

Martin Buber and Immanuel Kant on Mutual Respect and the Liberal State

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Buber's and Kant's views as to how to achieve mutual respect are intertwined, contrary to the way each would likely see the other's position. To this end, the author discussed each writer's view of mutual respect and shows how the deficiencies in each are made up for in the arguments of the other. The author concludes by suggesting that a conception of liberal civil society, at its best and most democratic, embodied both Buber's and Kant's views of mutual respect.

I. Introduction: Buber and Kant on Toleration and Mutual Respect

Toleration, often considered a central value in a liberal regime that is committed to provide to each citizen fundamental rights, can ironically be liberalism's undoing. Toleration suggests a “live and let” live attitude toward difference. People who practice toleration learn to ignore what they distrust or do not understand. And what people distrust or ignore, they may over time begin to fear and later, as fear grows, to hate. And when this happens, toleration itself becomes the source of illiberal attitudes toward difference. Since rights are in part protected by sympathetic rights-regarding attitudes, the mindset emanating from toleration can make it difficult to secure the rights that liberalism promises. In consequence, toleration must be buttressed by mutual respect, which directs people to communicate with each other in such a way that they create spaces in society for difference to thrive and for the rights of others, no matter how different, to be preserved (DeLue, 2002, 16-18).

In this paper, I would like to discuss the culture of mutual respect by making reference to two important writers on the subject, Immanuel Kant and Martin Buber. Both of these writers would no doubt view the other's work as problematic. And yet both need elements of the other's work. Buber predicated mutual respect on kindness, in which people naturally respond to perceived needs in others. Kant, on the other hand, predicates mutual respect on moral concepts that guide and motivate conduct to treat others as ends. The first view argues for natural and spontaneous relationships in which there are no third terms (such as institutions and practices) mediating between people for moral, social, and political purposes. The

Kantian view seeks to provide these third terms, by way of moral concepts which are to govern social and political relationships, in order to ensure that spontaneity does not lead to harmful encounters.

For Buber, organizing relationships by concepts, no matter how moral and true they may be, works to undermine spontaneity and thus leads to voiding the bonds of community and friendship. Thus, Buber (1967, 109; 1952, 27) saw Kant's argument as proposing a perspective built from reason which conceives moral concepts and principles that perpetuate, in the name of treating individuals with respect, separation and isolation. For Kant, on the other hand, Buber's mistake would be to envision circumstances that emphasize as the basis for mutual respect the experience of immediacy, not governed or guided by concepts of right stemming from reason, and this circumstance for Kant would not necessarily lead to real community but it may instead lead to exploitation.

My argument is that Buber's and Kant's views of how to achieve mutual respect are intertwined and in need of each other. In the next section, I first discuss in greater detail the objections Buber would have to Kant, and this is followed by the approach to mutual respect found in Kant. Then, I discuss the way in which Buber's view of mutual respect in the form of the "I and Thou" relationship actually must incorporate many dimensions of Kant's argument. Finally, I conclude with a view of civil society that embodies both views as part of what is needed to make possible mutual respect.

II. Buber's Effort to Overcome Dualism

Buber's view of mutual respect stems from his understanding of the intentions of original, authentic Judaism. For Buber, Judaism as originally developed sought community built not from abstract conceptions of truth emanating from reason. Community is not a product of a Platonic formula that fashions human interaction so as to emulate goodness. Rather, people build community when they take part in direct and immediate relationships with each other. What are direct, immediate relationships? People, when they speak to each other, reveal their needs, their fears, and their hopes. Others who hear these messages respond in a direct way to what is said. I hear you speak of your needs, and I respond to them with assistance. I listen to your hopes and dreams, and I work to help you realize them. I hear your confusion and fear, and I help you to overcome both. Simple

kindness is the basis of relationships of these relationships of immediacy. Kindness is nothing more than my direct effort to respond to the felt needs you communicate.

In all cases, what takes place in immediate relationships is that people are helping each other to both define and then to realize their potential as human beings. Since this objective for Buber is in step with the great and overriding purpose of human life, those who participate in these relationships experience together, as members of a community, an intimation of the unconditional and the eternal. Communal intimacy then is a pathway to achieving a sense of the divine. In each case, the “relationship between man and man [becomes] the carrier of the Divine, [and assumes] lasting shape (Buber, 1967, 145-46).

