How does nature speak to our concern?: A rhythm of dialogue and responsibility in environmental ethics and wilderness preservation

Scott Friskics

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University of Montana
HOW DOES NATURE SPEAK TO OUR CONCERN?
A RHYTHM OF DIALOGUE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND WILDERNESS PRESERVATION

By
Scott Friskics
B.A., Colgate University, 1985

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Approved By

Chairperson, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

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"How does nature speak to our concern? That is the question" (Henry Bugbee, "Wilderness in America" 11).

"When it is granted to man to hear the songs of the herbs - how every herb speaks its song to God without any alien will or thought - how beautiful and sweet it is to hear their singing. And therefore it is very good to serve God in their midst in solitary walks over the field among the plants of the earth and to pour out one's speech before God in truthfulness. All the speech of the field then goes into your speech and heightens its power. With every breath you drink the air of paradise, and when you return home, the world is renewed in your sight" (anonymous Hasidic saying, quoted in Martin Buber, Ecstatic Confessions 149).

"There are forces in the woods, forces in the world, that lay claim to you, that lay a hand on your shoulder so gently that you do not even feel it: not at first. All of the smallest elements - the direction of a breeze one day, a single sentence that a friend might speak to you, a raven flying across the meadow and circling back again - lay claim to you, eventually, with a cumulative power" (Rick Bass, Winter 68).
INTRODUCTION

I.

This paper attempts to describe and interpret the sense and meaning of our actual, lived relations with the nonhuman beings and things of the natural world. In our everyday lives we enter into all manner of relations with nature.¹ We eat nature’s creatures; we wear them; we study them; we dam them; we even write papers on them. In general, we use nature in all sorts of ways, even aesthetically and spiritually. And yet, on occasion, we also encounter the beings and things of nature in ways that do not fit these categories of analysis, manipulation and use. A rushing mountain stream or a pair of soaring buzzards may also speak to us, not of their use, their physical and chemical composition, their role in the ecology of the place, but simply and eloquently of themselves - as this stream or these buzzards, in all their uniqueness, beauty and depth. In turn, we may hear their voices, not in terms of our interests, our conceptual frameworks, our sciences, but simply, directly and immediately as this particular stream, that pair of buzzards; and their speech resonates within us in a way calling forth - evoking - a spirit of affirmation, wonder and joy. These relational moments are charged with meaning - and responsibility. We feel called upon to answer for them.

Address and response; call and answer. At the most fundamental level, at a level beyond and beneath mere speech, a dialogue has occurred. In such moments, we find ourselves as participants in meaningful and destinate dialogues, and, likewise, we come to know these other - and fellow - creatures whom we meet as genuine partners in those dialogues.²
I wish to begin this paper simply by bearing witness to the experiential reality of such moments of dialogue through a few firsthand accounts. Such testimony, however inadequate it may be, will provide the necessary experiential ground upon which this project must rest. Once this groundwork is established, I will describe the structural pattern or *eidos* of such relations and attempt to interpret their significance for the way we live in, and respond to, the natural world around us. I will present this eidetic description and interpretation in terms of a philosophy of dialogue, drawing heavily, although not exclusively, upon the thought of Martin Buber.

The reason for choosing Buber's thought as my primary interpretive tool in this project is a simple and, I believe, methodologically consistent one: Buber's description of our relationality in terms of I-Thou and I-It relations and his understanding of the ethical force of the I-Thou dialogue speak more truly and directly to my own experience than any other account of our relationality that I have come across. And, perhaps even more importantly for the purposes of this paper, Buber's witness to the reality of I-Thou dialogue occurring between humans and nonhuman, natural beings and things has not only verified my own experience but also provided me with a vocabulary with which to begin to understand and speak about these experiences.

To me, this resonance of Buber's words with one's own experience seems crucial if one truly hopes to hear and understand what he is, rather
idiosyncratically, at times, attempting to say. As Jacob B. Agus writes, "If we are to understand the uniqueness of the I-Thou relation, we must heed Buber's appeal to find an echo of his words in our own life" (Quoted in Diamond 23). Admittedly, without such an "echo," Buber's work and all that follows in this essay may appear as nothing more than mystification, double talk, or just bad science.³

And yet, if we remain open to the possibilities of which Buber speaks, I believe that we can hear that echo of his words in our lives. And so, I begin this paper by bearing witness to the experiential reality of my own dialogical, I-Thou encounters with the beings and things of nature. That my personal accounts of such events may at first seem trivial and/or parochial and that I lack the capacity to do them justice in speaking of them here should not diminish their crucial importance for this project; as mentioned earlier, they furnish the necessary experiential ground upon which the entire project depends.

Two events, in particular, come to mind most clearly in this context. The first occurred several years ago at the end of a long day of walking in the Mission Mountains. Coming down a steep incline as the sun's last rays cut across a stand of mixed conifers, I was stopped dead in my tracks by the deep, black eyes of a pine marten standing alert on a branch directly ahead of me. Startled by our mutual discovery, we momentarily stared at each other - frozen in each other's presence - until perhaps the blink of an eye or a noise from somewhere else (I never knew the reason) broke the gaze, and the
marten scrambled across the branch and disappeared into the deep growth of the pine.

The other event that comes to mind for its strongly dialogical flavor is one that has occurred repeatedly, although always with slight variations. In these instances I am walking the streets of Missoula in the early morning on cold and unusually clear winter days. As I cross several of the streets running diagonally across town, I am afforded a clear and unobstructed view of Lolo Peak rising up in the distance. Lit by the sun from the east, the dazzling white summit shines against the intense blue backdrop of a cloudless sky and the bluish-black foreground of the wooded ridges below. Even at such a distance the peak offers itself as an immediate and compelling presence, causing me to turn again and again to the southwest as it gives itself afresh in subtle changes of angle, texture, and shading.

Far from extraordinary, these two encounters stand out most clearly in my mind, although they are hardly isolated occurrences. Just as clearly and forcefully, I remember the motionless osprey perched in a cottonwood snag across the Bitterroot River, a certain meadow high up Blodgett Canyon, a charging (bluffing?) bull moose in the Pintler Range, an alpine ridge below Stuart Peak covered in wildflowers, a certain stretch of the Blackfoot River on a scorching hot summer day, and a young bull elk along the ridgeline of Hogback Peak in the Sapphire Mountains. For me, these and other encounters with the natural beings and things of western Montana are not merely fond remembrances; they provide the "immediate dat[a] of
consciousness" - to borrow Erazim Kohak's phenomenological term - upon which the following discussion rests ("I, Thou, and It" 51).

But not only these. The writings of naturalists, poets, novelists, and even some philosophers (although the latter case is quite rare given the rather abstract and theoretical nature of much of the philosophical enterprise) are full of accounts of similar encounters, presented with much greater power and evocative force than mine. These eloquent testimonials also provide me with the experiential foundation, albeit once removed, upon which to build my position. Out of many excellent examples, I have chosen four to present here because of their explicitly dialogical character. The first comes from the opening lines of Rachel Carson's The Sense of Wonder, where she writes,

One stormy autumn night when my nephew Roger was about twenty months old I wrapped him in a blanket and carried him down to the beach in the rainy darkness. Out there, just at the edge of where-we-couldn't-see, big waves were thundering in, dimly seen white shapes that boomed and shouted and threw great handfuls of froth at us. Together we laughed for pure joy - he a baby meeting for the first time the wild tumult of Oceanus, I with the salt of half a lifetime of sea love in me. But I think we felt the same spine-tingling response to the vast, roaring ocean and the wild night around us (8-9).

Or, consider John Muir's words as he tells of his first encounter with a stand of giant sequoias.

...I climbed the high rock called Wamellow by the Indians. Here I obtained telling views of the fertile forest-filled basin of the upper Fresno. Innumerable spires of the noble Yellow Pine were displayed rising above one another on the braided slopes, and yet nobler Sugar Pines with superb arms outstretched in the rich autumn light, while away toward the southwest, on the verge of the glowing horizon, I discovered the majestic dome-like crowns
of Big Trees towering high over all, singly and in close grove congregations. There is something wonderfully attractive in this king tree, even when beheld from afar, that draws us to it with indescribable enthusiasm; its superior height and massive smoothly rounded outlines proclaiming its character in any company; and when one of the oldest attains full stature on some commanding ridge it seems the very god of the woods (208-209).

The next example occurs on a much smaller scale than the first two, but the encounter is no less immediate and engaging. In his poem "The Heron," Wendell Berry writes,

And I go on until I see crouched on a dead branch sticking out of the water a heron - so still that I believe he is a bit of drift hung dead above the water. And then I see the articulation of feather and living form, a brilliance I receive beyond my power to make, as he receives in his great patience the river's providence. And then I see that I am seen, admitted, my silence accepted in his silence. Still as I keep, I might be a tree for all the fear he shows. Suddenly I know I have passed across to a shore where I do not live (113-114).

Finally, perhaps my favorite literary account of such an encounter is William Faulkner's depiction of that first and fateful meeting between young Isaac McCaslin and the great bear, Old Ben, in Go Down, Moses.

Then he [Isaac] saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, walking for an instant into the sun's full glare and out of it, and stopped again and looked back at him across one shoulder. Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the
woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool and vanish without even any movement of its fins (209).

In these brief passages, Carson, Muir, Berry and Faulkner speak of their meetings with the beings and things of nature in a way that seems explicitly dialogical, and, through their words, they bear witness to the meaning and depth of such encounters. No less telling, however, are Muir’s accounts of his first view of the Sierra Nevadas (100-101), or a night spent gazing wondrously at the auroras in Alaska (305-307), or his cheerful encounters with the water ouzels of Yosemite (147-161); or Aldo Leopold’s reflections on the revelatory force held in the green eyes of a dying wolf (138-139). Similarly, one can hear the power of an engaging and joy-filled dialogue with nature in Thoreau’s loving description of the ponds, particularly Walden Pond, near Concord (173-200) or in his account of a game of hide-and-seek with a loon (233-236); or in Henry Bugbee’s description of certain mornings at Miner’s Bend on the Gualala River (Inward Morning 86-87) or in his brief account of colorful aspens and larches "crying out" in the wild Canadian Rockies (Inward Morning 139-140). Finally, it seems to me that most of Edward Abbey’s Desert Solitaire could serve as a powerful testimony of one man’s intense and intimate dialogue with a particular place - the canyon country of southeastern Utah - in all its various instantiations.

In my own experience and in my reading of the witness of others, human beings, on occasion, encounter the beings and things of nature in a unique and important way that, to me, seems most accurately and naturally described as a dialogue - a genuine and reciprocal meeting occurring between
an I and a Thou. In the few preceding accounts to which I have referred, I have attempted to bear witness to the experiential reality of such encounters.

These narrative descriptions, then, will serve as the phenomenological 'baseline data' for my theorizing in this paper. However, they should serve not only as the foundation but also as the litmus test for the conceptual 'concoction' that follows. Throughout this paper I have tried to remain faithful to the spirit of these relational events (as well as their written articulation) without distorting or misinterpreting them. The success or failure of what follows depends primarily upon the extent to which my conceptualizing remains true to - or betrays - these original encounters as they actually grace and inform our lives.

II.

Moving from the particular I-Thou dialogues described above, we can generalize with Kohak and say, "Yet while the argument is inevitably complex, the basic thesis is simple. It is that things initially present themselves in immediate experience not as objects but as fellow beings, capable of functioning both as it and as thou " ("I, Thou, and It" 36). Quite simply, things such as mountain peaks and herons can and do enter into I-Thou relations with us, and it is wholly legitimate to describe our deep and engaging dialogues with them in such terms. Put negatively, nonhuman beings and things are not exclusively defined in terms of It.
I agree that this thesis is simple and hardly remarkable. And yet, it represents a major breakthrough in overcoming what Kohak describes as the "noematic prejudice" so prevalent within much of modern Western thought ("I, Thou, and It" 45). This prejudice involves the a priori limiting of the possible partners for meaningful I-Thou dialogue to one type of noema or relata (the 'poles' of a relational event): human beings. According to this view, only human beings can really become Thous for us. Nonhuman beings are, by their very nature, always Its, objects of subjective experience and use, and never Thous, fellow participants in meaningful and destinate dialogue.

Overcoming this noematic prejudice requires a radical shift of focus. Instead of focusing our attention on the noema, we need to focus on the relation itself, describing it in noetic - not noematic - terms. In other words, in attempting to describe and interpret our relationality as accurately as possible, we must always begin with the relational events themselves. Through such noetic analysis, the fundamental distinction that emerges is not between the types of relata we meet but between the types of relations we enter.

For Martin Buber, there are two basic types of relations: I-Thou and I-It. While the former refers to a reciprocal dialogue characterized by presentness, immediacy and integrity, the latter describes the subject's mediated and fragmentary perception of an object in terms of experience and use. However, although Buber posits two basic types of relations, this does not mean that, a priori, some things are Thous and others are Its independent of our relations
with them. Any being or thing can be encountered as a Thou or experienced as an It. Just as a wildflower can become my Thou, so, too, a telephone solicitor can - and usually does - become an It for me. What matters here is not the type of relata, but the type of relation.

For Buber, it is the relation that is primary. As he writes in I and Thou, "In the beginning is the relation" (69). Upon this ontological premise, all else follows; being is constituted and defined in relation. Even "The self," as Emmanuel Levinas writes, "is not a substance but a relation. It can only exist as an 'I' addressing itself to a 'Thou,' or grasping an 'It'" (136-137). There can be no thing-in-itself except as it is abstracted from the relationality of actual being-with-others; being, for Buber, is being-in-relation.6

In general, then, our being is constituted in terms of our relatedness, which, for Buber, takes on one of two basic forms - I-Thou or I-It. However, it is only through participation in the engaging dialogue occurring between an I and a Thou that we approach authentic being. For Buber, it is the interval between I and Thou, das Zwischen (the between), that is the bearer and locus of actual and meaningful existence. According to Buber, "We do not find meaning lying in things nor do we put it into things, but between us and things it can happen" (Between 36). This between, however, does not exist 'out there' independently of us; neither is it something we can conjure up at will. It is the interstice that opens up (graciously) and into which we step (actively, willfully) in each I-Thou encounter; or, as Gabriel Marcel describes
it, it is a "creative milieu" - a matrix of meaning and meaningful being rising up between the I and the Thou (45).

In addition, the between of I-Thou relations is also the bearer of divine presence. According to Robert Wood, "It [The between] is the place where the Transcendent is present in the world" (111). In so far as we enter into authentic I-Thou dialogue and actualize the between, we make the world a holy place; the world becomes sacrament. Although sometimes accused of pantheism, Buber's position might be more accurately (although somewhat laboriously) described as a panentheistic pansacramentalism, in which the world exists in God, whose presence among us is actualized in so far as we "let God in." In Hasidism and Modern Man Buber presents this idea by retelling and interpreting the following Hasidic tale.

"Where is the dwelling place of God?"
This was the question with which the Rabbi of Kotzk surprised a number of learned men who happened to be visiting him. They laughed at him: "What a thing to ask! Is not the whole world full of His glory?"
Then he answered his own question:
"God dwells wherever man lets Him in."
This is the ultimate purpose: to let God in. But we can let Him in only where we really stand, where we live, where we live a true life. If we maintain holy intercourse with the little world entrusted to us, if we help the holy spiritual substance to accomplish itself in that section of Creation in which we are living, then we are establishing, in this our place, a dwelling for the Divine Presence (175-176).

