamental of the three limits of knowing, and the one that soul refers to. Established in Chapter 26, section II. (26) (27)

Mysticism: a way of perceiving that begins in the omniscient modality as body technique, transitions to the transcendent as a diffusion of self, and completes in the immanent as realization. One of the six paths, and one of the three components of any philosophy. (27)

N

Nature, humanity, technology: a triple. That the three are a triple, and their correspondence one to each to change, choice, and causation, is established in *Evolution, Design, and the Ethics of the Possible*, Chapter 6, section VII. Their modal assignment depends on the standpoint the three are taken from, and both available assignments are valid. Taken from inside the human world, humanity is immanent, because the choosing is ours and the taking of responsibility for it is what is being asked; nature is transcendent, as the before from which we came; technology is omniscient, as the causative consequence of our choices. Taken from outside the three worlds, nature is immanent as change, the human world is om-

niscient as the transactional world, and technology is transcendent because it is about power. Chapter 27 uses the first, because its emphasis is our taking of responsibility for our choices, which requires that we operate as immanent, doing something. The second is what 1.61-13 states when it places change in the immanent class. The two do not conflict, because a change of the unit of conjunction or of the standpoint is a change of domain and therefore of assignment, which is the principle of Chapter 4 (Volume I), section III. *The Applied Metaphysics*, Chapter Five, also gives technology as omniscient. (27)

Non-Relativistic Ethics: ethical principles that are universal (because grounded in the necessary structure of choice) even though their specific expression is always context-dependent. (19)

Nurturance: what practice can do in place of control. Spirituality as acceptance and the enactment of love as nurturance increase the potentiality for joy without guaranteeing it. An increase of influence, not a condition of control. (27)

O

The Omniscient Bias: the tacit presumption that there exists a complete and correct account of how things are, available in principle, which is the account of no one in particular. Named as the standing obstacle to seeing that ethics is downstream of epistemology. (22)

Ought-as-ethics: a principle practiced from inside a situation, held in the immanent, as distinguished from ought-as-morality, which is a rule inspectable from outside and held in the omniscient. Only the former can be derived. (20)

P

Pain and Suffering: pain is a perceived decrease in the potentialities available to self and joy an increase; suffering is what results when morality is applied to the outcome of an interaction. There can be pain without suffering. (22)

Panpsychism of Matter and of Interaction: consciousness is a property of interaction, not matter; this avoids the combination problem because interaction is already relational and unitary. (25)

The Path of Right Action: a win-win choice always exists; such choices are contiguous, forming a path; and the degree to which no win-win choice seems available measures one's distance from it. Points, continuity, and a gradient everywhere else. (22)

Per-Act Triadic Evaluation: an act is assessed for the self, for the other, and for the world, against both principles, without ranking totalized outcomes. The most nearly operational form I give the two principles. (22)

Perceiver / Perception / Perceived: the consciousness triple; perceiver is transcendent, perception is immanent, perceived is omniscient. Perception is more fundamental than either pole (Axiom I). (25)

Physicalism and the Physical Description: the physical description captures one modality; consciousness is another; deriving the immanent from the omniscient is impossible by the ICT. (25)

Pistis: Greek, one of Plato's three forms of belief with doxa (opinion) and episteme (reasoned knowledge); translated as faith, losing its sense. The embodied cultivation of a capacity for relationship with reality; existential commitment; skill in life is embodied faith. Immanent. (26)

The Plane of Perception: the subjective on one side, the objective on the other, and every expression a crossing. It names the two contexts across which channel symmetry is asserted, composition and reception. (21)

Politics vs. Consensus: politics is a group deciding from what it fears; consensus is a group deciding from what its members love and commonly desire together. Values can be shared by all; purposes can only be coordinated; meaning is always in between. (23)

Positive Specification: an ethics must say what to choose and not only what to avoid, because a negatively defined system defines a contrast class against an infinite set and is therefore incomplete. (22)

Principle, Law, Axiom: a principle applies within many worlds, a law within only one, an axiom between all and within none. Non-relativistic ethics is an ethics of principles in exactly this sense, so its non-relativity is a claim of scope. (21)

The product form: the statement at 2.112-2 that effectiveness is proportional to the product, not the sum, of integrity maintained and future choice potentiated. The multiplicative form is what makes the first factor untradeable. (20)

Proportionate Response: one may respond with the same extent and intensity as one was affected, neither more nor less, not to diminish or to escalate but to change. The continuity ethics under conditions of high intensity, and the reason it is not pacifism. (22)

Q

Qualia as Contingent: the specific quality of experience is asymmetric and unrepeatable, so by the ICT no structural principle derives a specific quale; a theory that claimed to would violate the ICT. (25)