In this setting, life is experienced as a “unity not of being but of becoming” (Buber, 1967, 112). This means that I, as an individual, reveal my potential to others as I interact with them. As a result, there is an evolving understanding of myself, where today I understand one dimension of my life that has not been revealed before, and tomorrow in the face of new circumstances I may make myself aware of different possibilities. I am not on this view “called” to fulfill a predestined plan, and thus my life is not a fixed and permanent identity designed around such a plan. Rather, as I relate to others and discover my possibilities, I work to fulfill them and as I do, I end up inevitably creating new relationships or new variants of existing relationships to others, each of which makes me aware of new possibilities for myself.

To live in this way, there must be relationships in society that are designed to enable a life that is in the process of becoming, and not fixed and unchanging. But opportunities for moments such as these have become rare in the modern world. In large part this is the case, because life is no longer experienced as direct, mutual relationships but as relationships in which a third party enters between us to direct our relationships and to determine their content. Often, the third party acts on the basis of interests that do not incorporate the needs that direct, unmediated relationships meet. In this case, relationships are not arranged to help each person realize their potential but to help the third party realize its ends. Moreover, where third parties define the terms of relationships, communication is often blocked between people. Here, I can express my hopes and needs to you, but you cannot understand or even hear them. Thus, when our lives become mediated by third parties, they become frozen in place, forced to

be what third parties demand or, failing that, forced to cry out for help in a world where no one hears, listens, or acts to help facilitate other peoples' potential.

This circumstance, though typical in the modern world, has evolved from the beginnings of our religious history as Jews and Christians. For Buber, Judaism is dedicated to securing direct and unmediated forms of community. But Jews did not succeed in making this approach to community the foremost experience of religious life. Originally, Jesus walked in the steps of the primary purposes of Judaism. Jesus for Buber (1967, 123-24) was merely trying to promote direct, unmediated community, but those who used Jesus's teaching and name to establish Christianity used it to justify mechanisms for mediating human life, and these mechanisms separated and alienated people from each other. This reality is reflected in a Christianity grounded in institutional church authority, with those in power entering between the lives of people to guide and to direct them on terms acceptable to the ruling church. Naturally, in this situation, people could not restore the prospect of authentic community, and the sense of the unconditional that arises whenever community is restored remains hidden.

In the face of this reality, Jews instead of maintaining a commitment to authentic Judaism turned Judaism into a life form that replicated the approach of Christianity. This meant that Jews failed to create communities of immediacy but instead established communities based on rules that allowed third parties—religious elites—to orchestrate the lives of others. In mimicking Christianity, Jews lived in terms rigidly defined by religious rules and customs, and as a result were unable to interact naturally with each other for the purpose of helping one another both define and to realize their potential. In consequence, real community could not be established, nor could the experience of the divine be re-instituted. In this setting, the Jews, rather than restoring authentic community and the unconditional, turned their backs to both. “And [for Buber (1967, 129)] this is more sinister than the bloodbaths of the Crusaders or the tortures of the Inquisition, more heinous than pogroms.”

Perhaps the worst element of mediated relationships that both Judaism and Christianity have promoted since Jesus is that these relationships aid and encourage dualistic thinking among people. Here individuals see themselves as citizens and as private persons, as members of a religious order and as citizens, and as in Augustine as people in the city of man

filled with self-loathing owing to their sin and as parishioners in the church looking for grace in order to achieve eternal life in heaven (1967, 123, 126). There are many other dualisms, of course. But what each dualism does is to divide a person against him or herself, making that person think of themselves as two or four or six or more different people, split by schisms that cannot be overcome.

Given this line of thought, the situation is made worse today with multiculturalism. When we talk about human identity, we often define this idea in terms of group or ethnic or religious loyalty. In doing so, we say that “x” is a member of “y” group and is thus an “x,” but “z” is not an “x” because he is a member of “d” group. Looking upon life in this way allows us to recognize differences among people on a whole scale of factors, including for instance race, religion, morality, national origin, and so on. Here difference is the basis for what is not bridgeable. I can understand the perspective of those different from me, but I cannot find with them a common ground. Necessarily, others who are different inevitably become alien.

Through rational public discourse, we try to overcome these dualisms, of course. But in doing so, all we really do is create more dualisms. Thus, we conjure a language of opposites to explain the modern predicament. And then we seek a basis for conjunction in a language of harmony. Often, there is the individual on the one hand and the community on the other, and a third term—that of ethics—is used to conjoin both. Western thought can be viewed in precisely these terms from Plato to Hegel through Marx to Rawls. We recognize dualisms, we invent new ones to overcome existing ones, and when we cannot overcome these, we end up with more dualisms than before and more chances for alienation and estrangement than ever.