According to Buber, although the world is full of God's presence (after all, the world exists in God), God is present among us - between us - only in so far as we actualize God's presence in our lives.
This understanding of the world as potential sacrament is at the core of the Hasidic notion of "hallowing the everyday" that so captivated Buber's attention. For the Hasid (as presented in Buber's works on Hasidism) and for Buber, the distinction is not between the holy and the profane but between what is holy and what is not yet hallowed; there is no time or place that cannot be made holy. As Buber writes, "At each place, in each hour, in each act, in each speech the holy can blossom forth" (Hasidism and Modern Man 31). But, in order for the holy to "blossom forth," we must enter essential, I-Thou dialogue - holy intercourse - with the other with whom we presently have to do. Our priestly capacity and calling to make the world a sacrament - a holy place - depends upon our capacity to say Thou to the creatures whom we meet.

In all cases, what is decisive for Buber is the meeting between an I and a Thou, regardless of whether the Thou is a human being, a fish, or a boulder. However, this does not mean that the relata are unimportant or interchangeable with one another. For meaningful and decisive dialogue to occur, the I must be attentive and open to the irreducible uniqueness of the particular other whom it meets as Thou. As such, there is no generalizable class of relata - nonhuman, non-sentient, non-animal, non-living, etc. - that is, a priori, excluded from participation in genuine, meaningful and holy relations. According to Buber, "The limits of the possibility of dialogue are the limits of [our] awareness" (Between 10).
And yet, what I have outlined so far may offer us no more than what Marcel rather disparagingly refers to as a "pure mysticism of presence" unless it is accompanied by "the proper ethical bearing" (Introduction to Bugbee, Inward Morning 24). What is crucially important here is not simply that we can and, occasionally, do enter into dialogue with the beings and things of nature (although this, in itself, is indeed quite remarkable), but that such dialogical events carry great ethical significance. These I-Thou encounters call us forth to embody their meaning in our active - ethical - response to the beings and things who address us in our daily lives. As Maurice Friedman writes, "Only he who knows the presence of the Thou is capable of decision" ("Bases" 176).

However, according to Buber and others, we don't learn anything about the Thou in our encounter with it; our knowledge of the Thou is not on the order of an empirical or objective 'knowing about.' Instead, it is an immediate and participatory knowing similar in meaning to the old hebraic notion of 'to know' - 'to touch' or 'to intercourse with' the being of the other.7 We receive it as a contentless knowledge that cannot be reduced to objective, abstract terms. And yet, despite this lack of content, the knowledge received in the present and unmediated address of the Thou - received as such - conveys a depth and meaning upon which we may legitimately ground our ethical response.
Within the framework of a philosophy of dialogue, ethics is understood primarily in terms of responsibility, taken in the dialogical and etymological sense of the word: responding to the address of another. According to Friedman, "Responsibility, for Buber, means responding - hearing the unreduced claim of each particular hour in all its crudeness and disharmony and answering it out of the depth's of one's being" (Life of Dialogue 93-94). In order to hear and respond to the claim of the moment, however, we must be fully present as attentive listeners - open and receptive to the voice of the other as it addresses us in all its uniqueness and irreducibility. Only then can we receive the meaning present in the address of the other in all its empowering and imperative force.

Within each present moment, decisively received, we are not only addressed by the other whom we meet, but we are also confronted with the very meaning and purpose of our created being. For Buber, we are not "contingently thrown" into an absurd existence; rather, we are created beings, sent forth into a meaningful world - a creation. And this creatureliness involves a task - a vocation; we are forever called to become more fully the unique creatures we are created to be. As Buber puts it, "Every man's foremost task is the actualization of his unique, unprecedented and never-recurring potentialities" (Hasidism and Modern Man 140). However, this is not some internal matter of 'self-expression' or 'self-realization.' As Friedman notes, "We have to realize our uniqueness in response to the world" (Touchstones 153). It is only in and through engaged participation in our co-creaturely existence - in the existence we share with our fellow
creatures in the ongoing event of creation - that we become more fully the persons we are created to be. In turn, as we become increasingly aware of our own unique potentiality, we become ever more able to respond to our fellow creatures in an ethically decisive manner, deciding and acting from out of the depths of who we are and who we are called to become in each new moment of choice. Thus, the ethical situation claims us in a twofold manner; we are called forth by the address of the other whom we meet, and we are directed from within, so to speak, by our awareness of the task for which we have been created.

In addition to the call of the other and the call of our creaturely task, we receive yet a third call present in the depths of the I-Thou encounter: the address of our sponsoring and abiding Creator. According to Buber, "God speaks to man in the things and beings He sends him in life; man answers through his action in relation to just these things and beings" (Origin and Meaning of Hasidism 94). God the Creator addresses us in the events and situations of our creaturely lives and beckons and guides us to incarnate the meaning of this divine address in the world of concrete actions. Therefore, as we attend to and receive the threefold call present in the moment of dialogue we are both empowered and charged to respond in an ethical manner. Along with the gracious advent of dialogue also comes a compelling imperative, a command, which we receive, not in terms of a generalizable "One should," but as a unique and experiential "Thou shalt."
As such, it is within the context of our participation in dialogue that we come to know what we must do and who we must become; we come to know what is necessary. As Henry Bugbee develops the idea in *Inward Morning*, necessary action can only be understood within the framework of authentic dialogue. Concerning Bugbee's notion of necessity, Marcel writes,

> [H]e [Bugbee] derives the fundamental point that no satisfactory account can be given of necessity, that it cannot even be acknowledged, if things are approached from a purely spectatorial standpoint. The necessary can only become intelligible from a standpoint in which we no longer abstract from our involvement in reality. The necessary is appreciated as such only in that fundamental engagement with things in their uniqueness. ... Therefore necessity is properly construed as an experiential category and not an empirical one (Introduction to Bugbee, *Inward Morning* 28).

As we participate in authentic dialogue - "that fundamental engagement with things in their uniqueness" - we come to know what is required of us, and our actions become inspired and directed with the force of necessity. Of course, this also means that we cannot say what is necessary in advance of our participation in the situation demanding our response. In this sense, the old truism seems to hold: you really had to be there. And although an experiential, dialogical ethic of responsibility is deeply contextual, it is anything but relativistic. Through our participation in dialogue we come to know what the situation demands of us, not as a universal or general "One should," but as a powerful, personal imperative: "I must."

But what good is such an experiential ethic of responsibility? It offers no generalizable guidelines about how one ought to act; it cannot prescribe any course of action; it offers no solutions to hypothetical ethical scenarios. In
a word, it relieves none of the difficulties and ambiguities of living the moral life. Instead, what such an ethic requires is presentness and openness to the other - be it a river, a water ouzel or a human being - acknowledged in its irreducibility, richness and depth. Although not sufficient in and of itself, it is only through such presentness, from which no being or thing can be, a priori, excluded, that we can truly come to know the other and find the strength and meaning upon which we can ground our ethical response.

And yet, this much seems generally true: while we know nothing about the particular being or thing whom we meet in dialogue, through our encounter we come to know it as not only other but also as kin, eliciting both our respect and compassion. According to Bugbee, "[I]t is in coming to know fellow creatures as such that our respect for them can obtain as warranted and upheld" ("Wilderness" 12-13). To know another being truly and deeply is to know that being as worthy of the respect and concern due one's kin. As for what each situation demands of us, we cannot say apart from our involvement in that particular situation. However, if our response to that demand is to be genuine (and genuinely ethical), it must actualize and embody the respect engendered in the I-Thou dialogue with our fellow creature. Yet even this is no general or abstract notion of respect; rather, it is a living respect born of actual participation in particular dialogical moments. In and through our involvement in, and reflection upon, such relations, we catch a glimpse of the experiential ground of our capacity for respect and, in turn, respectful action; it is at such a point that ethical discourse - including environmental ethics - must begin.
III.

It is my intent to establish such a starting point in the first half of this paper, which will consist of Chapters One and Two. In Chapter One I will present a detailed description of the basic tenets of a philosophy of dialogue. I will begin by suggesting the fundamentally dialogical character of existence and proceed to examine our relationality in terms of Buber’s famous distinction between I-Thou and I-It relations. Along with presenting the basic differences between these two types of relations, I will also show how both are necessary for living a whole and active life and for actualizing the meaning of I-Thou relations in our everyday lives.

In Chapter Two I will attempt to outline a dialogical ethic of responsibility. I will suggest that the address of the situation, received in its meaning and depth, makes claims upon us and calls us forth to respond in a decisive and ethical manner. However, this address not only places demands upon us; it also empowers and directs us as we move to embody its meaning in our decisions and actions. Here I will begin by following Buber’s understanding of the threefold call present in the address of the moment, examining, in some detail, the imperative quality of the call of our fellow creature, the call of our creaturely task, and the call of the Creator. I will also show that these three elements of the address of the moment do not speak to us in isolation from one another; they ring unisonously as the claim of the particular and concrete situation - in toto- to which we must respond. And, in so far as we ground our responsibility upon the meaning received in this
address, we may find the capacity to act with decisiveness, integrity and commitment - or, to use Bugbee's terms, necessity and certainty. Finally, I will conclude by showing how, for both Buber and Bugbee (whose ideas I will draw upon heavily in this chapter) genuine ethical responsibility defies generalization, prescription or even verification in any objective sense; for both thinkers, responsibility cannot be abstracted from the irreducibly concrete and immediate meaning present in the ever new and changing situations in which we find ourselves called upon to respond.

In the second half of this paper I will examine the relevance of this philosophy of dialogue and its correlative ethic of responsibility - as presented in Chapters One and Two - for particular questions concerning our relations with the nonhuman beings and things of nature. In other words, I will be trying to establish their relevance and importance within the discourse of environmental philosophy and, more specifically, environmental ethics and wilderness preservation. However, Chapters One and Two are not intended to contain merely general background information for the environmental matters discussed in Chapters Three and Four. The reader must remember that the descriptions and interpretations of our relationality presented in the first half of the paper are presented in noetic or relational terms; they are not limited to any particular type of noema or relata. Therefore, once we bracket the noematic prejudice, which, a priori, excludes the nonhuman beings and things of nature from consideration as partners in I-Thou dialogue, the ethic of responsibility outlined in Chapter Two already includes an implicit environmental ethic.
In Chapters Three and Four I wish to point out, both generally and quite specifically, some of the wider implications of the ideas presented above within the realm of environmental concerns. I will begin Chapter Three by arguing for, and then presenting, three basic premises concerning the possibility, actuality and meaning of our I-Thou dialogues with the nonhuman beings and things of nature. Then, after submitting these premises to critical scrutiny, I will move on to suggest how these dialogical events inform our ethical responsibility with respect to - and for - nonhuman creatures. And here I will proceed both generally and quite specifically. After outlining this dynamic rhythm of dialogue and responsibility in theoretical terms, I will conclude this chapter by showing, via two brief and exploratory narratives of ethical concern, how this rhythmic interplay may actually inform our decisions and actions regarding nonhuman creatures.

Chapter Four concludes the paper by examining the specific issue of wilderness preservation. Here I wish to explore the unique character of wilderness as a place where, having suspended or at least tacitly questioned our proprietary and usury claims, we are especially receptive to the powerful and eloquent voice of nature as it speaks to us. Drawing on the ideas of Bugbee, Buber and Kohak as well as the poetry of Wendell Berry, I will suggest that the unusually strong and evocative presence of wilderness, as both an 'anti-resource' and a 'home of dialogue,' engenders within us a spirit of prayer and play that encourages and fosters our participation in dialogue with our nonhuman fellow creatures. Furthermore, I will argue that such a
spirit provides the tonic (in Kohak's phenomenology, both the "conceptual" and "practical" brackets) that can hold in check the technological ethos described in Chapter Three and elicit the respect required to ground our ethical responsibility. And here, I will conclude by bearing witness to my "certainty" that the truly compassionate and respectful response to the address of wild nature lies in preserving the few remaining tracts of wilderness left on this continent.
EXPLANATORY NOTES

1 - At the outset, I would prefer to define "nature" as matter-of-factly as possible. For now, I mean by "nature" the order of things and beings whose existence is not derivative of human handiwork and/or artifice. Admittedly, such a vague definition is besieged with obvious problems and shortcomings, made all the more complicated by humanity's ubiquitous impact and presence on the planet (see Bill McKibben's The End of Nature), genetic engineering, the selective breeding and domestication of plants and animals, etc. All are interesting topics, but all beyond the immediate scope of this paper.

More to the point, however, is the fact that human beings are also included within such a broad definition of nature. We, too, are sponsored and animated by a source outside ourselves; that is, we are not self-created, self-creating beings. Therefore, my intent in speaking specifically about the "nonhuman beings and things of the natural world" is not to establish an absolute distinction between "man [sic] and nature" but to include these beings and things in the category of "persons" (in the most inclusive sense) with whom we can enter into dialogue. I would argue that this entire paper is an attempt at inclusiveness, not exclusiveness; I want to suggest that nonhuman "creatures" (Actually, "creation" is the word I would prefer to use instead of "nature," but it is so open to misinterpretation that I think it is better to wait before introducing that term; over the course of the paper, however, creation will become a central idea.) warrant our ethical consideration, not as mere resources, but as independent and eloquent partners in dialogue.

At the same time, saying all this does nothing to compromise the irreducible and non-negotiable otherness of nonhuman beings and things like buzzards and mountain streams. And yet, it is an otherness that, precisely because it is other, we can meet in dialogue. In this case, then, alterity does not necessarily imply contrariety or objective over-againstness. Through our participation in dialogue, we meet and 'know' the other in an intimate and meaningful way that stands in contrast to our subjective 'knowing about' the other as an object of representation and analysis. Our experiential and immediate knowledge of the other received in dialogue does nothing to diminish or compromise the radical otherness of the other; it remains as ineffable and mysterious as before.

Finally, I cannot help but think that talking about "man and nature" or "man as nature" is all somewhat besides the point. Such broad strokes not
only set up somewhat arbitrary distinctions, but they do a great injustice to all
the distinct and unique terms that are summarily and monolithically lumped
together. Consider the non-negotiable otherness of our fellow human beings -
an otherness that can sometimes overwhelm us with its awesome and
devastating force when, for instance, seen in the vacant eyes of a street drunk
or a mother's weary smile, or heard in a young child 'barking' your name for
the first time or the inconsolable voice of Robert Johnson or George Jones, or
felt in a lover's touch or in the embrace of a friend you thought you'd never
see again. Our interhuman relations, as well, are made possible and
meaningful by our irrefutable otherness; and although this otherness more
often than not begets estrangement and alienation, it opens up the possibility
of truly sacramental, holy intercourse; meaningful relationality seems
inextricably bound up with the fact of non-negotiable otherness.

2 - To be sure, "dialogue," as I am using it throughout this paper, does not
refer to the written or spoken exchange of words, so, in a sense, I suppose I am
using it metaphorically. As Erazim Kohak presents it, the purpose of a
metaphor is not to describe and define a content, but rather it is an attempt to
evoke the sense of lived experience; as such, this evocation is, to a certain
degree, dependent upon an experiential resonance within the listener. For
Kohak's discussion of metaphor, see The Embers and the Stars, pp.52-56. To
speak of our meaningful relations as dialogues, then, is an attempt to evoke
the sense and meaning of those relations; to me, the language of dialogue
seems to be the most essentially accurate description of such events. Whether
or not such imagery resonates with my readers may be another issue.

3 - For such an out-of-hand dismissal of Buber's ideas and their place in
environmental ethics, see John Kultgen's article entitled "Saving You for
Real People." I will take up with his arguments in the second half of this
paper.

4 - And, in the case of Carson, Muir and Berry, it is not only their words that
bear witness to the meaning received in such encounters; over the course of
their respective lifetimes, they actively struggled to preserve, protect and heal
those things in nature that spoke to them most powerfully and eloquently.
Perhaps this, more than any rigorous ethical discourse, bears witness to the
compelling imperative force received in and through our dialogical
encounters with the nonhuman beings and things of nature as well as the
sense of vocation that comes over many years of intimacy and commitment.