R

React/Response Ratio: affect over effect, best near unity; more affect than effect is frustration, more effect than affect is tyranny. A proportion within one act, since action, reaction, and response are distinct yet inseparable and nothing is purely chosen or purely deterministic. (22)

Religion: the integration of oneself into a world. How one expresses, together with others, for the common good, in the social and natural environment in which one lives; a philosophy about the role that oneself plays within a world. Expressive, and therefore objective. Always made and never found. Refers to what is outside the self and is always named. A named philosophy is a religion. Spirituality must be bound to religion, and religion is always one of community. (27)

Religion and community as interchangeable: my usage in this connection, consistent with the definitions, since a named philosophy held in common by those who practice it together is a community under another description. Stated in both directions in *Personal Spiritual Inquiry*, Chapter 3: every religion is a community and every community a religion, in the sense of having some codification of how individuals become groups. What makes a community a religion on this account is codification and not belief. (27)

Root Tautology: comparison is isomorphic with interaction and relation. The warrant for treating a result about comparison as a result about choice. (21)

S

The sacred: that which is considered ultimately meaningful; not supernatural but structural, the recognition that reality has three aspects that matter. Met in awe (a response to the omniscient), gratitude (a response to the transcendent), and the love one feels for another person (a response to the immanent, the relational care within the domain; love itself, as what

enables choice, has the nature of the transcendent). A sacred moment differs from an ordinary one only in the quality of attention. Placed under the transcendent in the correspondence table of *An Immanent Metaphysics*; cannot be engineered. (26)

Safety: defined by potentiality to act, not prevention. Originates inside the self. The self is an axis upon which many worlds turn. The stability and sacredness of the spiritual core of self; there can be no Fear of God. (26)

The Scale Regime: the theorem applies absolutely where the concepts are pushed to a totalized limit, and not at ordinary scales, where imperfect symmetry and imperfect continuity coexist without contradiction. The relatively absolute is absolutely relative. (21)

Scope and Maturity in Governance: the scope of a leadership should never exceed its degree of maturity. Note 2 to 2.14-8 of *An Immanent Metaphysics* applies the principle to numbers: governance at ratios of influence above thirty to one fails ethically in its relations with single individuals, a ceiling that is not reached, not a limit below which governance is safe. (22)

Six Intrinsics of Comparison: sameness and difference, content and context, subject and object, taken as three pairs. Necessary and sufficient to characterize any comparison, reached independently from an ordinary act of seeing and from the smallest physical system that can represent an interaction. Not to be confused with the separate section of *An Immanent Metaphysics* on the six intrinsics of interaction, which enumerates a different six. (21)

The six paths: spirituality, religion, science, technology, mysticism, and magic, which together make up the totality of the relationship between self and reality. Philosophy is a combination of science, spirituality, and mysticism. Metaphysics is the integration and unifying basis of all six into a common whole, which is why a metaphysics contains a mysticism rather than opposing one. (27)

Soul: the transcendent self; that which is purely internal, subjective, and consists of a pure formless quality. Distinguished from mind, the immanent self, the boundary and dynamics between inner quality and outer form, and from body, the omniscient self, the objective symbol projected into a world. Soul is potentia, choice, and desire. It has no size, composition, or locus; it is integral and cannot be decomposed; it is free, undefined, and indefinable; it is not observable and is out of reach of science, technology, or experiment. It is everywhere and everywhere unique, and its essence is an exact quality I call its signature pattern. Soul is what the Mystery of the Subconscious refers to. (27)

The Space in Which Ethics Exists: no world is purely deterministic, since complete determinism would require both perfect symmetry and perfect continuity. Without indeterminacy there is no choice, without choice no responsibility, and without responsibility no ethics. (21)

Spirituality: the integration of a world into oneself. How one integrates the experiences of one's life into oneself, and reflects upon and learns from the events of one's days; a philosophy about the role that a world plays within oneself. Perceptive, and therefore subjective. Always found and never made. Refers to what is within the self and has no name. Its depth is proportional to the capacity to accept and integrate all experience. One cannot join a spirituality. (27)

Spirituality vs. Religion: spirituality is singular, solo, unnamed, about experience. Religion is collective, plural, named, about expression. Religion and community are nearly interchangeable. (23)

Standpoint: the basis of consideration, the position from which a triple is regarded. Modal assignment is made relative to a standpoint, so the same three terms can carry different and equally correct assignments as the standpoint moves. *An Immanent Metaphysics* names the mechanism as an Axiom II rotation introduced by a shift of basis, in the note to "Wisdom and Maturity". (27)