In authentic community, however, these dualisms disappear, as do all mediated relationships. Here instead of relating to each other based on third parties or divisive concepts, we relate to each other in terms of pure immediacy and experience the fullness of being. This fullness of being is made possible when our mutual aiding of each other inspires not just the realization of our potential but of a sense of the divine. Our task in restoring mutual respect then is to replace relationships built upon concepts of whatever origin, with the felt experience of immediacy. That moment is the bridging of all dualisms as well as their overcoming. It is the moment in which we experience in a direct manner, for Buber, God. In this way of looking at the world, God is no longer an abstraction known

only intellectually through the concepts used to construct him, as is the case for instance in Spinoza. Instead, God is an experience of feeling freed from dualistic thinking and, through this act, sensing the unconditional and the eternal (1952, 29).

Judaism speaks to the effort to recognize this problem in the modern world and to overturn as much as possible the many kinds of dualistic forms of thought and conduct that permeate life. We must return to the life of the immediate, felt experience. And this enterprise of authentic community can only be achieved through relationships created by dialogue. Central to all that we can be and hope for is a special dialogue that explains the nature of the world and us in that world. For Buber, however, the Kantian vision prevents us from understanding the necessity as well as the nature of this discussion, or what I refer to, following Dan Avnon (1998, 149), as dialogical community. Before discussing this aspect, first I want to outline some key ideas of Kantian morality.

II. Kantian Moral Thinking

The great Kantian moral principle of treating others as ends and not solely as means is the occasion for the kind of talk that is designed to make moral judgments at both the levels of the public realm and the private individual. Speech in the public realm is concerned with resolving major controversies in a manner that achieves publicly guaranteed rights for all. At the individual level, the principle of treating others as ends suggests that people in relating to each other must be aware of all the duties incumbent upon treating others with respect. Kant (1983, 43-57) lists many duties, such as never lie, always keep promises to another, never commit suicide, always promote the fullest development of yourself and others, and so on. Often these duties conflict as for instance is the case when the duty to always keep one's promise to another conflicts with the duty to never lie. I may have promised "y" that I would tell him the truth about his medical condition after seeing "y's" doctor. But "y's" doctor may tell me that, though "y" is about to die, I am not to tell him that, lest he lose his composure and dies without dignity before his family. I decide, in keeping with the doctor's admonition, to violate my agreement with "y" by saying to him that although he is seriously ill he will not die soon. In this case I have lied to "y" and broken both the duties not to lie and to always keep my agreements. My doing so has been buttressed by my support of a core value; namely,

my hope that “y’s” memory will be a good one for his family. I see this as necessary for their welfare, something I think “y” would want as well if he were in my position.

My ultimate rationale for taking this course is that I think it is the only way to maintain the Kantian moral principle requiring me to treat others as ends. To achieve this principle it is necessary to gauge the consequences of my proposed actions and to ask if these actions will embody duties in ways necessary to achieve the great moral principle of treating others as ends. To be sure, Kant’s morality is fueled principally by a motive to do right and not by thoughts of the consequences of proposed actions. Kant (1949, 192) says that “a free will and a will subject to moral laws are one and the same.” People, when they make as the motive of action their will, act from ethical precepts that are designed to treat others as ends (176-77). When they do, they act as free human beings not subject to external circumstances that would force them to treat others as means to their own ends. For Kant, people are free when they follow their will as opposed to their interests. The latter arise from emotion and thus negate the force of the will, which suggests the moral course all rational persons should follow. People should thus act from good motives, or motives that conform to Kant’s great moral principle.

Still, it is difficult to imagine how one could make moral choices without thinking ahead of time about the possible consequences of these choices. Thus, if I wish to help another in need, I may be prone to offer that person money. But my intention to help a person may dictate another course of action should it be the case that I anticipate that providing an individual with money will actually harm him. And thus Kantian ethics exhorts us to examine possible consequences of proposed actions and of determining if these consequences embody the moral law to treat others as ends.