5 - Kohak describes this "noematic prejudice" in his article "I, Thou and It: A
Contribution to the Phenomenology of Being-in-the-World." He focuses his
argument on a critique of the implicitly interpretive categories Heidegger and
Sartre employ to 'describe' the various types of relations we enter with both nonhuman things and our fellow humans; according to Kohak, although both philosophers set out to describe relations, their descriptions of those relations are prejudiced by the relata involved in them. Therefore, they end up offering noematic, not noetic, accounts of these relational forms - hence Kohak's term: "noematic prejudice."

6 - As Levinas correctly points out in the article referred to above, Buber's understanding of being as being-with-others or being-in-relation is wholly "consistent with contemporary views," such as those of Husserl, Bergson and Heidegger. It is beyond the scope of this paper to survey the various schools of phenomenology and defend my choice of Buber's ideas as my primary interpretive tool for this paper; for me, the resonance of his words with my own experience may be sufficient enough reason. Regarding Heidegger, however, the issue of Kohak's "noematic prejudice" comes up again. Things, for him, are excluded from possible participation in *Mitdasein*; they cannot become fellow subjects and partners in authentic and reciprocal relations. Instead, they are relegated to relations of *Mitsein*, as either *zuhande*, the objects of manipulation, or *vorhande*, the objects of speculation. In neither case are things granted the status of independent co-participants in a genuine dialogical relation. Buber's acknowledgment and defense of this possibility, therefore, stands as unique and, for me, preferable.

7 - The old hebrew sense of 'to know' seems especially fitting here. In his reading of "Wilderness in America" several years ago at the University of Montana Philosophy Forum, Henry Bugbee also made use of this notion in several side comments over the course of the reading. And although it may be an archaic usage, such a category of knowledge has some currency within contemporary philosophy. Again, it is Levinas who places Buber's theory of knowledge squarely amongst his contemporaries, citing those ontological ideas that suggest that we cannot know about or have access to knowledge about being in any objectifiable sense; what we 'know' of being is of a different order of knowledge altogether. For Buber, such knowledge is accessible through the I-Thou encounter, although in moving from the encounter to articulation we are unable to represent that knowledge in any objective way; in the most basic sense, it is ineffable.

8 - Obviously, my presentation of this rhythm of dialogue and ethical responsibility is a religious, even theistic, one. For this I need neither apologize nor rationalize. And while I find Martin Buber's (as well as Erazim Kohak's) thought explicitly and inescapably religious, and hear in the works of Henry Bugbee a deeply religious - though non-theistic - sensibility, my primary reason for offering this religious account of the rhythm of dialogue
and responsibility is far more basic: the world presents itself to me in religious terms and as a religious place - a place pervaded by Mystery, where grace and faith may reveal or withhold themselves and where the Divine Presence may, at times, flash like lightning in a summer sky or glow and quiver like those fleeting luminescences on open water (both come and gone in the instant of their apprehension). So, yes, my account of the rhythmic interplay between dialogue and responsibility will be a religious one; for me, to do otherwise would be both disingenuous and dishonest. And yet, the indefinite article in my project's title - the "a" - should not be overlooked. This essay is not intended to exhaust the ways we might describe and interpret our participation in relational events that sponsor meaning and meaningful action in our lives. Others may very well offer such descriptions and interpretations without recourse to religious language; for me, however, that isn't an option.
In attempting to outline a philosophy of dialogue, it makes sense to begin at the beginning, and for Martin Buber, the most eminent philosopher of dialogue, "In the beginning is the relation" (I and Thou 69). Every aspect of Buber's philosophy of dialogue is based upon his acknowledgment of the ontological primacy of our relationality. Our existence is constituted and defined in terms of our involvement in an infinitely complex network of relational events. Quite simply, "To be is to be related: everything in the world is being-with-others" (Wood 66). Of course, this insight is hardly unique to Buber or, for that matter, to the philosophy of dialogue in general. Beginning with Husserl and Heidegger, the entire school of thought loosely referred to as phenomenology (of which it seems to me the philosophy of dialogue is an especially rich and experientially grounded subspecies) is rooted in the awareness of our existential situation as one of being-in-relation with other beings.

What seems unique to the philosophers of dialogue, however, is their emphasis on the vocative character of the relational events that make up our lives. According to Buber, "Living means being addressed. ... What occurs to me addresses me" (Between 10 & 12). The beings and things whom we meet in our daily lives 'say' something to us; by their very presence and with their very being, they speak to us and call us forth.
In turn, "We are as respondents" (Bugbee, "Loneliness, Solitude" 5). Our fellow beings address us in a way that calls forth - evokes - our response. We are responsible - answerable. In one way or another, we are called to answer for the situation, the relational event, in which we find ourselves.

Therefore, our lives can be understood in terms of our involvement in relational events in which we are addressed in a way that calls forth our response. According to Henry Bugbee, "'Appel et reponse' [Address and response] is the basic mode of our participation in being with other beings" ("L' Exigence " 6). In so far as we respond genuinely to the address of our fellow beings, decisively received, our lives take on the character of a dialogue; we participate in being as partners in dialogue.

It is this experientially grounded awareness of the fundamentally dialogical character of our existence that serves as the foundation for the thought of Buber, Bugbee and other philosophers of dialogue such as Gabriel Marcel. In general, our being is constituted in terms of our being-in-relation, but it is only actualized - made fully real - as it takes on the character of a dialogue. Through our participation in such dialogical events we come to know our co-existents in an intimate and meaningful way, and we find the capacity to actualize the meaning received in the encounter in committed and decisive action. As engaged and responsive partners in dialogue, we are able to share in that degree of fullness, integrity and meaning which is open and available to us in our finite, creaturely existence.
Oftentimes, however, our relations with the other beings who cross our paths do not assume the character of a dialogue. These beings seem to have nothing to say to us; we do not find ourselves addressed by them. Or, perhaps we hold back in our response; we answer the call of the other and the claim of the moment in a half-hearted, distracted, or self-preoccupied way. In such cases, and for whatever reasons, we do not meet our fellow beings in genuine dialogue. We fail to actualize the potential fullness and meaning of our existence, and we find ourselves incapable of conclusive decision or action.

It seems, then, that our relations with others take on alternate forms, and although our lives may be essentially and potentially dialogical in nature, they are not always necessarily and actually so. Thus, the key question for a philosophy of dialogue is the one Bugbee asks when he writes, "How is it that beings may come to 'speak' to us in a decisive manner - coordinately with our coming to receive them in a decisively responsive way? And how is it, too, that this may not come to pass" ("Le Recueillement " 3)?

Chapter One of this paper is my attempt to point toward an answer to this question. In doing so, I will rely upon Martin Buber's understanding of our relationality in terms of his distinction between I-Thou and I-It relations as my primary, although not exclusive, interpretive tool. I will begin by describing the "basic attitude" - orientation, movement or posture might be better here - necessary, although not sufficient, for the gracious advent of genuine I-Thou dialogue in our lives. I will then describe the contrary
"attitude," which fosters a way of taking up with things defined exclusively in terms of I-It. After outlining these general dispositions, I will describe the qualities and characteristics of both I-Thou and I-It relations and distinguish between the different types of knowledge received in these two relational forms. I will then conclude by examining how I-Thou and I-It relations complement and balance each other in meaningful and active existence.

Martin Buber opens his book *I and Thou* with the following lines:

The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude. The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak. The basic words are not single words but word pairs. One basic word is the word pair I-You. The other basic word is the word pair I-It; ... Basic words are spoken with one's being. ... Whoever speaks one of the basic words enters into the word and stands in it" (53-54).1

For Buber, the word pairs I-Thou and I-It describe the two primary ways we take up with reality in our everyday lives. As relational word pairs they are not intended to be 'objective' descriptions of the way things are in and of themselves (for Buber, nothing is in and of itself). We cannot say, "This is a Thou," or "That is an It." Rather, I-Thou and I-It are noetic and anthropological descriptions of the way we humans may relate to our fellow beings.2 As Buber explains in his essay entitled "Religion and Philosophy,"

For man the existent is either face-to-face being or passive object. The essence of man arises from this twofold relation to the existent. These are not two external phenomena but the two basic modes of existing with being. ... Because they are the two basic modes of existing with
being, they are the two basic modes of our existence in general - I-Thou and I-It" (Eclipse of God 44).

Whether we exist in the "basic mode" I-Thou or the "basic mode" I-It depends in large part (although not exclusively) upon the "basic word" we speak; as both Smith and Kaufman translate it, it depends on our "attitude." And yet, such a translation is misleading if it suggests a merely mental or intellectual position that we can manipulate and change as a matter of conscious and willful choice. We cannot simply say "From now on, I choose to speak the basic word I-Thou." Rather, such 'speech' arises out of the depths of our very being. It is rooted in a basic disposition or fundamental posture that informs our way of taking up with things at the most primary level - at the level of faith. In fact, for Buber this is the very meaning of "real faith," which he defines as "presenting ourselves and receiving" (Between 12). Our capacity to say Thou to the beings we encounter is grounded in a faith that seems bound up with that deeply rooted affirmation which informs our way of being-in-relation at the most primal level. Henry Bugbee testifies to the primacy of such a faith posture for our participation in dialogue when he writes, "If we have looked upon the mountains time and again, and they have called upon us, and we have responded, let us remember that we have looked upon them with the eye of faith" (Inward Morning 116).

As we speak the basic word I-Thou out of the depths of faith, we move toward (but not actually into) dialogue with the beings and things who cross our paths. In saying Thou, we present ourselves to the other in a spirit of openness and attentive listening, which Marcel refers to as disponibilite,
availability. Unless we make ourselves available and receptive to the voice of the other, it is unlikely that we will be able to hear its address. As Buber suggests, "You say that often you hear nothing? Well, we have to be attentive with the unreserved effort of our being" (Between 76). Participation in actual I-Thou dialogue depends (from 'our side' of the relation, anyway) upon our capacity to attend to and hear the voice of the other as it addresses us.

In turn, through such participation in actual encounters we come to realize the fundamentally dialogical character of our existence; we come to recognize our situation as one in which we are always and forever being addressed by, and called to answer for, the relational events of our lives. In his essay entitled "Dialogue," Buber refers to this recognition as "becoming aware," which he distinguishes from "observing" and "looking on." "But in each instance a word demanding an answer has happened to me. We may term this way of perception becoming aware" (Between 10). Such awareness is essentially twofold. We become aware of the dialogical nature of our existential situation, in general, and we become increasingly aware of the "signs of address" given in the particular relational events that make up our daily lives. For Buber,

The signs of address are not something extraordinary, something that steps out of the order of things, they are just what goes on time and again, just what goes on in any case, nothing is added by the address. The waves of the aether roar on always, but for most of the time we have turned off our receivers (Between 11).

These signs are simply the call of the other and the claim of the moment received and acknowledged, personally and decisively, in our everyday
relations with our fellow beings. For the most part, however, we remain caught up within ourselves - our thoughts, purposes, concepts and values - and cannot hear the signs present in the address of the other. According to Bugbee, we have "noisy souls," and, "In a noisy soul this call is utterly ignored" (Inward Morning 221). For both Buber and Bugbee, our failure to actualize meaningful and decisive dialogue - I-Thou dialogue - testifies, above all, to our inability to make ourselves available and open to the signs of address given in the call of our fellow creatures. In order truly to hear, we must still the noise within; we must turn the receivers 'back on' and listen attentively to the signs which address us in the relational events of our lives.

Such a posture of availability and attentiveness, while not of itself sufficient cause for the actualization of dialogue, is surely necessary. As we take up with our fellow beings in such a manner we step toward them and toward that 'place' that Buber refers to as 'the between." As Maurice Friedman explains, "Only when one really listens - when one becomes personally aware of the 'signs of address' that address one not only in the words of but in the very meeting with the other - does one attain to that sphere of the 'between' that Buber holds to be the 'really real.'" (Introduction to Buber, Between xv). In saying Thou to the other whom we meet we move toward das Zwischen, the between. As mentioned in the Introduction of this paper, the between is the 'place' where I-Thou dialogue is actualized; as such, it is the bearer and locus of meaningful being - reality. According to Buber, this is not merely a psychological or conceptual construct; rather,

It [the between] is something ontic. ... [T]he dialogical situation can be adequately grasped only in an ontological way. But it is not to be
grasped on the basis of the ontic of personal existence, or of that of two personal existences, but of that which has its being between them, and transcends both. ... On the far side of the subjective, on this side of the objective, on the narrow ridge, where I and Thou meet, there is the realm of "between" (Between 204).

Buber's emphasis on the between - the "narrow ridge" - allows him to move outside the usual understanding of relationality (and knowledge, as I will discuss later in this chapter) in terms of typical subject-object distinctions. For Buber, reality cannot be described, let alone understood, purely in terms of the subject's experience of objective phenomena; actual being occurs between an I and a Thou and is reconstituted again and again in each I-Thou encounter. Emmanuel Levinas succinctly describes Buber's ontology of the between in the following passage:

The [I-Thou] Relation cannot be identified with a "subjective" event because the I does not represent the Thou but meets it. The meeting, moreover, is to be distinguished from the silent dialogue the mind has with itself; the I-Thou meeting does not take place in the subject but in the realm of being. However, we must avoid an interpretation of the meeting as something objectively apprehended by the I, for the ontological realm is not a block universe but an occurrence. The interval between I and Thou, the Zwischen, is the locus where being is being realized (139).

As we make ourselves available to the other and encounter it as a Thou in dialogue, we step into the between and participate in the actuality of meaningful being. Only then do we find a measure of authenticity and integrity in our lives. As Buber puts it, "All real living is meeting." (I and Thou, trans. Smith, 11).
Thus, the possibility of meaningful being is open to us in so far as we step into the between and enter I-Thou dialogue with the other beings and things whom we meet in our lives. However, for such an encounter to occur, we must be willing to go out to meet the other in a spirit of availability and openness grounded in a fundamental posture of faith. Buber summarily describes this entire movement as *Hindwwendung*, which he defines simply as "turning towards the other" (*Between* 22). Elaborating slightly, Robert Wood calls *Hindwwendung* "a swing outward toward the Other, toward the Between" (102). For Buber, this movement describes, in general terms, a way of taking up with our fellow beings characteristic of the life of dialogue.

As we enact this basic movement of the life of dialogue, our concern and attention is not focused upon ourselves and our interests but upon the other beings whom we encounter. To the degree our hearing is conditioned by the 'filters' of self-interest, we will be unable to hear the voice of the other as other - as it speaks to us out of the depths of its uniqueness, independence and integrity. In such cases, we remain within ourselves and do not step out toward the between; we fail to actualize the possibility of dialogue in our lives. For authentic dialogue to grace our lives, we must focus our attention upon the other who speaks to us. In discussing Marcel's notion of *disponibilite*, which, like Buber's *Hindwwendung*, is a double movement in which we turn toward the other from our rootedness in a fundamental posture, Bugbee writes,

The disposition in question stands in definite contrariety to self-centeredness and the whole set of interests on which self-centeredness symbiotically feeds. *'L' Etre disponible'* [The available being] is
discovered to others as available to them and he is open to the opportunities which life brings ("Le Recueillement" 9).

Although contrary to self-centeredness and self-interest, such an orientation or movement is not one of self-negation. Within a philosophy of dialogue, the integrity and presence of the self (the I) are essential to the very structure and form of the dialogue (I-Thou). That is, both I and Thou are necessary for the actualization of the relation occurring between them. What is crucial from the I's side, however, is that the I turns toward the other and attends to the voice of the other as it addresses the I.

To speak of this movement in yet another way, we may again follow Bugbee and say that while we remain attentive to and intently interested in the other with whom we have to do, our interest is rendered disinterested. To meet another being in a mode of disinterested interest means that our interest in that being, although keen, is not conditioned by our private self-interest or interests. However, merely because such interests are suspended, that does not mean that we cease to care. According to Bugbee, "On the contrary, we have tended to suppose that disinterestedness is only possible for a person whose interest is profound; the very opposite of superficial, or casual, or optional" ("The Moment" 4). Therefore, our disinterested interest is marked by an intense and deep interest; however, what we are intent upon is not our own self-interest, but the voice of the other addressing us.