Symmetry, continuity, and their limit: symmetry is sameness of content across a difference of context and continuity an unbroken connection without gap; the Incommensuration Theorem holds that both cannot be perfected in one comparison. Because symmetry and continuity cannot both be perfected in one comparison, consciousness can only be approached asymptotically. For the same reason, the world must appear as pain, while joy and connectedness, equally real, cannot be seen objectively. Established in Chapter 26, sections I and II. (27)

Symmetry Principle: where the objective external context differs and the subjective internal context is the same, the content of expression shall be the same. A principle of consistent expressions. Encompasses the golden rule, the categorical imperative, equality before the law, the prohibition against deception and coercion, and integrity of communication. (21)

T

Temporal Asymmetry as Consciousness: the directionality of time is a feature of interaction (immanent), not structure (omniscient); consciousness *is* this directionality. (25)

Tests of Community: the sickness test (when a member falls into need, do the others rearrange their own choices to hold that person's wellbeing as an end in itself) and the freedom-to-leave tell (does the group's cohesion depend on members being able to leave, or on their being unable to imagine leaving). (23)

The three aspects of self in any event: the dreamer self, which creates the stage, omniscient; the dreamed self, the character on the stage, immanent; the dreaming self, apart from both and with its being in another world, transcendent. In any domain these three are intrinsic and always implicit, and they are Truly Owned. (27)

Three Bases of Relation: care asks what do you need; transaction asks what is it worth; power asks who decides. All three are present in any relation of substance; the question is which governs when they conflict. Power without care is abuse; transaction without care is exploitation; care without power is vulnerability. The chain care, transaction, power is open, and must be closed by governing power with care. (23)

Three Connections: self to spirit (the good), self to world (the true), self to other (the beautiful). A three-legged stool: any two support the third. (23)

The Three Masteries: humanity's mastery of change (contemplative traditions), mastery of causality (science and technology), and the still-incomplete mastery of choice (ethics and governance). (19)

The three modalities: the omniscient (the view from outside; structural, describable), the immanent (the view from inside; participatory, relational), and the transcendent (the view from beyond; creative, exceeding every frame). Distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable (Axiom III); the immanent most fundamental (Axiom I); cycling by precedence of class over instance (Axiom II). (26)

The three Mysteries: the limits of knowing are three: the Mystery of the Horizon (macroscopic; omniscient), the Mystery of the Infinitesimal (microscopic; transcendent), and the Mystery of the Subconscious (mesoscopic; immanent; "that quality of which oneself is"), the last being the most fundamental. (26)

Three Named Discontinuities: prejudice, a discontinuity in awareness of change and interchange; selfishness, in awareness of choice and potentiality; cruelty, in awareness of actuality, cause, and consequence. (22)

Three Rights of Communication: the right to speak, the right to be understood, and the right to know that one has been understood. Communication between people does not happen until all three are granted, from each to the other; they are voluntarily granted, never taken, only given; ir-

reducible, since any simplification loses something essential; the first two symmetry and the third continuity. Agreements rest on relationship, and relationship on communication. (22) (23)

Toxicity and Linearity: toxicity is linearity: extraction, abstraction, accumulation cannot not create toxicity. The antidote is cyclicity: distribution, embodiment, recontextualization. (23)

The Transcendentals (Chapter 25): the good (transcendent), the true (omniscient), and the beautiful (immanent) are structural aspects of all conscious experience, inseparable by Axiom III. (25)

The transcendentals (Chapter 26): goodness, truth, and beauty as a foundational triple. Mapping used in this book: goodness transcendent, truth omniscient, beauty immanent (the essences of the connections to depth, world, and other), which is the third-person frame. In the first person, one step forward along the cycle of Axiom II: goodness immanent, beauty omniscient, truth transcendent. In the second person, one step back: goodness omniscient, beauty transcendent, truth immanent. A modality is assigned relative to the triple and the frame from which it is considered. Zero-positive (each has a zero, its absence, and any positive degree above it, with no negative opposite); a fully effective choice has all three; truth and beauty cannot both be perfected, by the ICT. (26)

True Ownership: that which cannot be taken away. Experience, choice, time, validity (my examples in *An Immanent Metaphysics*); also one's evolution and the three aspects of self. Self is always sovereign; Self is Truly Owned by Choice, not the reverse. (26)

True Ownership, and the Fact of Choice: true ownership is what cannot be taken from a self even in principle. The kinds of choice available to a person can be taken, by another's prior choice or by bad fortune; the fact of choice cannot, since a person living and conscious retains it even in a prison or locked into their own body, where the capacity to dream remains. Because the fact of choice cannot be taken, no situation forecloses every alternative. (22)

Trust: the reasonable expectation that another's choices will track what one cares about. Not a feeling and not a belief; a condition of a relationship, built from accumulated evidence. Two kinds: continuity-based (native to friendship; the unit of account is the relationship; a trust in choice) and symmetry-based (native to coordination; fairness within a boundary; a trust in causal regularity). (23)