The consequentialist inevitability of Kant’s argument always seems to be bracketed from the experience in which the consequences naturally arise. Yes, Kant must also think in terms of the consequences of proposed actions, but in so doing, he is thinking of them in the abstract. He is asking questions such as what if all people continued to lie or to cheat each other? What kind of world would follow from that conduct? Is it a world that any rational person would want to live in? His questions always suggest a negative answer. But Kant does not look at particular moments when we are faced with lying or telling the truth. It might be the case that lying may make for a better world, as for instance when we lie to save a man’s life from the Nazi at our door because doing otherwise harms humanity in some critical way.

The importance of this point for this paper is that, on Buber's view, Kantian philosophy is too often detached from the circumstances that are the domain of moral decision making. Where the focus of philosophy is a discussion of rational, moral motives, individuals approach this task from a notion of an ideal society rather than the actual society in which individuals live, and in consequence lose touch with the actual one. This means that so focused are people on a particular mental vision explaining how the world should look, that they lose grasp of the world in terms of how it does look in practice. In practice, the world is basically quite simple. We need to relate to others' in terms of their needs and hopes, and by doing so, there is the presumption on Buber's part that the consequences for humankind will be great and beautiful. And the reason for this is that in manifesting kindness to others in a direct way, we serve the great purpose of helping people realize their potential, and this action is the basis for our receipt of a sense of the eternal in our lives.

For Buber (1952, 27-29, 71), knowledge of moral life comes only in relation to others, not through abstract moral thinking. And knowledge of our lives "in relation" arises through dialogue. In the next section, I look at the way in which this dialogue is constructed.

III. Buber and Dialogical Community

Buber (1958a) in his famous book *I and Thou* sought to see the other as a helpful presence and not the enemy desirous of stealing freedom as was the case in Sartre's other in *Being and Nothingness*. For Buber, the other is capable of recognizing that we have real potential that needs to be developed and in doing so we attain significance to our lives. The other in this case helps us to articulate and to understand our potential, as well as helps us to realize that potential. As Buber (1997, 91) says in discussing this dimension of human relationships, "I not only accept the other as he is, but I confirm him, in myself, and then in him, in relation to this potentiality that is meant by him and it can now be developed, it can evolve, it can enter a reality of life."

Why is this moment so important for people? As Avron says (1998, 212), for Buber as for Kant there is a natural human longing to answer the following questions: "Where do I come from? Where am I going? What will judge my deeds at the end of my days?" The answer to each question is the same. We are to work to fulfill our potential and in doing so we achieve understanding that life is filled with meaning.

Now what stands in the way of attaining this great purpose for people's lives are the many dualisms that we encounter throughout life. Buber (1967, 25) says, "It is a fundamental psychological fact that the multiplicity of man's soul appears to him, recurrently, as a dualism; in fact, inasmuch as appearance and being mean the same thing in the world of consciousness, it may be said that his multiplicity repeatedly assumes the form of dualism. Man experiences the fullness of his reality and his potentiality as a living substance that gravitates toward two poles; he experiences his inner progress as a journey from crossroads to crossroads."

These dualisms emanate naturally from the human condition. Indeed, to look inward on the nature of consciousness is to recognize a dualism at the heart of human life. For instance, for Kant, consciousness of life is split between a reality that we try to understand and an appearance arising from our sense perceptions of that same reality. Through our perceptions, all we really can know is the appearance of reality, and never the reality itself. And this fact creates a sense of the permanent absence of unity. It is this dichotomy at the center of life itself that we seek to overcome through the attainment of unity. No doubt, Buber understood this point of view and agreed with it.

Kant cannot overcome the dualistic nature of life, but Buber thinks we can and must. That is the nature of his quest for unity. Indeed, Judaism for Buber is based on the assurance that unity can be attained. Buber (1967, 31) says that "Every man whose soul attains unity, who decides, within his own self, for the pure and against the impure, for the free and against the unfree, for the creative and against the uncreative, every man who drives the moneylenders out of his temple, participates in the great process of Judaism."

Judaism is seen as a way to bridge the unbridgeable gap between our consciousness of the world and the world itself. But like all journeys to a great venture, such as the discovery of unity, we have to start somewhere. And for Buber, we start with the self in its relationship to others. Indeed, the starting point in this search for unity is the inner self so long as that inner self is in part fashioned by authentic mutuality and not by self-imposed or externally imposed isolation from others. As Buber (1958a, 62) says, "A person makes his appearance by entering into relation with other persons." It is only in relationships of mutuality that we become capable of understanding our potential and of being able to bring it to fruition. Moments of recognition such as these fully indicate to us why we are here and

where we are going, and this knowledge enables us to acquire full meaning and significance to our lives.