For Bugbee, such disinterested interest is akin to respect. "[O]ur regard for anything approaches respect in so far as our interest in that thing becomes
inspired in a way qualifying our mode of interest as disinterested" ("The Moment" 3). We respect the other whom we meet to the degree we take up with it in its own right and on its own terms, without reducing it to a means through which we may fulfill our own intentions. To respect someone or something is to let it speak to us of itself and to listen attentively and openly to that speech as it truly addresses us. However, we must remember that such respect is only actualized in and through our active participation in dialogue. As Kohak rightly points out, our respect for others is not a passive sein-lassen (letting be), "but rather the active respect for the demands of the other" ("I, Thou, and It" 67). As we actively move toward and enter into dialogue with others in the manner of respect and openness, we are, in turn, called to active response through which that respect finds embodiment. Thus, this respect not only conditions our participation in dialogue, but it is, in turn, also further engendered within the dialogical events themselves.

In sharp contrast to Hindwendung, which I have characterized as a turning toward the other (and, consequently, toward the between) in a spirit of attentive listening, availability and respect, Buber sets a second "basic movement": Ruckbiegung. Just as Hindwendung is the basic movement of the life of dialogue, so Ruckbiegung is the basic movement of the life of monologue. Like Hindwendung, Ruckbiegung also involves a turning towards, but in this case it is a turning towards the self, which Maurice Friedman translates as "reflexion."

I term it reflexion when a man withdraws from accepting with his essential being another person in his particularity - a particularity which is by no means to be circumscribed by the circle of his own self and though it substantially touches and moves his soul is in no way
immanent in it - and lets the other exist only as his own experience, only as a "part of myself." For then dialogue becomes a fiction (Buber, Between 23-24).  

In the I-Thou dialogue, the I moves out into the between and acknowledges the other in all its unique and irreducible otherness; however, in the 'fictitious' dialogue referred to above, which may be described more accurately as a monologue or soliloquoy, the I withdraws or remains within itself, and the other is reduced to a mere object of the I's experience. In other words, the other is reduced to an It. As opposed to the I-Thou relation in which the I meets or encounters the other, the I-It relation is defined in terms of subjective experience and use. In Land Thou Buber writes, "The world as experience belongs to the basic word I-It. I perceive something. I feel something. I imagine something. I want something. I sense something. I think something. ... All this and its like is the basis of the realm of It" (54). For Buber, the I-It experience occurs within the I, while the I-Thou encounter occurs between the I and the Thou. Several pages later he writes, "Those who experience do not participate in the world. For the experience is 'in them' and not between them and the world" (56). Instead of going out to meet the other in dialogue, the I of I-It remains closed in upon itself and its experiences. As Malcolm Diamond puts it, "[T]he 'I' holds back" (21). Such a posture is directly opposed to the openness and attentiveness necessary for hearing the address of the other as it speaks to us. To draw upon language used above, we could say that the I of reflexion has not become aware of the signs of address as they speak to it; the receivers are turned off. In the mode of reflexion we no longer find ourselves addressed by the other beings whom we meet. Our lives lose their vocative character, and the world becomes no
more than an assemblage of voiceless objects, passive and plastic, which can
be taken up with, used and manipulated according to our interests and
purposes. As objects, the beings and things who cross our paths no longer
speak to us in their own right; their speech (or, more accurately, our hearing
of their speech) is conditioned and mediated by our self-centered categories of
utility and intention. They exist for us and our purposes. As dead tools or
mere resources, the others we experience cannot warrant or engender our
respect, and our relations with them will bear witness to this.

According to Buber, then, we take up with our fellow beings in one of
two basic ways, according to the basic word we speak and the basic movement
we enact. To be sure, unless we turn toward the other from out of a
disposition of attentiveness, availability and respect - unless we say Thou to
the other - we cannot possibly enter into I-Thou dialogue. And yet, such an
orientation is not, of itself, the I-Thou relation; a disposition is not a dialogue.
Real dialogue is based upon reciprocity. According to Buber, "One should not
try to dilute the meaning of relation: relation is reciprocity" (I and Thou 58).
And again, a few pages later, he writes, "Relation is reciprocity. My You acts
on me as I act on it... Inscrutably involved we live in currents of universal
reciprocity" (67). By definition, I-Thou relations are reciprocal and mutual
encounters in which both the I and the Thou play active roles.

In the I-Thou relation, the Thou is not simply a passive object; it is an
active co-participant in dialogue, addressing and responding to the I. In
describing Buber's understanding of reciprocity in the I-Thou encounter, Emil Fackenheim writes,

This relation [I-Thou] is, above all, mutual. The other is for me, but I am also for the other. I do something to the other, but the other also does something to me. This happens in the relation of dialogue, which is a relation of address and response-to-address. The other addresses me and responds to my address; that is, even if the other happens to be a lifeless and speechless object, it is treated as one treats a person" (279).9

The I-Thou relation is fundamentally reciprocal and dialogical; it is a relation of mutual address and mutual response, with both partners actively involved.

Because of this, even our Thou-saying disposition is, of itself, insufficient for the actualization of a reciprocal dialogue. And if something akin to faith (only partially informed by conscious will) is a necessary precondition of our capacity to say Thou, then an element of grace is also required for the consummation and fulfillment of the actual dialogical encounter. According to Buber,

The You encounters me by grace - it cannot be found by seeking. But that I speak the basic word to it is a deed of my whole being, is my essential deed. The You encounters me. but I enter into a direct relationship to it. Thus the relationship is election and electing, passive and active at once (I and Thou 62).

For Buber, I-Thou dialogues grace our lives in unforeseeable and unprocurable ways. Even our most sincere Thou-saying cannot guarantee the actualization of I-Thou encounters in our lives. And yet, in so far as we say
Thou and openly attend to the other in the givenness of the situation in which we find ourselves, we make ourselves available to receive the gift of existence as it is given to us - here and now. In saying Thou we recognize and affirm our existence (and, correspondingly, the face-to-face existents with whom we share our existence) as a gift, one which we are free either to accept or reject in each moment it is granted us.

In contrast to the two-sided reciprocity of the I-Thou dialogue, I-It relations are decidedly one-sided and monological. As stated earlier, the I of I-It does not step forth to receive the address of the other but remains enclosed within its subjectivity and experiences the other merely as an object of speculation, manipulation and use. Within the exclusive framework of I-It experience, the other is taken up with as a passive and inert object, and any discussion of vocative and reciprocal relations with it would indeed sound absurd. As an It, the other can neither speak to us in its own right nor can it offer any real response. In so far as we take up with others as mere objects, Its, we remain closed to the gift of the other, and we lead solitary lives in a world of deadening silence, devoid of grace.

In addition to reciprocity, the I-Thou dialogue is also characterized by presentness. When we encounter another being as a Thou, we are totally and exclusively engaged in the present moment. In fact, it is only in our I-Thou relations that we find ourselves dwelling in the present. According to Buber,

The present - not that which is like a point and merely designates whatever our thoughts may posit as the end of "elapsed" time, the fiction of the fixed lapse, but the actual and fulfilled present - exists
only insofar as presentness, encounter, and relation exist. Only as the You becomes present does presence come into being" (I and Thou 63).

For Buber, living in the present means entering into I-Thou relations with the others whom we meet in each present situation. Of course, for this to occur, we must be present ourselves - receptive and attentive to the address of the other as it speaks to us in that particular moment. As Buber suggests, "He who is not present perceives no Presence" (Eclipse of God 126). Unless we are fully present in the moment of relation, we cannot truly say Thou to the particular other with whom we have to do; consequently, our relation with the other does not take on the character of a dialogue, and we fail to make the moment fully and actually present. In other words, if we are not present, then the present moment passes us by. According to Buber, then, the "one thing needful" for living the life of dialogue, is "the total acceptance of the present" (I and Thou 126).

In the I-It relation, on the other hand, the I does not attend to - is absent from! - the present situation. As such, the I does not encounter the face-to-face presence of the other, and the present moment slips into the past. According to Buber, when we confront the other as an It, as the object of our inner experience and according to our categories of manipulation and use, we are living in the past. "[I]nsofar as a human being makes do with the things that he experiences and uses, he lives in the past, and his moment has no presence. He has nothing but objects; but objects consist in having been" (Buber, I and Thou 63-64). As an object of our experience, the other is taken out of the present moment and re-presented in terms of our conceptual
constructs of space and time, species and genera, cause and effect, and the like. This process, to be sure, is extremely useful to us; it allow us to comprehend, organize and, to some extent, even control our immediate environment. However, in doing so we remove ourselves from the lived present and dwell in the past.

A third general characteristic of the I-Thou relation is immediacy. In dialogue, we encounter the very being of the Thou in a direct and unmediated way. For the most part, Buber describes this attribute of the I-Thou relation in negative terms. "The relation to the You is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You, no prior knowledge and no imagination. ... No purpose intervenes between I and You, no greed and no anticipation; ...Every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated encounter occurs" (Buber, I and Thou 62-63). In the moment of authentic dialogue, we encounter the other, not in terms of our conceptual categories and mental constructs, our purposes and projects, but in direct response to the unfiltered and undistorted voice of the other as it speaks to us, on this particular occasion, out of its irreducible and uncanny otherness. We encounter the very being of the other - a sheer, ineffable presence.

In the I-It relation, however, what we confront is not the other as a presence but as an image - our projected image of it. Here, our meeting with and, therefore, our knowledge about the other is conditioned by the conceptual framework that we impose upon it and into which we attempt to make it fit. That is, we 'hear' (in as much as we can be said to hear at all in
the I-It relation) and interpret the address of the other in terms of the subjective (and objective - both, as they are commonly understood, belong to the world of It) categories we bring with us to the relational event. These categories act as the conceptual and even emotional filters through which we screen our experience as we try to understand, order and manipulate our world. And again, although extremely useful, our categories, whether they be of science or poetry, act as a barrier between ourselves and others that prevent us from receiving their call as they speak of themselves from out of their very being. Only in those gracious moments when this barrier is suspended (it would be neither possible nor desirable to do away with our image-forming constructs altogether) can dialogue occur, not within one's mind, but between an I and a Thou.

In addition to reciprocity, presence and immediacy, the I-Thou dialogue is also characterized by the quality of wholeness. According to Wood, "In the I-Thou relation the undivided self meets the undivided Other" (41). In saying Thou we go out to meet the other without reservation, giving fully and completely of ourselves; in turn, it is only through our participation in such actual encounters that we come to realize wholeness and integrity in our lives. In his essay "What Is Man?," Buber writes, "Man can become whole not in virtue of a relation to himself but only in virtue of a relation to another self. This other self may be just as limited and conditioned as he is; in being together the unlimited and the unconditioned is experienced" (Between 168). Of course, this personal wholeness is not something we have once and for all; like the I-Thou dialogues themselves,
such integrity is fleeting and evanescent. And yet, as our lives become more and more informed by our participation in meaningful dialogue with our fellow beings, we become more fully who we are meant to be; we come to realize a degree of integrity in our lives.11

In contrast to the wholeness of I-Thou dialogue, our participation in I-It relations is partial and fragmentary. In turn, the It we experience is similarly fragmented, divided into analyzable components, classes and functions. Speaking of our I-It experiences, Wood writes, "Each object is located within a humanly constructed frame of reference relative to other objects and is broken up into various perceptible and interpretable parts" (40). Again, such analysis and dissection is very useful in making sense of and ordering the world in which we live. However, in doing so we do not encounter the other in its fullness, integrity and irreducibility - in all its "undivided" otherness; and so, participation in actual dialogue is denied us. For, as Friedman explains, "Dialogue is ... the response of one's whole being to the otherness of the other, that otherness that is comprehended only when I open myself to him in the present and in the concrete situation and respond" (Introduction to Buber, Between xvii).

But what good are these reciprocal, present, immediate and whole encounters with our fellow beings? As suggested above, the knowledge we receive in I-Thou dialogue defies representation, interpretation and analysis. According to Buber, our uncanny I-Thou encounters are devoid of content,
and, in them, we learn nothing about the others whom we meet. Furthermore, although we may move in the direction of such encounters, we cannot procure them through an act of will or 'have' them on our own terms. In turn, through our participation in them we accomplish nothing; they serve no purpose. As Buber writes, "The purpose of the relation is the relation itself - touching the You. For as soon as we touch a You, we are touched by a breath of eternal life" (Land Thou 112).

Although we learn nothing about the other whom we meet as a partner in dialogue, in so far as we "touch a You," we come to know that particular other in a deep and decisive way, and our lives are graced with truth and meaning - "finality," to use Bugbee's term. According to Buber's epistemology, our 'knowing' takes one of two basic forms, according to the type of relation - I-Thou or I-It - from which it arises. Generally, our I-It knowledge is a 'knowing about,' in which we know the other superficially and abstractly, as a subject knows an object of study and inquiry, in terms of its qualities, characteristics and attributes. On the other hand, the knowledge received in our I-Thou dialogues is similar to the hebraic meaning of 'to know:' to touch or to intercourse with the being of the other. For Buber, it is this latter knowing, our deep and intimate knowledge of the other in all its otherness, through which we may glimpse the truth, "which can never be possessed and yet may be comprehended in an existentially real relation" (Buber, Between 82). We come to know truth and meaning in our lives only through our committed and whole-hearted participation in dialogue - or what Bugbee calls "sacramental participation in being with beings"
For both Buber and Bugbee, the truth is not something we 'have,' not a mental possession; rather, it is something we may encounter - or not encounter.

Buber describes the experiential and participatory knowledge we receive in our I-Thou encounters as a contentless "force." In *I and Thou* he writes, "They [I-Thou relations] leave no content that could be preserved, but their force enters into the creation and into man's knowledge, and the radiation of its force penetrates the ordered world and thaws it again and again" (82). In the I-Thou dialogue we do not gain any knowledge about the other that is susceptible to analysis and representation in thought or speech; the meeting is, in the fullest sense, ineffable. As Levinas explains,

Buber describes a sphere of being which cannot be told because it is a living dialogue between individuals who are not related as objective contents to one another: *one individual has nothing to say about the other*. The sensitivity of the I-Thou relation lies in its completely formal nature. To apprehend the other as a content is tantamount to relating oneself to him as an object and is to enter into an I-It relation instead (143).

And yet, despite the lack of content and our inability to say anything about the other, through our participation in I-Thou dialogue we come to know the other in an immediate and decisive way. This knowledge, however, is not so much a knowledge about the other as it is a knowledge of the other. In describing this experiential, contentless knowledge, Buber employs the biblical sense of 'to know' - to touch or to intercourse with the other - as in "Adam knew Eve" or "God knew Hosea." In his book *Good and Evil*, Buber writes,
The original meaning of the Hebrew verb 'to recognise, to know', in distinction from Western languages, belongs not to the sphere of reflection but to that of contact. The decisive event for 'knowing' in biblical Hebrew is not that one looks at an object, but that one comes into touch with it. This basic difference is developed in the realm of a relation of the soul to other beings, where the fact of mutuality changes everything. At the centre is not a perceiving of one another, but the contact of being, intercourse" (56).

Through participation in dialogue we come to know the other - touch the other - at the most intimate and fundamental level, at the level of being.

In such primal encounters we come face-to-face with the other in all its otherness and recognized as such. We come to know the other as other.

According to Buber,

The actual other who meets me meets me in such a way that my soul comes in contact with his as with something that it is not and that it cannot become. My soul does not and cannot include the other, and yet can nonetheless approach the other in this most real contact. This other, what is more, is and remains over against the self, no matter what completeness the self may attain, as the other. ... All beings existing over against me who become "included" in my self are possessed by it in this inclusion as an It. Only then when, having become aware of the unincludable otherness of a being, I renounce all claim to incorporating it in my soul, does it truly become Thou for me (Eclipse of God 88-89).