The Two Principles of Ethics: the Principle of the Symmetry Ethics and the Principle of the Continuity Ethics, named as such in *An Immanent Metaphysics* at 2.12-6. They are distinct from the priority of ethics over morality and from the structural criterion of right action, the two claims section IV.3 of Chapter 19 treats; the two principles themselves are derived in Chapter 21. (19)

U

Understanding and knowing, as An Immanent Metaphysics bounds itself: *An Immanent Metaphysics* states that by the nature of communication it can convey understanding but cannot convey knowing, and that the reader already has a knowing of innate being to which no text can add. This is the reason the account is offered as points of departure for meditation rather than as an argument meant to convince. (27)

Understanding Cannot Be Deceived: understanding (continuity-natured) is immune to deception (which requires discontinuity); a structural consequence of the ICT. (25)

The Universal Law: all lawfulness is of exactly two kinds, symmetry and continuity; world is founded on the first and self on the second. The answer *An Immanent Metaphysics* gives to why there are exactly two principles of ethics. (21)

The unqualified why: the question why anything at all. A why is transcendent, relative to a self, and answered in possibility; the ultimate why of everything is answered, tacitly, by love, and the asking already implies care. The omniscient cannot justify the transcendent. (26)

V

Values Are Intercompositional: purposes are frequently mutually exclusive, values are not, so there are no necessary value conflicts. The support for the claim that one chooses most effectively from love. (22)

The Veil of Secrecy: the omniscient cannot contain or observe the transcendent; it can only be that the transcendent perceives the omniscient, never the reverse. Its positive complement: from the immanent the transcendent becomes accessible; the mystery is held in practice, not in theory. (26)

Violence as Discontinuity of Choice: violence comes from a discontinuity of choice and begets one, at both ends of the act; a weapon is the use of causation to suppress choice. The positive form of what nonviolence names negatively is continuity of choice, gradual boundaries in the felt availability of choosing. Intensity is not violence, provided all parties retain sovereign possession of their capacity to choose. (21)

The void: what is left when form is taken away. Structurally there is none: wherever attention moves one finds substance, and absolute nothingness is incoherent. Contemplatively the formless is not the empty: love, care, value, and potentiality are formless and not nothing. Lived, the void is depression, a cessation of energy that moves in no direction; and even from it there is a way out. (26)

W

Whether the metaphysics is a religion: it cannot be just a religion, because religion is one of the six paths and the metaphysics lives at the level of the union of all six, and what stands at the union of a set is not a member of it. Positively, it provides the core code of the inner mysticism of basically any religion, while the core itself, and much of what it supports, stands outside religion and community. It is not a religion, but it can function as the core of one, of several, or of all of them. Grounded in *The Divine, Faith, and Religious Life*, Chapter 13, for religion as one of the six paths, and in *Conversations on the Immanent Metaphysics*, Chapter 1, section VI, for the conclusion that neither the metaphysics nor the ethics can be based in any religion and that both can only be the basis of one or of many. The claim about the inner mysticism is stated in *Global and Indigenous Philosophical Traditions* (the short title of *The Questions of Global and Indigenous Philosophical Traditions*), section V, as an adjacency claim about what each tradition holds at its center. (27)

Why a Trolley Problem Is Not an Ethical Question: a stipulated dilemma permitting no third course puts an omniscient-modal question, one asked from the view outside with the alternatives already enumerated and closed, while ethical principles, taken as principle, in triple with practice and theory, are transcendent. Such a problem smuggles in the impression that existence has priority over reality, which I deny, holding the real more fundamental than the existing. (22)

Why Computation Cannot Account for All of Process: the ICT proves that computational process (symmetric, lawful) cannot account for all of reality, because the creative dimension is incommensurable with it. (24)

Why neither can be escaped: no life is lived without perception, so no one is wholly unspiritual; no life is lived without expression, so no one is wholly irreligious. There can be no spirituality without a self, and no world without a religion. (27)

Wild / Domesticated / Feral: a person who trusts nature first is wild; one who trusts other first is social (domesticated); one who trusts nothing is feral (hypervigilant, exhausting). (23)

Wisdom: the integration and synthesis of both knowledge and understanding. Since knowing is symmetry-natured and understanding continuity-natured, wisdom is the name for holding both where the theorem says neither can be perfected at the other's expense. (22)

Worship and respect: worship is the behavior of one who believes there is some irreducible difference in the basic nature of the being of self and the being of what is worshiped. Respect assumes a basic sameness. The distinction is why I place the imperfect and temporary as equal in value to the perfect and eternal. (27)

Terms Inherited from Earlier Volumes

These terms are defined in an earlier volume of the series and are used in this one without being defined again. Each is given here in the words of the chapter that defines it, with the volume and chapter named, so that a reader who does not have the earlier volume to hand is not stopped by a term.