Authentic mutuality is for Buber (1967, 110) not predicated upon Kantian moral concepts, but upon words that enable us as individuals in relation to other individuals to “open themselves to one another, disclose themselves to one another, help one another.” For Buber (1967, 110) this moment is one of great spiritual impact, in which the ethical and religious realms coincide. Here, words are triggers for deeds. The other asks for help, I provide it. I ask for help, the other furnishes it. I seek to know with the help of other, who I am, what my potential may be, and the other enables me to address these questions.

In this way, we experience unity not just in general, but in terms of the way unity is manifested in the specific character of our particular lives. This experience provides our lives with a sense of the source not just of *our* being, but of *all* being. And thus understanding what we can be as a result of the relationships of mutuality provides not just a life plan, but it spiritualizes our lives, since what we find in the process is a touch of the eternal at the core of our being. Buber (1958a, 79) says, “He who goes out with his whole being to meet his *Thou* and carries to it all being that is in the world, finds Him [meaning God] who cannot be sought.”

Forces outside the individual—such as a powerful state or bureaucratic organizations—may address these great questions of course. These forces when they enter our lives cast us into relationships that mirror the power regimen that these entities seek to impose on all individuals. In succeeding, these established forces undermine the capacity for real mutuality and for authentic relationships that should ground life. Buber thus seeks a life independent of established power, in order to allow individuals to form relationships for achieving a mutually shared understanding of each person’s full possibilities. And this is done in relationships of I and Thou or in what I have called here, following Avnon, (1998, 149-151) dialogical communities.

For Buber, dialogical communities create communities of inclusion. Here (1975, 97) inclusion is not based on an emotion such as empathy. Empathy represents only a part of the self, and to emphasize this part solely excludes my ability to forge relationships to others that involve all aspects of my self with all aspects of others’ selves. And what are these aspects? An inclusive relationship is one in which we are able to experience the felt experience of another and make that felt experience part of our own un-

derstanding. In doing so, the other becomes part of our life, and we are in a position to aid the other in a variety of ways, including making available to him or to her our own understandings and perspectives. In doing so, the other now has an additional way to understand what he or she experiences, and through this understanding the other learns important information about him or herself. Through relationships of this sort, I can come to grips with the potential I have and the best way to realize it.

Of course, those who are part of the dialogical community are expected to bring with them certain basic dispositions, without which the space needed for achieving self-mastery would be impossible. It would seem that to create Buber's I and Thou relationship, people would require the following characteristics. First, people must agree to seek together the truth about the matter at hand. And in so doing, each must be dedicated to telling the truth to each other. Second, people must make every effort to understand in as full a way as possible the various views of the various people with whom they are in relation. It is necessary not to allow particular affiliations, however defined, to prevent people from trying to understand others' views in as complete and in as full a way as possible. Third, as people talk to others they must always consider very carefully the different understandings, experiences, points of view, and ideas that are inevitable.

These attitudes would prepare the ground for relationships of immediacy without undermining these relationships and turning them into mediated ones. Indeed, it would seem that the attitudes just discussed would enable people to hear the needs of others and respond in a direct fashion to them. These provisions enable clarity of communication so that the needs can be accurately conveyed and the responses clearly presented. So at this point, we have not entered Kantian territory, which would bring into relationships of mutual respect the prospect of asking if proposed actions are likely to maintain a commitment to treat others as ends. To enter this setting, we would be asking what kinds of duties we need to observe, how they should be balanced, and so on. These questions necessarily establish between people a third term that directs, or in other terms, mediates how our relationship is to be carried out. As a result of this third term, it is possible that my view of your needs becomes distorted from what you say they are, and thus I am unable to relate to you in a direct way. Or perhaps, because of these mediating terms, we permit a third party to determine the outcomes of our relationships, as for instance when a religious group or some other party espouses the best way for us to act toward each other, even when that way betrays our real needs.

But it is also the case, as Buber (1958a, 62, 100) says, that we inevitably move from an I-Thou to an I-It relationship. In an I-It relationship, people tend to be more guarded toward each other. The other is no longer someone with whom I am in direct relationship, but the other is a person whom I perceive as an object. As an object the other is part of a conceptual scheme I have in my mind and that I use to understand the other. That scheme is designed around certain purposes and ends. By putting that person in a conceptual scheme, I place him in a setting that determines how he is to be used to achieve that end or purpose. Of course, in doing so, the other may feel that he is being harmed because I am not listening and responding directly to his needs and hopes, but that I am perceiving his needs and hopes through a lens that distorts their accuracy. As a result, the other may hope to restore the "I-Thou" with me so that his or her real needs can be clearly understood again.