This knowledge of the other - as other - is not something we can possess; nor is it something we can fit into our systems of thought or include as part of ourselves. Through our dialogical encounters we come to know the other as an independent partner in dialogue (not-I yet also not-It), an irreducibly and radically other being whom we cannot appropriate or possess but whom we can meet - and, therefore, know - in moments of dialogue.
It is through this knowing intercourse with others that we recognize their inexhaustible meaning and worth as fellow creatures warranting our respect. In turn, we come to know our own lives and situations as eminently meaningful. For Buber, and for Bugbee, we can only know such meaning through our full and committed participation in the situations in which we find ourselves; when examined objectively as a detached observer and not as a participant, our fellow beings and our existential situation appear absurd and meaningless. As Bugbee writes,

Perhaps the existence of things, the standing out of the distinct, can only make sense, as we stand forth ourselves, as we are made to stand forth. In *ecstasis* (literally a 'being made to stand forth') the meaning of the existent becomes clear, and the infinite importance of existent things becomes clear. ... This is to say that there can be no conclusive meaning to our situation so long as it is abstractly considered" (*Inward Morning* 106 & 126).

Through our whole-hearted participation in existence - through our "standing forth" - we come to know existence, instantiated in our own and fellow existents', as meaningful. Only through the knowledge received and engendered in dialogue with our fellow beings is such meaning accessible to us. And yet, like the dialogical encounters themselves, we cannot go out looking for and striving after such meaning. It dawns upon our lives as a gift, which is open to acceptance or refusal; we can only make ourselves ready to receive it and answer for it with our actions. In his essay "Religion and Philosophy" Buber writes,

Meaning is to be experienced in living action and suffering itself, in the unreduced immediacy of the moment. Of course, he who aims at the experiencing of experience will necessarily miss the meaning, for he
destroys the spontaneity of the mystery. Only he reaches the meaning who stands firm, without holding back or reservation, before the whole might of reality and answers it in a living way. ... The reply of the people of Israel on Sinai, "We will do it, we will hear it," expresses the decisive with naive and unsurpassable pregnancy. The meaning is found through the engagement of one's own person; it only reveals itself as one takes part in its revelation" (Eclipse of God 35-36).

Meaning is accessible and open to us in the here and now of our everyday lives. In fact, it is only through our unreserved participation in the here and now that such meaning is granted to us - in hearing and responding to the claims of the moment as it addresses us in the manifold situations of our lives. As participants in dialogue we know the other in an intimate and decisive way, and correspondingly, we come to know meaning in our lives as well.

All of this is not to say that our knowledge about others - our I-It knowledge - is unnecessary or unimportant. Quite the opposite, it would be impossible for us to live and act without it. Only by examining our experience in terms of space and time, cause and effect, species and genera and similar categories of analysis and interpretation could we make any sense out of the world in which we live. Scientific and technical knowledge about things - what may be called objective knowledge - is useful and important. However, it is a detached knowing that, by definition, abstracts from our knowledge of things encountered in their depth and meaning; the meaning of our co-participation in existence with our fellow beings is not accessible to empirical investigation or so-called objective knowledge. In his essay "On Starting with Love" Bugbee writes,
Now objectivity is a stance in which we abstract from the evocative way in which the beings we represent to ourselves are present as holding concrete meaning for us. It is a kind of deliberate detachment from the mutuality of existence, though a sense of that mutuality with the beings we are thus considering may well persist, and is further implicitly presumed in the address of thinking and speaking with other persons, or as in the presence of other persons, with reference to what is thrown into objective aspect. Still, the explicit rendering of meaning coordinate with the stance in objectivity abstracts from the mutuality of existence between oneself and the beings thus being taken into account. Likewise abstraction is made from the concern but for which we could not be called upon by anything to render what is called for with respect to it, even if that be in giving an objective account of it (7).

From the position of an objective investigator, we may accumulate a great deal of good and useful knowledge about the world in which we live. In our attempts to reduce suffering and promote justice and healing, such information may indeed come in very handy. Yet, by itself, it is a directionless and, ironically, meaningless knowledge. Only as it is informed by our knowledge of others as inexhaustibly meaningful and worthy of respect - a knowledge engendered in our immediate and intimate intercourse with them - does our empirical, objective - I-It - knowledge become valuable. Respect and meaning dawn upon us through participation in engaged and destinate dialogue with our fellow beings.

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to describe our relationality, for the most part, in terms of Martin Buber's distinction between I-Thou and I-It relations. Up to this point I have contrasted the fundamental postures or movements with which we enter into I-Thou and I-It relations, the generic
traits and characteristics of these two types of relations, and the kinds of knowledge we receive through our participation - or non-participation, as the case may be - in these relations. Now, however, I would like to close this chapter by examining how I-Thou and I-It relations complement one another in building up an integrated and active life.

According to Buber, full and meaningful human existence is characterized by an ongoing movement between I-Thou and I-It relations. As he writes in I and Thou, "Mortal life is by its very nature an oscillation between You and It" (101). And earlier, he states, "The individual You must become an It when the event of relation has run its course. The individual It can become a You by entering into the event of relation" (84). A life of pure I-Thou relation is neither possible or desirable; our dialogical I-Thou encounters are fleeting and evanescent, brief moments of sheer reciprocity, presence and immediacy. On the other hand, while it is all too possible to live in a world defined exclusively in terms of I-It, such a life lacks meaning, authenticity and the necessary experiential ground of decisive action. Neither I-Thou or I-It, taken in isolation from the other, can sustain us in meaningful and active existence. As Friedman explains, "[I]t is not I-Thou or I-It which is the basic choice but the healthy alternation between I-Thou and I-It" (Preface to Life of Dialogue x).

This "healthy alternation," however, is no random bouncing back and forth. As discussed earlier, the knowledge about things we gain from I-It experiences is very useful in comprehending, analyzing and manipulating
our world; such subjective-objective knowledge provides us with an orderly and fairly reliable vision of the world - a world that 'makes sense' and in which we can live. However, this knowledge about things cannot provide meaning for our lives or direction for our actions. As Buber emphatically concludes, "And in all seriousness of truth, listen: without It a human being cannot live. But whoever lives only with that is not human" (*I and Thou* 85). So, although both I-Thou and I-It relations are necessary, it is always the former that must inform the latter and serve as the signpost. According to Buber,

Both [I-Thou and I-It] together build up human existence; it is only a question of which of the two is at any time the architect and which is the assistant. Rather, it is a question of whether the I-Thou relation remains the architect, for it is self-evident that it cannot be employed as assistant. If it does not command, then it is already disappearing (*Eclipse of God* 128).

Through our participation in dialogue with our fellow beings our lives are graced with meaning and we find ourselves empowered to act in a decisive way. If our lives and actions are to approach authenticity, they must always be grounded in the deep and decisive knowledge received in and through our participation in such dialogue, even in those times when we experience the others whom we meet as Its; the Thou-saying spirit must permeate our lives and inform our manner of taking up with things in an enduring way.

Furthermore, in the address of the other received in the moment of dialogue, we find ourselves called forth to respond and, consequently, to embody that response in the world of action. And yet, in actualizing our response and acting upon it, we return to the world of It. According to Buber,
"All response binds the You into the It-world. That is the melancholy of man, and that is his greatness. For thus knowledge, thus works, thus image and example come into being among the living" (I and Thou 89-90). While our response may be grounded in our participation in I-Thou dialogue, it is embodied - incarnated - in the It-world. For Buber, the dynamic whereby our dialogical encounters find embodiment in committed action, which he refers to as Verwirklichung ("realization" or "actualization," depending on translations), provides a critical link between the worlds of Thou and It.

Through this process the It-world is illuminated and hallowed with the meaningful and destinate force of the I-Thou encounter, and, at the same time, the presence and meaning received in that encounter is 'made flesh' - actualized - in the world of experience. For the I, the actualization of the dialogical encounter in action offers the possibility of integrity and unity in the continuity of committed response. Born out of the moment of holy intercourse, we find our actions inspirtied with a sense of decisiveness and resolve.

In trying to explain this process of actualization, Buber uses the example of the artist. In the conception of the creative act, the artist encounters the sheer presence of the form. According to Buber, "The form that confronts me I cannot experience nor describe; I can only actualize it. And yet I see it, radiant in the splendor of the confrontation, far more clearly than all clarity of the experienced world. Not as a thing among the 'internal' things, not as a figment of the 'imagination,' but as what is present" (I and Thou 61). In the moment of encounter, the artist and the form enter into an
actual relation. However, if the form is to find embodiment, the artist must actualize it. In doing so, Buber writes, "I lead the form across - into the world of It. The created work is a thing among things and can be experienced and described as an aggregate of qualities" (I and Thou 61). As such, the artistic act involves both participation in an actual relation and the actualization and embodiment of that relation in the world of action.

Of course, given the incomprehensible and ineffable nature of the I-Thou relation, such actualization will, of necessity, be incomplete. Out of the multitude of potentially appropriate responses, the artist must choose one and commit himself/herself to its actualization. For Buber, this is the "sacrifice" involved in the actualization process, where "infinite possibility is surrendered on the altar of the form" (I and Thou 60). To a certain degree, all creative acts of embodiment necessarily involve the death of possibility. However, through this sacrifice and death, resurrection also becomes a possibility - not only for the artist but for the larger community as well. Through the artist's active and creative response to the sponsoring relational event, he/she actualizes the encounter and allows it to be shared. Robert Wood explains this in the following way:

But in all this there is the alternation of the actual and the latent; once achieved, relation is recognized as that which is hidden within the Thou-become-It, and from time to time it can be actualized - provided one persists in faithful openness. The situation of thinghood envelops the Thou as a chrysalis envelops the butterfly. But in being reduced to this state, the It is located as something that can become Thou for others. Hence the It-world has a function to play that is essential. Relation, however, is first (62).
In our response to the dialogical moment, faithfully articulated, we bear witness to the reality and truth present in the encounter. In doing so, however, our witness becomes a thing among things, but it is a thing which points to, and invites participation in, the ongoing life of dialogue. Like the actual encounters themselves, our faithful testimony may work evocatively - upon ourselves and others - and call us forth in renewed readiness to meet our fellows in dialogue.

At this point, then, we have come full circle. Beginning with an account of the faith posture in which we must necessarily stand if we hope to hear the call of the other as it addresses us and, thus, encounter the other in dialogue, we have concluded by describing the alternation between I-Thou and I-It relations which, in turn, may engender such a disposition and point us toward future participation in I-Thou dialogue. As we go forth to meet others in faith, we may come to know them - intimately and decisively - and find meaning and truth in our lives; in doing so, our faith is upheld and deepened as it finds embodiment in our committed response. It is this response, examined in terms of our ethical responsibility, that I will examine in the following chapter.
EXPLANATORY NOTES

1 - Kaufman, in his 1970 translation, uses I-You instead of I-Thou. He does so to preserve the intimate and familiar nature of Ich-Du and, at the same time, downplay the over-emphasis on the theological associations rooted in the tendency of modern English readers to understand "Thou" as referring exclusively to God. See Kaufman's lengthy translator's introduction for a more complete account of his reasons for preferring I-You over I-Thou.

2 - For Buber, "The world is twofold for man." Given that we enter relations from the standpoint of humans, we can only legitimately describe those relations in anthropological terms. The ontology Buber presents here is a limited, regional one. See Ray Hart's Unfinished Man and the Imagination for a discussion of regional ontologies, especially pp.91-92.

3 - Although often used interchangeably, especially in English, we must distinguish between faith, as I wish to use it here, and belief, which commonly refers to our intellectual assent to a truth claim or proposition such as "I believe that the world is flat," or "I believe that God exists." For an excellent analysis of faith and belief along these lines see Wilfred Cantwell Smith's The Meaning and End of Religion and Faith and Belief.

4 - See Bugbee's "Le Recueillement et L' Accueil ," especially page 9, for a discussion of availability and its central importance in Marcel's thought.

5 - Both Bugbee and Marcel make similar moves in their use of "meta-technical" and "meta-objective" as referring to being and beings in a way that defies characterization and reduction into the framework of a subject's knowing and representing an object. I will take up with Bugbee's understanding of the meta-objective categories of finality, necessity and certainty in considerable detail in Chapter 2.

6 - A note on translations: Smith translates Buber's Begegnung as "meeting," while Kaufman translates the same word as "encounter." In Kaufman's translation of I and Thou this passage reads, "All actual life is encounter" (62). For Buber, Begegnung always describes the I-Thou relation (Ich-Du Beziehung) and never the I-It relation (Ich-Es Verhältnis). Thus, meeting here refers to the meeting between an I and a Thou. In this paper, I will use meeting and encounter interchangeably.
7 - Friedman's choice of terms is somewhat unfortunate for my purposes here. In his discussion of the twofold nature of Marcel's _disponibilite_, Bugbee distinguishes between "reflexive" and what we might call referential _disponibilite_. In his essay "L' Exigence Ontologique," Bugbee describes the interplay between the two as follows:

Reflexive _disponibilite_ is the deepening of concern in its radical character--and ultimately no less than a willing disposition of oneself in accord with being unconditionally claimed. But it is in and out of being so claimed that we can come to 'hear' and to heed beings in their grounded claim upon us; that hearing and heeding is the manner of our _disponibilite_ in the direct engagement of concern by beings occupying our attention; accordingly _disponibilite_ is also coordinate with respect to them (5).

For Marcel and Bugbee, reflexive _disponibilite_ is something like a primary awareness of our situation as one in which we find ourselves as given along with our fellow beings who are likewise given in our mutual co-existence. It is out of such recognition that we find ourselves called upon to make ourselves available to our fellows - in the referential sense. Thus, it is akin to the fundamental posture we have been discussing and completely antithetical to what Friedman means by reflexion as he uses the term. In a translator's note to Buber's essay entitled "Dialogue," Friedman describes reflexion as "...the essence of the 'monological' life, in which the other is not really met as the other, but merely as a part of the monological self, in an _Erlebnis_ or inner experience which has no objective import: what happens is that the self 'curves back on itself'" (Buber, Between 206).

8 - For the purposes of this paper, it is important not to read "persons" within the framework of the noematic prejudice we are attempting to overcome. The category of "persons" is not limited exclusively to human persons. I will follow the inclusive personalism of Erazim Kohak, here, as he presents it in _The Embers and the Stars_. According to Kohak,

To speak of the world as 'personal' means to conceive of it as structured in terms of relations best understood on the model of meaningful relations among persons. It is to conceive of it as peopled by beings who are similarly best understood on the model of persons, modified as needed, rather than on the model of matter in motion, raised to infinite complexity(209).

Thus, for Kohak- and for us - "[A] person, ultimately, is not just a being who possesses a psyche or manifests certain personality traits as much as a being
who stands in a moral relation to us, a being we encounter as a Thou" (The Embers and the Stars 128-129). Throughout this paper, then, "person" refers to a being with whom we may engage in authentic I-Thou dialogue and should be understood in the most inclusive, noetic sense of that term.

9 - At this point in the paper I am merely trying to outline the basic characteristics of I-Thou and I-It relations in general terms. Therefore, I wish to hold off on my (and Buber's) attempt to answer the obvious question: How do these "lifeless and speechless objects" (sic) reciprocate? For now, I will follow Buber and say that reciprocity with such beings involves "the reciprocity of being itself" (Afterword to I and Thou, 173). I will take up with this question in more detail in Chapter Three, where I will present Buber's defense of his claim that reciprocal I-Thou relations can and do occur between humans and animals, plants and rocks.