A

The Asymmetry: perception, experience, and world share the omniscient modality and are defined by symmetry and discontinuity; pain is discontinuity and so is perceivable, joy is continuity and so is not. The appearance of fact is not the being of fact. (Volume II, Chapter 13)

Attention: the locus, a position of a maximum in the distribution of awareness. A location and not a quantity. Awareness is the shape of the distribution; attention is where its peak sits. Perception cannot be moved, only attention can be moved. Moving it to a greater depth costs energy in proportion to the depth. (Volume II, Chapter 10)

Attunement and Discernment: the practice by which a win-win is found; attunement is registration of where the other is, discernment is the reading of what is actually happening in the feeling space. Both are matters of feeling. (Volume II, Chapter 17)

Axiom II Rotation: terms that bind naturally across two domains can still carry different modal assignments in each, when one domain is the predecessor of the other. Questions are the setup for measurements, and how and when rotate accordingly; comparison and measurement, being equivalent, show no rotation. (Volume I, Chapter 4)

Axiom III: the three terms of a triple are distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable; intrinsic in all relationship, being and doing are three concepts which are distinct, inseparable and non-interchangeable. The relation that makes the subjective and the objective inseparable. It is not one of the six intrinsics. Applied at 2.43-6 and 2E9: one cannot have thoughts without emotions and feelings, nor emotions without thoughts and feelings, and even the strongest emotion does not imply the absence of the other two. Inseparability is not sameness, which is why the triple can be worked as three independent variations on one object. (Volume I, Chapter 9; Volume II, Chapter 10)

B

The Basal Motivations: the root desire of all consciousness is to maximize the degree, diversity, and intensity of both creative experience and the experience of creativity. Direction, not destination. The product of both, not one at the expense of the other. This is what a developing self develops toward. (Volume II, Chapters 14 and 16)

Belief: a structure of mind that acts as a filter on perception and knowing and as a predisposition in understanding and expression. An operator on both arrows at once. Fixed and unchanging, it has the characteristics and effects of prejudice. (Volume I, Chapter 9)

Blockage: emotion is apparent in proportion to blockage, resistance, or de-coherence in value, significance, and purpose, and is found where ideologies, beliefs, ideas, and perceptions conflict. Emotion is not more present when it is more conspicuous; it is more obstructed. (Volume II, Chapter 10)

Boundary of Self: my term in *An Immanent Metaphysics* for that boundary, defined as an arbitrary demarcation within the totality of the beingness of interaction, with my own note there that there is no actual boundary. It is a variable and not a fixed locus, and its placement is what decides whether one is giving a realist or an idealist description. (Volume I, Chapter 8)

C

Channel Integrity: the joint condition of symmetry and continuity on a communication channel. Because the channel is immanent relative to the subjective and the objective, the integrity of self and of world both rest on it, which is why its two conditions become principles of goodness rather than merely of engineering. (Volume I, Chapter 7)

Choice: a process of potentiality, selection, and consequence, these three being necessary and sufficient. A selection with no consequence is not a choice. All choice is cooperative and can only be given, never taken, and every choice involves both freedom and limitation. (Volume II, Chapter 16)

Choose from the Basis of Love: the emotions differ in how much choice each enables, love enabling most. A choice made from anger, fear, or skepticism is made from a smaller range and is less effective at realizing anything significant. (Volume II, Chapter 13)

Clarity: not only the ability to see through but the ability to move through. Where imagination has been interrupted, potentiality has been lost, and with it choice. (Volume II, Chapter 17)

Code: two degrees of interpretive context (a source language and an execution environment, related by a translator). Enacted intentionality. Transcendent, because it necessarily crosses a domain boundary. System design, governance, automation. Most exposed of the three to continuity failure, because a channel that executes what passes through it has agency by construction. (Volume I, Chapter 6)

Communication Channel Integrity: the plane of perception considered as a conduit. Symmetry is what goes in one end coming out the other; continuity is connection without abrupt breaks. The more agency in the conduit, the less faithful it is. (Volume I, Chapter 9)

Conjugacy: the structural relationship in which two aspects cannot be simultaneously perfected; the deep principle underlying Heisenberg uncertainty, Gödel incompleteness, and Bell's theorem. Choice and causality, for example, are conjugate with respect to change: neither can be defined away, and the ICT proves the conjugacy is irreducible. (Volume I, Chapters 0 and 2)