Still, it is also possible that the I-It becomes vital to us for the sake of securing mutual respect, and here is where Buber needs Kant and vice versa. Kant needs Buber to ensure that the concepts used to define duties to each other do not distort the authentic communication between people. But at the same time, Buber needs Kant in order to avoid circumstances where, as a result of people relating to each other directly and immediately, harms which might emerge are avoided. For instance, when two people fall in love with each other, they seek to meet directly each other's needs. Each strains to hear those needs and to be sure that all is done to satisfy them. The more this is done, the deeper their love. But suppose the two people in question are individuals married to others, and suppose further that each has a family from these marriages. To continue to fall deeper in love is to harm the respective families. At least the Kantian conceptions of morality would post such a warning. Here the Kantian language of duty would help people understand this possibility emanating from the I-Thou relationship and gauge the consequences in terms of basic duties of continuing it. For instance, each would ask what duties each owes to their children, to their spouses, and so on, and if falling in love with another outside of marriage can help all these others to realize their potential as human beings. Many other questions like this would have to be asked, and if they were the I-Thou would turn into an I-It. Here a Kantian might say that the latter provided some degree of protection from the unforeseeable harms that the former can create, even in the name of mutual respect. Judgments of this sort are inevitable and that is why the I-Thou always moves to an I-It (Buber, 1958a, 16-17, 24).

It would seem that both the language of immediacy and the Kantian language of duty are needed in building dialogical communities that ensure not just the I-Thou, but an I-Thou that works to expand mutual respect and the full flourishing of human potential. Both languages are needed in the modern world of role complexity. The various formal roles—as workers, parent, church member, etc.—that people have in life pressure people to make judgments concerning how best to negotiate their roles. But the question of the best life for them is a question of a different order. And living within a setting defined by the various pressures of different roles prohibits addressing this question well, since formal roles command our attention to what is necessary to meet their requirements. And this takes us away from focusing attention on what is necessary for us to live our lives in full.

To address this concern, people need a space freed from these role pressures to both recognize and then to make the choices available to them. If I want to be a lawyer, musician, and family man, I have to make decisions about how to marshal my capacities. But in trying to excel in so many different roles, I realize that I am vulnerable to those who demand conformity to this or that role. Indeed, my risks are many. I may lose my job as a lawyer, be ridiculed for my music, or be labeled a bad father by my children. Still, I have to decide and the only place where I may do so without the element of risk dictating my choices is in the setting of dialogical communities.

This setting, says Adam Seligman (1997, 55), is “constitutive of the I-Thou relationship” in Buber. The location of the I-Thou is in the interstices existing between my diffuse roles. In these spaces, I am free to build friendships to others outside the administration of role regimens, and through these friendships I become empowered to make my own judgments about the best course for myself in a role-diffuse world. For Buber (1967, 110), this space is referred to as the “Between,” and this “seemingly empty space” [is the] “true place of the realization... [of] community, and true community is that relationship in which the Divine comes to its realization between man and man.”

Here is where it would seem Kant would reappear. When we enter the interstices with others in relationships of immediacy, we have to make sure that we are not led in a direction that violates the moral canons of Kantian reason. Thus, we have to be certain which duties must be put into play and how or if they should be put in balance. Necessarily, once again the I-Thou will turn into an I-It for the sake of securing the full flourishing of each human life at stake.

III. Civil Society

In a liberal civil society, people join groups at least initially because the groups provide settings through which individuals are able to manifest their core values and develop various capacities. The walls separating groups are permeable in a liberal civil society because people enter and leave groups during the course of pursuing their lives. Here individuals learn how to communicate across difference, and to create the prospects of accommodation among diverse groups (DeLue, 2002, 10-16).

A civil society would overcome the power principle that Buber (1958b, 81) rejected and permit the relationships of immediacy that he hoped for. On the power principle human relationships are built not in terms of dialogical communities, but in terms of power hierarchies. Where power dominates relationships, individuals cannot engage each other on basis of mutuality. Instead, power triumphs when individuals live in isolation from each other, and in this isolation they are made incapable of forging the relationships that are central to dialogical communities. Buber (1958b, 134) hoped for “a genuine community of human beings—genuine because it is *community all through*.” Here as individuals create settings of mutuality, they are able to acknowledge a central element of their humanity. But for mutuality to be realized people need, as in a civil society, to belong to different groups as part of what it means to be a full human being. Moreover, they need to live their lives in such a way as to make them able to communicate across their differences. This prospect is sustained by spaces that manifest mutuality, and moreover, these spaces themselves are the basis for preparing individuals for the larger setting of the public realm.