10 - Although this quote occurs in the context of Buber's discussion of our relations with God, it also holds true for the whole of our relational lives, including our relations with our fellow finite beings. As with the other implicitly theological references I have made up to this point in the paper, I ask the reader's patience until Chapter 2, when I will address Buber's theology and philosophy of religion explicitly and in some depth.

11 - Two notes here: First, my discussion of integrity and wholeness in this paragraph brings us to the topic of a life informed by what can be called a sense of vocation; as an active, non-static category it implies that our lives become informed with direction and follow along a path that becomes a way. But here, we move into the realm of Buber's - and Bugbee's - philosophical anthropology, a subject I will discuss in detail in Chapter 2. Second, the more static connotations of wholeness still persist. And yet, Buber makes it clear that we never become whole in any finished or once-and-for-all sense; to use Ray Hart's language, we cannot bridge the "ontological difference" between who we are and who we are to become - between who we actually and potentially are - in any absolute sense. I think the wholeness of which Buber speaks is more akin to finding direction and vocation along the course of one's life. Throughout the paper, it is this more fluid, process-oriented meaning of wholeness and integrity that I mean.

12 - Because "eternal life" is so easily misinterpreted, I would suggest that Bugbee's sense of "finality," as he presents it in Inward Morning, is more akin to what Buber means here. For a more detailed discussion of finality, see Bugbee's Inward Morning; I will discuss Bugbee's understanding of finality in some detail in the next chapter.
A CORRELATIVE ETHIC OF RESPONSIBILITY

As I tried to show in Chapter One of this essay, our existence, understood dialogically, is essentially a matter of address and response. In the multitude of relational events that constitute our daily lives, we find ourselves addressed in a way that calls forth our response. In turn, we respond through our words and actions or, in other cases, our silences and non-actions; even our failure to hear and/or respond is a form of response. As relational beings, we are forever placed in the position of being responsible - answerable - to the address received in each new and unforeseeable relational event. As we participate in these events, we find ourselves called, claimed, and it is our responsibility to respond in an appropriate and decisive manner - in an ethical manner.

This dynamic of address and response - claim and responsibility - lies at the heart of a dialogical understanding of ethical responsibility. Within the context of a philosophy of dialogue, ethical decision-making and action are not matters of applying or prescribing general or universal principles to the particular situations in which we find ourselves and acting accordingly. Instead, ethics begins with our being truly present and attentive to the concrete situation and venturing to respond to the unique and unprecedented claims of that moment. As Martin Buber explains in his essay entitled "Dialogue,"

The idea of responsibility is to be brought back from the province of specialized ethics, of an "ought" that swings free in the air, into that of lived life. Genuine responsibility exists only where there is real responding.
Responding to what?
To what happens to one, to what is to be seen and heard and felt. Each concrete hour allotted to the person, with its context drawn from the world and from destiny, is speech for the man who is attentive. Attentive, for no more than that is needed in order to make a beginning with the reading of the signs that are given you. ...
It will, then, be expected of the attentive man that he faces creation as it happens. It happens as speech, and not as speech rushing out over his head but as speech directed precisely at him (Between 16)

As Buber suggests, our ethical responsibility begins as we take up with things in a spirit of attentiveness, availability and respect - that fundamental posture of faith described in Chapter One. Only as we step out to meet our fellow beings in such a manner do we find ourselves addressed by them and called forth to respond. Our capacity to say Thou to our fellow creatures is a necessary precondition of our participation in genuine I-Thou dialogue. And it is here, in and through our participation in dialogical encounters (and, more generally, in life lived in the mode of dialogue), that we are empowered to commit ourselves in decisive ethical action. Ethical responsibility involves, above all, the actualization of our I-Thou encounters in the world of action. That is, as we come to know the other as Thou, we come to know what is asked of us (required of us), and our actions, if they are to be ethical, will embody the knowledge and meaning received in the moment of dialogue. The address received in dialogue is not neutral; it carries with it an imperative - a compelling claim to respond in a decisive and committed manner.
How, specifically, our response will be actualized is impossible to say outside of the situation in which we find ourselves called upon. Genuine ethical responsibility, by its very nature, cannot be prescribed. Universal moral laws, categorical imperatives, and the like may, at times, be useful, but they cannot remove from us the burden of our responsibility in the particular and utterly unique and unforeseeable situations in which we find ourselves. Our responsibility can only be fulfilled in responding to the claims of each particular relational moment.

For Buber, the moment, received in depth, speaks to us in what may be understood as a threefold way. First, and most obviously, we are addressed by the particular finite other whom we meet and with whom we have to do. However, in being so addressed, we are also confronted with the meaning of our existence as called upon by beings who, although radically other, are, at the same time, co-existent with whom we share our being - a being which we did not choose or originate. In traditional theological language, we find ourselves together with our fellows as creatures - created, derivative, sponsored beings. And, what is more, this creatureliness involves a task; we are called, out of creation and in the depths of each moment, to become the particular beings who we are created to be. Our proper vocation is to actualize our unique potentialities, and we do this insofar as we truly respond to the evocative speech of our fellow creatures. And lastly, in the address of the moment acknowledged in its fullness and meaning, we receive the call of the Creator who speaks to us through our fellow creatures and who, in creating us, sponsors us and sends us forth along our way - who offers us a destiny we
are free to fulfill. Thus, the call of the other, the call of our creaturely task, and the call of our sponsoring and abiding Creator speak together in the depths of the moment, decisively received, and charge our dialogical encounters with imperative force, empowering us to respond in a decisive, committed manner. That is, through our engaged participation in these events, we come to know what is necessary in this our unique situation, and we find, at the same time, the capacity to commit ourselves in necessary action.

In attempting to outline a dialogical understanding of ethical responsibility, I will begin this chapter by examining, in greater detail, how the call of the other, the call of our creaturely task, and the call of our Creator each address us in and through our participation in dialogical encounters, claiming us and calling us forth into committed, ethical action. I will suggest that in the claim of the situation, heard singularly and in its entirety, our lives are informed with a fundamental meaning, and we receive a compelling imperative to incarnate that meaning in our actions. After attempting to outline this 'rhythm of ethical responsibility' I will close by showing the experiential, non-prescriptive and non-verifiable nature of such an ethic and restating the necessity of grounding our responsibility in our participation in dialogical encounters with our fellow beings.

Within each relational moment, we find ourselves addressed, most immediately and apparently, by the particular, finite other who crosses our
path. As suggested in Chapter One, the multitude of others whom we meet have a word to speak to us, which, when decisively received in dialogue, calls us forth to respond; in fact, the very meaning of this word of address lies in its evocative force. As Emmanuel Levinas explains, "The essence of the 'word' does not initially consist in its objective meaning or descriptive possibilities, but in the response that it elicits" (142). Within the dialogical, I-Thou encounter, the beings whom we meet speak to us evocatively, and we find ourselves called upon to answer their word of address; we are responsible to them.

Our participation in such dialogical moments grounds genuine ethical responsibility. Only as we meet the other in dialogue do we hear the word of address that elicits our ethical response. As Buber writes in I and Thou, "Only those who know relation and who know the presence of You have the capacity for decision" (100). Quite simply, ethical decision-making begins with our participation in I-Thou encounters, which come to fruition as we attempt to actualize them in our various actions and non-actions.

As such, we practice genuine responsibility, at the most basic level, to the others whom we meet - that is, whom we meet as Thous. As described in Chapter One, in the reciprocal, present, immediate and whole I-Thou encounter, we come to know the other in a deep and intimate way. The other speaks to us, not as an object to be analyzed and/or manipulated for our private purposes and according to our intentions, but as an independent partner in dialogue - a unique and wholly other being. It is the voice of the
other, heard as such, that makes ethical claims upon us and elicits our response. In his essay "The Question to the Single One" Buber writes, "Responsibility presupposes one who addresses me primarily. That is, from a realm independent of myself, and to whom I am answerable. ... It can only be experienced when one is not closed to the otherness, the ontic and primal otherness of the other" (Between 45). In the moment of dialogue we find ourselves responsible to the other whom we meet, an other that is neither It nor I but Thou. As Levinas explains, "For only what is other can elicit an act of responsibility. Buber attempts to maintain the radical otherness of the Thou in the Thou relation: The I does not construe the Thou as object, nor ecstatically identify itself with the Thou, for the terms remain independent despite the relation into which they enter" (141). For Buber, we cannot practice responsibility to the other if we reduce it to just another object among objects; objects cannot claim our responsibility. However, neither can we include or appropriate the other within ourselves; we are not responsible to ourselves. If the other is to engender and elicit our ethical response, it must speak to us of its singular, irreducible, independent, and uncanny otherness. Quite simply, it must speak to us of itself, and we must hear it as such. For, as Henry Bugbee points out, "Things say themselves, univocally, unisonously, formulating a tautology of infinite significance" (Inward Morning 141). As we meet with others in authentic dialogue, they speak to us of their deep and inexhaustible otherness, and their voices resonate within us, stirring us up and calling us forth into decisive and committed response. Acknowledged in their own right, they rightfully claim our responsibility and, at the same time, renew and deepen our respect.
However, this emphasis upon the otherness of the beings whom we meet in dialogue does not imply contrariety or 'atomic' isolation. These beings are, indeed, other, but they are other in such a way that they can be met. In turn, as we meet these others as independent partners in dialogue, we come to know them as co-existents, fellow creatures, kin. According to Bugbee,

Things exist in their own right; it is a lesson that escapes us except as they hold us in awe. ... A philosophy of the given misses the point which does not think of things as given in their independence. Yet the truth of the independence of things should not lead us to succumb to a sense of isolation and insularity among independent existents. The independence of things is no warrant for an objectivizing mode of thought about them, for taking an abstract point of view toward them and ourselves. For concretely, experience of the presence of things is also complete intimacy with them, the opposite of estrangement from them and ourselves. The gift of things in their independence is also the gift of ourselves together with them (Inward Morning 164).

To acknowledge the independence and otherness of the beings and things we come across in our daily lives does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that they are, therefore, atomic objects existing over-against us and from whom we are separated by an unbridgeable and, finally, incommunicable gulf. The either-or choice between fusion/identification and atomism is a false one, born of ideologies trapped within an exclusively subjective-objective (I-It) understanding of our relationality. In the reciprocal and dialogical encounter - in the reception of the given thing as presence, to follow Bugbee's use of Marcel's terms in the quote above - we meet what is other not as an It - an object - but as a Thou, a fellow being and co-participant in the mutuality of
our shared existence. In and through our participation in I-Thou dialogue we come to know the beings whom we meet as both other and kin, standing side by side as fellow members of what Maurice Friedman calls the "community of otherness" (Touchstones 268).

Bound together within this existential community of otherness, we hear the address of the particular being whom we meet as the call of the other who is, at the same time, also our fellow creature. And if the otherness of our fellows, received in depth, elicits our respectful response, so too, will the realization of our mutual standing and co-creaturely kinship as it dawns upon us through the gracious advent of our dialogical encounters. As we come to know our fellow beings as kin, we come to know them as engendering and warranting our respect. According to Bugbee, "It is in and out of that mutuality appreciated as final and ultimate that we can affirm things and other persons in their independence, and also at the same time - reflexively - ourselves. This affirmation is respect" ("The Sublime" 5). Our capacity for respect and, in turn, respectful response is grounded in our participation in authentic encounter, through which we come to know the other as kin and become aware of ourselves as bound together with one another in a shared existence.

Our ethical responsibility will, then, involve the active embodiment (or, in Buber's language, actualization) of the respect engendered and/or deepened in our dialogical encounters with the beings whom we meet - and come to know - as both other and kin. As other, we become aware of these
beings as existing in their own right, independent of our purposes, desires and intentions. They do not exist merely as psychological extensions of our minds or as tools and resources for our use; their being and value lies beyond our mental constructs and instrumentality. As such, they are to be treated not merely as means to our ends but also as ends in themselves. Therefore, as Friedman points out in his discussion of Buber's ethics, "Buber's concept of the responsibility of an I to a Thou is closely similar to Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative: Never treat one's fellows as a means only but always also as an end of value in himself" (Life of Dialogue 200). Yet even here, where Buber and Kant seem to be saying the same thing, there is a crucial difference. Whereas Kant comes to this principle universally and abstractly (and exclusively, in so far as he limits its application to our treatment of rational beings), attempting to apply it to each particular situation as it presents itself, Buber's ethic of responsibility is rooted in our genuine participation in the particular situation in which we find ourselves and must be renewed and re-tested again and again in the unique and unforeseeable moment of each new encounter. Friedman attempts to articulate this fundamental difference as follows:

To Kant the respect for the dignity of others grows out of one's own dignity as a rational being bound to act according to universal laws. For Buber the concern for the other as an end in himself grows out of one's direct relation to this other and to that higher end which he serves through the fulfilment of his created uniqueness. Thus Kant's imperative is essentially subjective (the isolated individual) and objective (universal reason) whereas Buber's is dialogical (Life of Dialogue 200).

For Buber, our respect for the other is grounded in our hearing its address - spoken out of all its unique, irreducible and uncanny otherness - in the
moment of dialogue. Only as we receive the word of the other as a Thou, and not merely and exclusively an It, can we venture to respond in a truly respectful - ethical manner.

In addition, if our awareness of the otherness of the being whom we meet in dialogue evokes our respect for it as an end in itself, then our similarly experiential awareness of the kinship of our co-creatureliness will call forth our respectful solidarity with and compassion for our fellow beings. As kin, we share an intimacy and affinity with our fellow beings, and we recognize them, even in their independence, as co-participants in a common situation; we are all, so to speak, in the same ontic boat. Born out of the acknowledgement of our common lot, we treat the fellow being whom we meet with the respect - even love - due one who is "like yourself." Here, again, Buber arrives at the same point, although again via a different route, as a traditional ethical norm: God's injunction in Leviticus 19:18 to, "Love your neighbour as one like yourself." (Between 51). In meeting our fellow beings as Thou, we come to know and respect them as creatures like ourselves, and our actions toward them, if they are to be ethical, will embody that knowledge, compassion and respect. But again, this cannot be reduced to the rote application of a universal norm to the particular situations that arise; our compassion, respect and consequent response - the fulfilment of our responsibility - are inseparable from the unique relation out of which they arise and become actual. Thus, in his book Touchstones of Reality, Friedman interprets, and qualifies, Buber's use of the biblical command as follows:
Here the true meaning of "love your neighbor" unfolds itself: "Deal lovingly with your neighbor as one equal to yourself," as your fellow creature, your brother, your "Thou." You cannot "deal lovingly with your neighbor as one equal to yourself" as a general principle, but only in a mutual relationship in a concrete situation (266).^3

Through our participation in the I-Thou relation, we come to know the being whom we meet as our neighbor and our kin - a being with whom we share our existence. To know our fellow beings in such a decisive and intimate way is to know them as warranting our compassion, commitment, and respect.

Initially, then, ethical responsibility involves hearing the address of the other as it speaks to us out of both its otherness and its fellow-creatureliness; ethical responsibility begins with meeting the other as a Thou, a being who is neither I nor It. Only as a Thou can such beings elicit our respect and compassion and call us forth to incarnate that same respect and compassion in committed, ethical response. Therefore, although certain moral principles and commandments may be suggestive and helpful, they cannot substitute for our engagement in genuine dialogue with our fellow beings. Ethical responsibility involves responding whole-heartedly to the voice of the other whom we meet as Thou in the concrete and utterly unique moment of dialogue; unless we hear that voice as it speaks to us, how can we find within ourselves the capacity for authentic response?
In the moment of dialogue we find ourselves addressed by the beings whom we meet, and through our participation in such dialogical encounters we become aware of ourselves as called upon. That is, we recognize our existential situation as one of standing together with our fellow beings in the manner of being called upon and, consequently, of being answerable. This is the meaning of what Marcel and Bugbee refer to as "L’exigence ontologique": "the way in which we are as called upon" ("L’Exigence Ontologique" 16). In each particular situation we find ourselves called upon by the other whom we meet and with whom we have to do, but, underlying and circumscribing each particular relational event, we are likewise addressed by the very meaning of our existence as one who is called upon. In turn, we practice responsibility for this meaning - we participate in meaningful existence - in so far as we respond truly to the situations of our lives. As such, both the call of the other - of our fellow being - and the call of our unique existence speak together in the relational moment, claiming us and calling forth our committed, ethical response.