Conjugate: of two quantities that vary against one another and are jointly constitutive of a third, such that neither member can change without the other changing, and driving one to its limit drives the other to zero, so that only their combination admits a maximum; this is why the product and not the sum. Thought and feeling are conjugate at 2E11, density and frequency are conjugate under intensity at 1.64-4, and actuality and potentiality are conjugate. The potentiality of joy and the potentiality of pain move together, as do limitation and freedom. A conjugate pair is not two names for one thing and not two independent things, and explicitly not a pairing of opposites in balance. (Volume II, Chapters 10, 13 and 14)

Continuity: sameness of content where there is a sameness of context, given as a proportionality between the change of context and the change of content. The law of self, of creation, of change and of feeling. Its complement is discontinuity, difference of content with sameness of context. It fails in two directions: total change for an infinitesimal cause is discontinuity, and no change for any cause is no signal. Symmetry, asymmetry, continuity, and discontinuity are the four primary operators, and they exhaust the combinations of the two axes. (Volume I, Chapters 4 and 8)

Cooperative Choice: individual freedom is non-linearly proportional to cooperation and coordination, on condition of a maximum of both accepted diversity and expressed unity. This is why two working together produce more than twice one. (Volume II, Chapter 17)

Courage: fear held with the love that sources it in view. Not the absence of fear and not a separate emotion. (Volume II, Chapter 12)

D

Depth: scope, in time, in space, and in possibility. Effects begin to show at about three inches down on the logarithmic scale I use in teaching and are definitive by nine, and the return on depth is quadratic rather than linear. (Volume II, Chapter 16)

Desire: arises at the boundary and resolves at the boundary, or, in the depth architecture of *An Immanent Metaphysics*, arises in the soul and returns to it. Transcendent modality under the precedence cycle. Not personal, and scalable. (Volume II, Chapter 14)

Desire, Want, and Need: three aspects of love, referring to its quality, form, and intensity. Distinguished by where each arises and where each is realized, satisfaction always being a return to the origin. In boundary form: a need is satisfied inside the boundary of self, a want outside it, a desire across it. They close into a cycle in which a class of desires precedes an instance of need, a class of needs an instance of want, and a class of wants an instance of desire. (Volume II, Chapter 11)

The Developmental Sequence: six stages in two triples: attachment, attunement, and nurturing care action (the caregiver's), then trust, autonomy, and sexuality (the child's). Individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the process between generations to continue. (Volume II, Chapter 18)

Dualism: to model all that is real in terms of a fixed Cartesian separation of mind and soul from body and matter. The compromise between the two poles, excluded because the degree of interaction between self and reality can never be zero or infinite. (Volume I, Chapter 9)

E

Emotion: intensity, direction, and state of energy flow. Immanent modality. Volume, brightness, flow. "energy in motion", which is my own gloss; my cognate in *An Immanent Metaphysics* at 2.43-8 has emotions "literally power, or give strength to, one's thoughts". Indicative of significance. Bridges mind and body by supplying the energy that crosses the channel. (Volume II, Chapter 10)

Ethics and Morality: oughtness as a principle is ethics and is immanent; oughtness as a rule is morality and is omniscient. The derivation yields ought-as-ethics; ought-as-morality cannot be derived from is-as-being. (Volume I, Chapter 5)

F

Feeling: quality, timbre, texture. Transcendent modality. Color; the appreciable but not describable. Rich in quality. Cannot be controlled by anything internal or external, and for that reason is truly one's own. Non-dimensional: qualities have no axes, cannot be ranked, and are not compounds of simpler qualities, which is why there is no periodic table of smells. (Volume II, Chapter 10)

G

Gentleness: the reflection of inner stillness and sensitivity, where stillness is proportional to the integrity of self and sensitivity to the self's involvement with reality. It cannot be performed, because a manner can be adopted and an integration cannot. (Volume II, Chapter 13)

The Governance Axis: governance operates on the survival and sociality axis, because sociality is the public instinct and the other two are primarily private. It must not be co-opted by individual interest or by survival myopia, and must still preserve both. (Volume II, Chapter 16)

Grief: not a sixth emotion but the unwinding process, the sequence traversed in reverse. Its order is fixed; its number of passes is not, and intense grieving moves back and forth. (Volume II, Chapter 12)

I

Idealism: perception absolutely dependent on expression. The deletion of the objective process. The return path is not cut but shortened to nothing. (Volume I, Chapter 8)

Inseparability: sameness/difference, content/context, subjective/objective are inseparable pairs. Each requires the other. (Volume I, Chapter 2)

Instinct, Intellect, Intuition: three faculties, not three drives. The characteristic failure is using one of them for everything. Instinct is the embodied energy, intellect the predictive guide, and intuition the felt sense beyond available data. *An Immanent Metaphysics* pairs intuition with intellect; my teaching completes the pair into a triple with instinct. Unacknowledged instinct co-opts whichever faculty is being used, and the error is symmetrical between intellectual and emotional temperaments. (Volume II, Chapters 15 and 17)