Buber’s (Avron, 1998, 153) person-centered community would contribute to a space where people could express the basis, as they see it, for their humanity. Here each person’s understanding of him or herself arises from the fact that each is joined to others who together have helped each person understand their purpose and their potential. But in my view realizing this dimension cannot take a step without Kantian language of duty. Nor would this dimension succeed in achieving the objective of a fully free person were it the case that dialogical communities failed to extend themselves to a public realm where issues of common importance were carefully elaborated.

This means that in order to achieve a civil society in which human centered, mutually enhancing discourse is possible, there should be a state that protects the rights of each person. This state, in particular a liberal

democratic state, would recognize the existence of many diverse ways of life and points of view, as well as advocate a civil society in which people could communicate across their differences to locate their own identities and define their own potential. Buber (1967, 134) however seems to reject a rights-based approach to community because he thinks a state should be built first upon an already existing cultural perspective, a culture that binds people together. A liberal, democratic secular state, which makes rights for all its primary purpose under the rubric of universal law, is not a substitute for the binding ties of friendship and community. Liberal democratic states for Buber do not restore a sense of the eternal spirit to individuals. Rights doctrines provide people with laws that all should abide, but such a state is not located in communities of mutuality which are the enduring source of a person's authentic relationship to the unconditional. These ties are only made possible in a society in which there is a shared national community in which the prospect for building the interstices that secure dialogical community becomes manifest.

But what Buber did not understand is that a rights-based society is the location of the kinds of connections he seeks to build. Indeed, without these formal rights, protected by state-backed rule of law, such linkages are impossible. For to create relationships of mutuality, there must be trust and the assurance that others will not use moments of relationship building to deny others a chance to manifest their own potential as human beings. Rights protect citizens as they go about building relationships of mutuality, and as a result it is this setting of rights that is critical to the creation of a true civil society. Here dialogical community is sustained by the recognition of our basic duties to others, but that understanding goes hand in hand with the acknowledgement of the need to protect and to maintain basic public rights.

Buber (1967, 130) saw his community as arising only in a setting that banned a preoccupation with money and wealth accumulation. Instead, (141) the essence of community is only possible where a society has made a cultural transformation to mutuality. Buber (Avron, 1998, 183) rejected the need for a powerful nation state as the basis for Zionism, and instead hoped for a Palestine in which Jews and Arabs built a confederation as the basis for authentic community. He accepted linking religion and socialism as a basis for building a dialogical community between Arabs and Jews, but he did not accept the linkage of the state with socialism as the basis for a solely Jewish state. The latter connection would only lead to a situation in

which dialogical community would be supplanted by relationships built upon power, leading to endless conflict and war.

But couldn't secular liberalism, which does have a central state, achieve the kind of community Buber seeks? Central to the establishment of liberalism, a state based on respect for wide variations of different ways of life, is a civil society predicated in Kantian language on duties to self and to others. Only in and through that language can the unique spaces of the I-Thou be established and made the basis for a civil society. Here each person while emphasizing the importance of this or that core group is able to move across many others. And from this experience, people are able to create a culture of mutual respect arising from those duties that cement the state's purpose as protecting a civil society dedicated to preserving rights for all.

But that prospect can only come about when language is used to construct a basis for mutuality. So long as language is used in ways that deny this prospect, the hope of a state that can defend the rights of all, within the context of a civil society, remains a distant hope, as would Kant's ideal of treating others as ends. Certainly, Kant and Buber would agree on that. But Buber would add an additional caveat. He would ask the following: Do human beings in situations of strife and conflict have the courage to use language in a way to build a basis for toleration within the confines of a culture of mutual respect? Such an effort means restoring the I and the Thou discourse throughout the culture of society. This enterprise can only take place in a cultural setting designed to emphasize the importance of immediacy in building and sustaining community. And Kant would no doubt add that even Buber's community of direct, immediacy must have as its base conceptual recognition of rational moral duties as well as the liberal rights-based state which embodies these duties into law.

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