If our existence is defined in terms of our being beings who are called upon - both by our fellow creatures and from the root, existentially, so to speak - then we may rightly speak of our existence as assuming the character of a vocation, in the Latin sense of vocatio: a calling or summons, an invitation. And, according to Bugbee, this is, indeed, the case: "Our lives are in essence vocational" ("Thoughts on Creation" 5). Here the meaning of life as an ongoing dialogue carries existential import. Understood in terms of a
vocation - a calling - our very existence speaks to us in the manner of a fundamental address to which we must venture to respond. In turn, we practice responsibility not only in and for each relational moment but also - writ large - for the meaning and purpose of our creaturely being. Towards the end of *Inward Morning* Bugbee writes,

> I think of reality as ever questioning, calling upon us, as if in syllables shaped from a mouth, which issue almost soundlessly. In a noisy soul this call is utterly ignored. But as true stillness comes upon us, we hear, we hear, and we learn that our whole lives may have the character of finding that anthem which would be native to our own tongue, and which alone can be the true answer for each of us to the questioning, the calling, the demand for ultimate reckoning which devolves upon us (221).

As our lives come to us in the manner of a calling, so it is with our lives that we must answer this same call.

Thus, like a dialogue, the vocational character of our lives is essentially twofold: call and answer, claim and responsibility. Buber addresses both aspects of our existential vocation when he writes, "[T]rue human existence ... means being sent and being commissioned" (*Eclipse of God* 69). In speaking of ourselves as "sent" he acknowledges the meaning of our creatureliness, as discussed above. We exist as creatures, created beings, originated and sponsored from a source outside ourselves. "For one is animated; and one does not animate himself" (Bugbee, "On Starting with Love" 17). As creatures who are sent forth into existence, our very being comes to us as a gift, and we recognize it as such as we become more clearly aware of our creatureliness.
But, according to Buber, we are not only sent; we are also commissioned. That is, our creatureliness involves a task; we are sent into existence with a purpose. In Good and Evil Buber writes,

My uniqueness, this unrepeatable form of being here, not analysable into any elements and not compoundable out of any, I experience as a designed or preformed one, entrusted to me for execution, although everything that affects me participates in this execution. That a unique human being is created does not mean that it is put into being for a mere existence, but for the fulfilment of a being-intention, an intention of being which is personal, not however in the sense of a free unfolding of infinite singularities, but of a realisation of the right in infinite personal shapes (142-143).

As creatures, we are created, intended for a task peculiar to each of us, and that task is to become who we are created to be. To repeat a statement quoted in the Introduction to this paper, according to Buber, "Every man's foremost task is the actualization of his unique, unprecedented and never-recurring potentialities, and not the repetition of something that another, and be it even the greatest, has already achieved" (Hasidism and Modern Man 140). Our true vocation, the task we have been sent forth to accomplish, is to become ever more fully the unique creatures we are called upon to be. This is the meaning of the Hasidic saying attributed to Rabbi Zusya of Hanipol, which Buber recounts in his Tales of the Hasidim: Early Masters as follows: "Before his death, Rabbi Zusya said, 'In the coming world, they will not ask me: Why were you not Moses? They will ask me: Why were you not Zusya?'" (251).

For both Buber and the Hasid, each one of us is called to fulfill our particular task - a task which no one else can perform and whose responsibility we cannot abrogate. Only we - each one of us - can become more truly ourselves.
However, this does not mean that our essential task is to achieve individual perfection or to attain some pre-ordained and fixed vision of an ideal or potential self; our uniquely personal vocation is not a matter of self-realization, nor is it a terminus or goal toward which we strive. As creatures who exist as co-participants in an ongoing process of creation, we can only become who we are called to be (and receive that measure of authenticity in our lives) through meaningful and decisive relations with our fellow creatures. According to Bugbee, "We are such as we are in answering these beings in their address to us - in that meaning they come to hold in our receiving them, worked out answeringly. ... [O]ne's mode of being only receives definition in and through the manifold of relations and undertakings through which one participates in the world" ("Loneliness, Solitude" 4 & 5). We are who we are in and through our various relations with our fellow beings. If we are to become more authentically who we are called to be, then our meetings with our fellow beings must carry the weight of authenticity. Therefore, entering dialogical relations with our fellows goes hand in hand with fulfilling our essential task. For, as Maurice Friedman explains, "If man becomes authentic, if the person becomes what only he can and should become, it is through responding with his whole being to the address of the unique situation which confronts him, through becoming whole and finding his true personal direction" ("Bases" 179). Our personal vocation calls to us time and time again in the multitude of relational events that make up our lives. As we engage ourselves in dialogue, we heed the call and answer for the potential meaning in our lives, and, in doing so, our lives are directed along a path - the pathway of dialogue - ever open and calling us
onward to renewed attentiveness and responsibility. And, it is along the way, which we must continually work out and discover for ourselves with each step, that our lives find a degree of integrity and our actions manifest an enduring constancy and commitment. According to Buber,

Only on the path of true intercourse with the things and beings does man attain to true life ... [M]ore than ever, existence in reality is recognizable as an unbroken chain of meetings, each of which demands the person for what can be fulfilled by him, just by him and just in this hour. In opposition to the illusion of ostensibly-attained perfection, as it prevailed in the confusion of the false Messianic, here stands the life of the everyday, which has found its fulfillment as the true miracle (Origin and Meaning 86).

In working out our way along this path, the unique and personal task of our existence calls to us, and, in responding truly, we find that measure of meaning and fulfillment accessible to us - here and now, miraculously.

However, just as the struggle to fulfill our essential task - our vocation - is not a matter of self-realization, neither is the path along which we incarnate and enact our personal direction one of blind, indeterminable fate. For although we are called unto and along our way, we alone must practice responsibility for the manner of our response in each new moment of meeting and for the meaning and direction of our lives. Only as we take this responsibility (often heavy and burdensome with ever new claims, demands, choices) upon ourselves, can we find genuine, liberating freedom in our lives.

In responding decisively to the demands of the moment, we are free to fulfill our unique, creaturely task. Thus, according to Bugbee, our existence comes to us not as inscrutable fate but as a destiny we are free to fulfill - or refuse. In
Inward Morning he distinguishes between fate and destiny in the following way:

Care must be exercised in working out the idea of having a destiny to fulfill so as to extricate it, for one thing, from the idea of having a fate, of being fated. It seems to me that I am invited by the idea of fate to think from the standpoint of a certain inner paralysis often reflected in speaking of man's helplessness in the hands of fate. On the other hand the idea of having a destiny to fulfill seems to invite me to think from the standpoint of responsibility, as one responsive to a call: a call clarifying itself in its constancy as we respond with relevance in multiform situations engendering it: a call imparting to sustained courses of action a vocational significance which is at the heart of not acting in vain.

The idea of fate not only suggests that we act in vain; it tends to controvert the very idea of our acting. The idea of a destiny to be fulfilled suggests that we are followed wherever we go, whatever we do, by a basic significance in terms of which our lives must be construed, and that we act in vain only as we fail to respond consonantly with the significance aligning the otherwise contingent moments of our lives (144-145).

As opposed to dooming us to a fate toward which we must passively resign ourselves, the call of our existence offers us a destiny we are free to fulfill insofar as we practice genuine responsibility for it in the course of our being-with-others. In turn, as we struggle to fulfill this vocation, our lives are informed by a sense of direction and wholeness out of which we are empowered to respond to the claims of each new situation with purpose and integrity. We are free to act, within the limitations - the liberating limitations - of the situation in which we find ourselves, in a meaningful and ethical manner.

This awareness of ourselves as creatures with a unique and particular task - a destiny to fulfill - carries with it a powerful imperative force. The
creatures we are created to become are also, then, the creatures we ought to become. For Buber, this ever-growing, ever-changing awareness of who we ought to be, as well as the recognition of the gap between who we are and who we ought to be, are central to his understanding of the role of conscience in ethical decision-making and action. In his essay "Religion and Ethics" Buber describes what he means by conscience as follows:

It is the individual's awareness of what he is "in truth," of what in his unique and non-repeatable created existence he is intended to be. From this awareness, when it is fully present, the comparison between what one actually is and what one is intended to be can emerge. What is found is measured against the image, no so-called ideal image, nor anything imagined by man, but an image arising out of that mystery of being itself that we call the person (Eclipse of God 95-96).

As I have already said, in each moment we are called upon not only by the other being whom we meet but also by the very meaning of our created being - our creaturely task. How we respond to the moment is determined by the voice of the other as it speaks to us as well as by our understanding of who we are called to be and how we are to fulfill that destiny as it comes to us in this particular relational event. That is, we must take stock of ourselves, deciding and acting out of the depths of who we are and who we are called to be; we must answer for ourselves and for the direction of our lives in the present moment of decision. Thus, our ethical responsibility involves not only responding to the call of the other but also from the depths of our conscience - our reflective recognition of our being as called upon to perform a particular task that has been entrusted to us. This is the reflective and inescapably personal element of all truly ethical decision-making and action. According to Friedman,
It is only when I ask, "What ought I do in this situation?" - not what ought one, but what ought I do? - that I begin to understand the problem of moral action from within. ... [T]he only real perspective for moral judgment and decision [is] the ground on which I stand and from which I respond to the claim of the situation upon me (Touchstones 281).

The "ground" upon and from which we move and act is always a deeply personal one, and thus, our ethical responsibility is, likewise, a deeply personal (but, at the same time, neither individualistic nor relativistic) affair. In the moment of ethical decision, we find ourselves placed in a situation that requires an answer from us. The beings whom we encounter and our awareness of our creaturely vocation call forth our response, and no one else - not God, not the prophets, not even the moral theorists - can respond for us. In turn, if our response is to be genuinely ethical, it must embody not only the respect and compassion engendered in the meeting with the other who is at the same time our kin, but it must also be brought forth out of our recognition of ourselves as called upon to fulfill our intended task, which comes to us ever anew in an ongoing chain of relational events and which we must work out and struggle to fulfill through engaged participation in dialogue with our fellow beings. As we ever more clearly come to realize the task proferred us, our lives take on the character of a way, and we come to know integrity and vocational unity as we act in consonance with the direction and meaning our lives find along that path.
Up to this point, I have portrayed our ethical responsibility in terms of our responsiveness to the call of our fellow creatures as well as our responsiveness to the call of our unique, creaturely vocation. Yet, according to Buber, Friedman and others, there is yet a third call to which we must respond: the call of the Creator, who not only sends us forth to fulfill our particular task but who also meets us and speaks to us in and through each encounter with the other finite creatures whom we meet in dialogue. As such, our ethical responsibility involves our decisive and committed response to the call of this sponsoring and abiding Presence, as it reveals itself to us - and we discover it - in our lives.

What follows in this section, then, might be described as the explicitly religious element of our ethical responsibility. But is this really necessary? Is the overtly religious an indispensable part of the ethical orientation in question? Clearly, for Martin Buber, the answer is an emphatic yes. In his essay entitled "The Bases of Buber's Ethics," Maurice Friedman - the foremost English-speaking translator and student of Buber's works - asks this same question and answers it as follows:

Can we say, then, that it is possible to carve out of Buber's philosophy an autonomous ethics, free from a necessary connection with religion? Yes and no. Yes, if we mean by religion a separate sphere of special, specifically religious revelation and command; no, if we understand God's "Where art thou, Adam?" to be addressed to every man at every hour through each everyday event that confronts him, for then "religion" is just man's listening and responding to this address (188-189).

Not surprisingly, the religious life, for Buber, is primarily a matter of dialogue. The genuine, I-Thou dialogue with our fellow creature is, at the
same time, the religious dialogue with God, the eternal Thou. And as we hear the address of the eternal Thou in the dialogical moment, we, in turn, respond with our actions and non-actions. Buber, himself, describes the essentially dialogical character of "religion" in the following way:

I know no fulness but each mortal hour's fulness of claim and responsibility. Though far from being equal to it, yet I know that in the claim I am claimed and may respond in responsibility, and know who speaks and demands a response.

I do not know much more. If that is religion then it is just everything, simply all that is lived in the possibility of dialogue (Between 14).

Here, Buber's 'definition' of religion comes very close to his understanding of ethics in the mode of dialogue: claim and response. Conversely, elsewhere Buber defines "the ethical" in decidedly religious language: "But the ethical in its plain truth means to help God by loving his creation in his creatures, by loving it towards him" (Between 57). For Buber, at a certain level - the level of dialogue - there is very little difference between the truly religious and the truly ethical; together, they weave a seamless fabric of meaning - and meaningful action - in the life of dialogue.

As such, it is impossible to have one without the other. If the religious is necessary for the ethical [And for Buber, there is no question about this. In "Religion and Ethics" he writes, "But always it is the religious which bestows, the ethical which receives" (Eclipse of God 98).], then religion without ethical responsibility is similarly bankrupt. The meeting with God, the eternal Thou, carries with it an imperative force that turns us toward and renews our active commitment to our fellow beings. God calls to us in and through our relations with our fellow creatures, and our response to the call of the Creator
and the creature is inseparable. We cannot know God apart from God's creation (and apart from or outside of our own createdness), and as we treat our fellow creatures, so, too, we treat their (our) Creator. In *I and Thou* Buber writes,

> Sea and rivers - who would make bold to separate here and define limits? There is only the one flood from I to You, ever more infinite, the one boundless flood of actual life. One cannot divide one's life between an actual relationship to God and an inactual I-It relationship to the world - praying to God in truth and utilizing the world. Whoever knows the world as something to be utilized knows God the same way (155-156).

And, again in a later essay entitled "Love of God and Love of Neighbor," he writes,

> [A] direct relation to God that includes no direct relation to the world is, if not deception, self-deception; if you turn away from the world in order to turn to God, you have not turned toward the reality of God but only toward your concept of God; the isolated religious is also in reality the not religious (*Hasidism and Modern Man* 235).

For Buber, religiousness and ethics cannot be separated because both are grounded in the dialogical, I-Thou encounter, where we cannot - and need not - distinguish between the address of the present other and the divine Presence. In the moment of dialogue both speak to us and call us forth to actualize the sacramental meaning of the encounter in our committed response. Thus, Buber can claim that, "The genuine moral act is done to God" (*Hasidism and Modern Man* 241).

That we can - and do - encounter God, the eternal Thou, at all is possible because God addresses us in all the various, creaturely situations of
our everyday lives. According to Buber, "The first Biblical axiom is: 'Man is addressed by God in his life'" (On Judaism 218). This is the fundamental starting point for Buber's understanding of religious life, and specifically Jewish religiousness, as an ongoing dialogue between God and humanity - a dialogue between heaven and earth. It is the awareness that within the address of our fellow beings and within our never-ending struggle to find direction and integrity in our finite existence, something of the ineffable and transcendent mystery speaks to us and endows our lives and actions with that degree of meaning, resolve and finality available to us. Furthermore, this call comes to us not only as it spoke to Moses in the burning bush or atop Mount Sinai but in the seemingly inconsequential and ordinary occurrences of our lives, and it is here - and now - that it must ever be re-discovered and heard anew. Buber likens this awareness of ourselves as 'divinely' called upon to the often misunderstood biblical notion of the "fear of God."