Intensity: the third term defined in its own right at 1.64-4, as proportional to the product of density (the number of choices) and frequency (the rate at which they are made), the two being conjugate. Immanent, with density omniscient and frequency transcendent. Not a synonym for strength of feeling; it is how much choosing is going on. (Volume II, Chapters 10 and 13)

Intensity of Choice: the product of density (how many choices) and frequency (how fast). Intensity is immanent, density omniscient, frequency transcendent. (Volume II, Chapter 16)

Interdependence: a relation in which each party's love enables the realization of the other's own dreams as well as their shared ones. Distinguished from dependence, which is debilitating, and independence, which is static. The second route out of depression. (Volume II, Chapter 13)

Intrinsic: a term chosen against causality and predication. An intrinsic is not a cause of an interaction and not a predicate of one; it is an aspect without which the interaction would not be that interaction. The model is neither more nor less fundamental than the concept it models. (Volume I, Appendix A)

Is-Ought Dissolution: Hume's gap presupposes separability of "is" and "ought". Axiom III says they are inseparable. The derivation through communication channel integrity provides the specific content. (Volume I, Chapter 5)

J

Joy: the perception of an increase in the potentialities available to self. Corresponds to the potentiality of events of connection, continuity, and union. (Volume II, Chapter 13)

K

Knowing: abstractive transformation of perception, outer form to inner feeling. Symmetry-natured: repeatable, shareable, third-person. Distinct from knowledge, which is static content rather than a process. (Volume I, Chapter 5)

Knowing and Understanding: knowing is the transformation of outer form into inner feeling and understanding the transformation of inner feeling into outer form. Both are required for a life to be meaningful, because feelings do not persist and forms do not endure, each being durable exactly where the other is not. (Volume II, Chapter 11)

L

Love Only Exists When It Moves: love cannot be kept, stored, saved, or protected; it is not a possession but the unconditional state of both channels, and a love that is not moving is not love. (Volume II, Chapter 12)

M

The Modal Assignment: attachment and trust transcendent; attunement and autonomy immanent; nurturing care action and sexuality omniscient. Anchored firmly at attunement (perception) and autonomy (choice); the remainder follows by position. (Volume II, Chapter 18)

N

Need: arises within, resolves within. Body, integration, urgency. Immanent modality under the precedence cycle. Not purchasable. (Volume II, Chapter 14)

Not a Technique: emotional and spiritual dynamics cannot be the target of any goal driven activity, because they work by expansive choices that increase potentiality and a target is a limit. The distinction between a discipline and a technique. (Volume II, Chapter 11)

O

Override Ring: sexuality overrides survival; sociality overrides sexuality; survival overrides sociality. An Axiom II process, licensed by the modal assignment sexuality immanent, survival omniscient, sociality transcendent, which holds with the instincts bound to self, world, and other in the order of the Axiom II flow. In a ring no member is deepest, so conflicts resolve by the direction of the cycle. (Volume II, Chapter 16)

P

Pain: the perception of a decrease in the potentialities available to self. Corresponds to the actuality of events of interruption, cessation, and discontinuity. The definition names no who, only a what, which is why one word covers the cut and the bereavement. (Volume II, Chapter 13)

Passion: anger conscious of the love that sources it and directed in a way that is healthy and effective. Distinguished from anger by consciousness and by direction, and, I hold, more efficient at lasting change. (Volume II, Chapter 12)

Prejudice: expression absolutely independent of perception. The deletion of the inward crossing. In the ethics, a maintained discontinuity in the distribution of one's choices, and an attempt to make choices beyond the boundary of self. (Volume I, Chapter 8)

R

Reaction: expression absolutely dependent on perception, where reaction is mechanistic and deterministic. The deletion of the subjective process. Never wholly absent from any response, so that the error is its absolutization and never its presence. (Volume I, Chapter 8)

Real: the beingness of a single instance of an interaction, exactly one. Not the self and not the world, but the crossing between them. Interaction is real but does not exist, because existence is characterized by independence and an interaction is not independent of its terms. (Volume I, Chapter 8)

Realism: perception absolutely independent of expression. The deletion of the outward crossing, which is to say of its arrival. The mirror image of prejudice. (Volume I, Chapter 8)

Reason and Faith: reason is the fullness and accuracy of thinking as the basis of choice; faith is the fullness and precision of feeling. They are conjugate rather than opposite, and no effective choice can be made on either alone. Faith is not blind, it is vision wide open. (Volume II, Chapter 17)

S

The Second Person: the relationship conceived as process, the communication channel between subject and object. The transit from third person to first is impossible directly and possible through the second, which is why a text conveys understanding and not knowing. (Volume I, Chapter 5)

Six Intrinsics of Interaction: the six aspects into which any consideration of interaction, perception, or expression resolves, at 1.85-3. The distinction of subject and object, an omniscient modal context; the fixed characteristic of the structure of the object, an omniscient modal content; the irreversibility of change, an immanent modal context; the direction of the flow of change, an immanent modal content; the transformation of information, a transcendent modal context; the specification of transformation attributes, a transcendent modal content. (Volume I, Appendix A)

Structural Correspondence: what the theorem's application to a domain claims. Both the theorem and the domain result instantiate the same general trade-off; the domain result is not deduced from the theorem. (Volume I, Chapter 8)

Symmetry: sameness of content where there is a difference of context. The property that makes a claim hold across changes of situation; the golden rule and the categorical imperative are both symmetry claims. The law of world, of existence, of physics, of substance and of form. Its complement is asymmetry, difference of content with difference of context. (Volume I, Chapters 4 and 8)

T

Text: one degree of interpretive context (a language). Structural description, viewable from outside. Omniscient. Neutrality, longevity, information. Its neutrality is a service performed for a recipient whose choices have not been made yet, not a property of the medium. (Volume I, Chapter 6)

Thought: form, pattern, structure. Omniscient modality. Melody, shape, the describable. Static as a result and dynamic as an activity, which is the distinction between a thought and thinking. Rich in quantity. Taken in the wide sense of *An Immanent Metaphysics* at 2E6, it covers anything that organizes perception, including beliefs, ideas, concepts, ideologies, philosophies, and the structural aspects of the nervous system. (Volume II, Chapter 10)

The Three Axioms: in the words of *An Immanent Metaphysics*, 1.3-1. Axiom I: "The immanent is more fundamental than the omniscient and/or the transcendent. The omniscient and the transcendent are in conjugate relationship to one another". Axiom II: "A class of the transcendent will precede an instance of the immanent. A class of the immanent will precede an instance of the omniscient. A class of the omniscient will precede an instance of the transcendent". Axiom III: "The (classes/instances) of the immanent, omniscient, and transcendent are distinct, inseparable, and non-interchangeable". (Volume I, Chapter 0)

The Three Instincts: sexuality (self, creativity, generativity), survival (world, self-preservation), sociality (other, relational). Bound strictly to the self, world, other triple, from which they inherit their completeness; every other named instinct is a composite of these three. The evolutionary basis of choice, the bottom-up term in the triple of choice, evolution, and technology. Complete as a set, and not absolute as individual drives. Named by me in the order social, survival, sexual, with immanent, omniscient and transcendent connotations respectively, in my book *The Questions of Mind and Self*, Volume IV of the Apex Question Project; that align-

ment holds under the ordinating relation, with the instincts taken as the originating basis of the character of the motivations. Bound to self, world, and other taken in the order of the Axiom II flow (first person immanent, third person omniscient, second person transcendent), sexuality is immanent, survival omniscient, and sociality transcendent; the two differ because the triple is taken in two relations. (Volume II, Chapters 14 and 16)

Three Rings of Verification: intensity, consistency, and novelty. Their product is the degree to which something counts as an objective part of a world, so that any one of them at zero takes the whole to zero. The third ring is what idealism sets to zero by construction. (Volume I, Chapters 4 and 9)

Truth: not primarily correctness in thinking but the significance and efficiency of choice, validated in both subjectivity and objectivity; that on the basis of which one can act with confidence and effectiveness. Known through feeling as much as through thought. The meaning of a truth is more basic than its value or its purpose. An absolute truth is content that is completely context-independent, which is the limit of symmetry. (Volume I, Chapter 5; Volume II, Chapter 17)

Two Smaller Selves: the cost of confused desire. A divided chooser is not one chooser in difficulty but two, each with significantly less freedom of choice. (Volume II, Chapter 15)

U

Understanding: instructive transformation of expression, inner feeling to outer form. Continuity-natured: participatory, first-person. Transcendent when taken in triple with knowing; immanent when used in the sense of attunement. The transcendent assignment is stated outright in *An Immanent Metaphysics*, at "Wisdom and Maturity" and its note 1, together with knowledge as omniscient, and the ground given is that understanding connects to expression and knowledge to perception, each as an aspect of

interaction. The note makes the assignment from the perspective of the self and says the correspondences would change from the perspective of the world. (Volume I, Chapter 5)

W

Want: arises outside, resolves outside. Marketplace, transaction, specificity. Omniscient modality under the precedence cycle. Learned rather than intrinsic, and therefore teachable by others. (Volume II, Chapter 14)

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