All religious reality begins with what Biblical religion calls the "fear of God." It comes when our existence between birth and death becomes incomprehensible and uncanny, when all security is shattered through the mystery. This is not the relative mystery of that which is inaccessible only to the present state of human knowledge and is hence in principle discoverable. It is the essential mystery, the inscrutableness of which belongs to its very nature; it is unknowable. Through this dark gate (which is only a gate and not, as some theologians believe, a dwelling) the believing man steps forth into the everyday which is henceforth hallowed as the place in which he has to live with the mystery. He steps forth directed and assigned to the concrete, contextual situations of his existence. That he henceforth accepts the situation as given him by the Giver is what Biblical religion calls the "fear of God" (Eclipse of God 36).6

The mystery of the existence given us as created beings and the Present mystery that beckons to us in and through the particular events of that very
existence speak together, for the theistically religious person, as the call of the sponsoring and enduring Creator - a call which is ever open to us as participants in the ongoing event of creation.

And if it is through creation that the Creator God speaks to us, then it is through our engagement in authentic dialogue with creatures that we are able to hear this divine address and respond to it. That is, our meeting with God, the eternal Thou, occurs within and through our I-Thou meetings with our finite, fellow creatures. As Buber explains, "Meet the world with the fullness of your being and you shall meet Him" (On Judaism 213); "If you hallow this life you meet the living God" (I and Thou, Smith trans. 79). Thus, the necessary condition for meeting God and receiving God's divine address, is genuine dialogical participation in the relational events of our daily lives.

Furthermore, any relational event, no matter how seemingly trivial or insignificant, may be the bearer of divine Presence - and speech - in so far as it is received in dialogue. According to Robert Wood, "It is in the depths of the Between, grounded upon spirit, that the opening to the eternal Thou occurs" (72). And the between, as discussed in the previous chapter, is not limited to any fixed place or genus of relata; it is constituted in the relation of an I and a Thou - any Thou.

In every sphere, in every relational act, through everything that becomes present to us, we gaze toward the train of the eternal You; in each we perceive a breath of it; in every You we address the eternal You, in every sphere according to its manner. All spheres are included in it, while it is included in none.
Through all of them shines the one presence (I and Thou 150).

As we open ourselves to the address of our fellow creatures, we receive, at the same time, the address of God; in meeting other finite beings as Thou, we meet the eternal Thou. Because of this, all the relational events of our lives have the potential to become revelation and sacrament insofar as they take on the character of dialogue.

But just as we may encounter the Divine Presence and receive the divine address in and through each and every dialogical meeting with our fellow creatures, so, too, there is one 'place' where God can never be encountered: the I-It relation. According to Wood, "The only world where God cannot be met is the world of It" (95-96). Here we are at the heart of Buber's notion of God as the eternal Thou. In contrast to the twofold nature of our relations with other finite beings (I-Thou and I-It), we can only meet and know God in one way, as a Thou. In I and Thou Buber writes,

By its very nature the eternal You cannot become an It; because by its very nature it cannot be placed within measure and limit, not even within the measure of the immeasurable and the limit of the unlimited; because by its very nature it cannot be grasped as a sum of qualities, not even as an infinite sum of qualities that have been raised to transcendence; because it is not to be found either in or outside the world; because it cannot be experienced; because it cannot be thought; because we transgress against it, against that which has being, if we say: "I believe that he is" - even "he" is still a metaphor, while "you" is not. And yet we reduce the eternal You ever again to an It, to something, turning God into a thing, in accordance with our nature (160-161).

Elsewhere, Buber simply says, "[I]t is also only the relation I-Thou in which we can meet God at all, because of Him, in absolute contrast to all existing
beings, no objective aspects can be obtained" (*Eclipse of God* 128). For Buber, we cannot experience God as an It, and we cannot know anything about God. And yet, God can be met as Thou, as a real and abiding presence in dialogue.

Therefore, it is through our participation in dialogue that the Divine Presence addresses us and reveals itself to us. For Buber, the genuine I-Thou relation is nothing less than the bearer of divine revelation, and what God reveals to us in and through the dialogical event is not an objective content but a presence. As Emil Fackenheim explains, "[T]he core of the revelation is not the communication of content but the event of God's presence" (290). And Friedman echoes this idea when he writes, "Revelation is thus man's encounter with God's presence rather than information about His essence" (*Life of Dialogue* 246). Divine revelation does not disclose anything about God; through it, we learn nothing about the divine essence, nature, attributes or properties. Instead, what God reveals to us is God's enduring presence as the eternal Thou - our ever-present partner in dialogue. Indeed, for Buber, this is the meaning of God's message to Moses in Exodus 3:14, which Buber interprets as follows:

This is the eternal revelation which is present in the here and now. ... The word of revelation is: I am there as whoever I am there. That which reveals is that which reveals. That which has being is there, nothing more. The eternal source of strength flows, the eternal touch is waiting, the eternal voice sounds, nothing more (*I and Thou* 160).\(^9\)

For Buber, the significance of the "word of revelation" is not only that God is but that this God is also present among us and promises to be present in the future. Expanding upon Buber's interpretation of God's words to Moses from
the burning bush, Walter Kaufmann writes, "The Tetragrammaton, with the initial J or Y which indicates the third person, would then mean: HE IS PRESENT" (381). In addition, this promise of abiding presence is not limited to God's encounter with Moses at the burning bush or with the children of Israel at Mount Sinai; according to Friedman, "YHVH is He who is present in every now and in every here" (Life of Dialogue 246). Each event in our lives holds the possibility of divine revelation; through each (no matter how seemingly trivial or 'profane'), we may receive the gracious self-disclosure of the Divine Presence. For, as Buber explains, "The powerful revelations invoked by the religions are essentially the same as the quiet one that occurs every where and at all times" (I and Thou 165-166).

However, this revelation of Divine Presence, which is potentially open to us within each and every moment of our lives, is not something timeless, changeless or monolithic. God's revelation of God's enduring presence manifests itself within and through the particularity of each unique situation. In other words, God's revelation is not one of generic presence; God reveals God's self as the Present One - whose presentness is inextricably bound up with the irreducible particularity of the dialogical event through which it is revealed. According to Fackenheim,

The God of dialogue, like any Thou in any dialogue, speaks to a unique partner in a unique situation, disclosing Himself according to the unique exigencies of each situation. ...[God] can only be encountered in each here and now, as He may show Himself in each here and now (285).
Thus, God reveals God's enduring, eternal presence ever anew and afresh in the multiplicity of each new moment of revelation; God 'speaks' this abiding presence in and through the unique and non-repeatable words of the manifold situations of our lives.

Furthermore, as God becomes present to us as the eternal Thou in and through our I-Thou encounters, these relations take on the character of a sacrament. Through the revelation and actualization of the Divine Presence in dialogue, the world becomes a holy place. Thus, each and every relational event in our lives is potentially not only the bearer of divine revelation; it can also become sacrament insofar as it is raised to the level of dialogue. For Buber, this pansacramentalism lies at the heart of the Hasidic notion of "hallowing the everyday." In the story cited in the Introduction to this paper, Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotzk teaches his learned audience that although the entire world is full of God's glory, God is truly present among us only insofar as we "let God in" and make a dwelling-place for God in our lives. For Buber and the Hasid, there is no time or place where God cannot be found because the whole world exists in God.10 And yet, God is truly present with us only as we maintain "holy intercourse" with that part of the world with which we have to do. Or, to put it another way, God, the eternal Thou, becomes truly present among us - between us - in and through our participation in I-Thou dialogue. According to Friedman,

It is because God dwells in the world that the world can be turned into a sacrament. But this does not mean that the world is objectively already a sacrament. It is only capable of becoming one through the redeeming contact with the individual. ... Sacramental existence, like
dialogical existence in general, involves a meeting with the other in which the eternal Thou manifests itself (Life of Dialogue 140).

Therefore, although our world is not holy in any static, essential sense, it can become hallowed through the sacrament of dialogue, in and through which God's presence is made actual and manifest among us. And, as mentioned earlier, there is no time or place, no relational event, that cannot become the sacramental 'host'; every aspect of our lives can become hallowed to the degree we take up with our fellow creatures in the spirit of dialogue.

Speaking, again, of the Hasidic way, Buber writes,

One may and should live genuinely with all, but one should live with it in consecration, one should hallow all that one does in his natural life. No renunciation is commanded. One eats in consecration, one savors one's taste of food in consecration, and the table becomes an altar. One works in consecration and lifts the sparks that are hidden in all tools. One walks over the fields in consecration, and the silent songs of all creatures, those they speak to God, enter into the song of one's own soul. One drinks to one's companions in consecration, each to the other, and it is as if one studied together with them in the Torah. One dances in consecration, and a splendor radiates over the community. A man is united with his wife in consecration, and the Shekina [the indwelling Divine Presence or Glory] rests over them (Origin and Meaning 55-56).

And, coming from quite a different perspective, Henry Bugbee echoes many of the same ideas when he writes,

What is there that is native and natural in life that is not open to a hallowing? that, indeed, may not call for it? By virtue of what are things made holy and how is it that we may come to participate and partake in this? Are we the initiators? No, surely not. For our part in it is enacted at its inception as an act of acknowledgment and of sponsored recognition and commitment occurrent within the way in which the natural is given us and received, brought to cumulative maturity. One knows full well, furthermore, that there is nothing automatic or matter-of-course about it. For the hallowing of the
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natural occurs only in and through our being radically recalled o u t of
im m ersion in thoughtless ways, inadvertent cheapening of life, and
the oppressive incubus of things-taken-for-granted and threatening to
go stale ("Loneliness, Solitude" 9-10).
For Bugbee, as well as Buber and the H asidim , there is nothing in our lives
th at cannot be m ade holy; everything is potential sacram ent. A nd, as Bugbee
carefully points out, although we are not solely (or even prim arily)
responsible for the m anifestation of the Divine Presence in our w orld, our
genuine presence and engaged participation in dialogical existence is surely a
necessary condition for the actualization of the sacram ental character of each
e n co u n te r.11 For, as quoted earlier, "He w ho is not present perceives no
Presence" (Buber, Eclipse of God 126). If the w orld is to becom e sacram ent for
us, w e m ust rem ain open and available to the others w hom w e m eet and be
responsive to the divine address present in the situations given us; if God,
the C reator and eternal Thou, is to dwell am ong us, we m ust "let God in" by
m aintaining holy intercourse w ith our fellow creatures in the sacram ent of IThou dialogue.

Therefore, w e can speak of the dialogical encounter in an d through
w hich the eternal Thou is revealed and m ade m anifest am ong us as both
revelatory and sacram ental. A nd both revelation and sacram ent, as they are
traditionally understood, im ply a commission. That is, they are not term inal
events b u t rather sponsoring, initiating ones. We are sent forth from our
m eeting w ith the eternal Thou to em body the tru th an d m eaning of that
encounter in our daily lives. A ccording to Buber, "The encounter w ith God
does not come to m an in order that he m ay henceforth attend to G od b u t in


order that he may prove its meaning in action in the world. All revelation is a calling and a mission" (I and Thou 164). As God addresses us in the sacrament of dialogue we are called forth to actualize the divine word in our lives with our fellow creatures. As Robert Wood explains, "[T]here is a rhythm here; meeting and mission, summons and sending, alternate" (107).

Here, we come to the decidedly ethical nature of the divine-human dialogue. As stated earlier, God addresses us in and through the multitude of events and situations that we face in our daily lives. These events, perceived in their fullness and depth, have a divine word to speak to us. Furthermore, this divine speech makes demands upon us, claiming us with its powerful imperative force. In his "Afterword" to the second edition of I and Thou Buber writes,

God's address to man penetrates the events in all our lives and all the events in the world around us, everything biographical and everything historical, and turns it into instruction, into demands for you and me. Event upon event, situation upon situation is enabled and empowered by this personal language to call upon the human person to endure and decide. Often we think that there is nothing to be heard as if we had not long ago plugged wax into our own ears" (182).

In so far as we remain open to and receive the address of the eternal Thou as it speaks to us in our everyday lives, we find ourselves instructed and claimed by a divine command - a unique and personal "Thou shalt."

But how is this possible? Earlier I suggested that, for Buber, the core of divine revelation was not any particular content but rather the manifestation of Divine Presence. Doesn't the idea of a divine imperative present in the
enounter with the eternal Thou imply a content of some sort? According to Buber, it does not, although he does elaborate on the nature of the "presence" received in the meeting with the eternal Thou.(12) In Part III of I and Thou he explains,

Man receives, and what he receives is not a "content" but a presence, a presence as strength. This presence and strength includes three elements that are not separate but may nevertheless be contemplated as three. First, the whole abundance of reciprocity, of being admitted, of being associated while one is altogether unable to indicate what that is like with which one is associated, nor does association make life any easier for us - it makes life heavier but heavy with meaning. And this is second: the inexpressible confirmation of meaning. It is guaranteed. Nothing, nothing can henceforth be meaningless. ... You do not know how to point to or define the meaning, you lack any formula or image for it, and yet it is more certain for you than the sensations of your senses. What would it intend with us, what does it desire from us, being revealed and surreptitious? It does not wish to be interpreted by us - for that we lack the ability - only to be done by us. This comes third: it is not the meaning of "another life" but that of this our life, not that of a "beyond" but of this our world, and it wants to be demonstrated by us in this life and this world. The meaning can be received but not experienced; it cannot be experienced, but it can be done; and this is what it intends with us. The guarantee does not wish to remain shut up within me, it wants to be born in the world by me. But even as the meaning itself cannot be transformed or expressed as a universally valid and generally acceptable piece of knowledge, putting it to the proof in action cannot be handed on as a valid ought; it is not prescribed ... The meaning we receive can be put to the proof in action only by each person in the uniqueness of his being and in the uniqueness of his life. No prescription can lead us to the encounter, and none leads from it. Only the acceptance of the presence is required to come to it or, in a new sense, to go from it. As we have nothing but a You on our lips when we enter the encounter, it is with this on our lips that we are released from it into the world. That before which we live, that in which we live, that out of which and into which we live, the mystery - has remained what it was. It has become present for us, and through its presence it has made itself known to us as salvation; we have "known" it, but we have no knowledge of it that might diminish or extenuate the mysteriousness. We have come close to God, but no closer to an unriddling, unveiling of being. We have felt
salvation but no "solution." We cannot go to others with what we have received, saying: This is what needs to be known, this is what needs to be done. We can only go and put to the proof in action. And even this is not what we "ought to" do: rather we can - we cannot do otherwise (158-160).

I have indulged in this extremely long quote not only because it shows Buber at his most inspired but because it is so central to Buber's understanding of revelation, ethical action and the tenuous relation between the two. In the encounter with the eternal Thou we are graced by the Divine Presence, which bestows upon us the "abundance of reciprocity," the "confirmation of meaning" and the charge to incarnate this reciprocity and meaning in our actions. Together, these three elements of the revelation of Divine Presence may inspirit our actions with the direction, integrity and certainty inherent in truly necessary, ethical action: we find ourselves called upon, directed to act as we must. And yet, the specific forms such actions will embody are wedded so intimately to the situations in which we find ourselves addressed, and so irreducibly concrete, that we cannot possibly say in advance, or in general, what we 'ought' to do in such and such a set of circumstances.

And it is here, at the point of deciding and acting, that we arrive at the 'human side' of the dialogue between God and humanity. For as God reveals - 'speaks' - God's presence in the everyday situations of our lives, it is through our various actions and non-actions that we answer this address. And although the divine address may carry with it a powerful and compelling imperative, we remain free to hear and respond in an ethical manner. That is, although we respond to the empowering and directing address of the eternal Thou, we alone remain responsible for our actions,
again and again confronted with new and unforeseeable situations of decision and choice. Our personal responsibility to respond decisively and ethically to the call of the Divine Presence cannot be abrogated. As Buber explains,

And he, the Single One[the person of dialogue], must answer, by what he does and does not do, he must accept and answer for the hour, the hour of the world, of all the world, as that which is given to him, entrusted to him. Reduction is forbidden; you are not at liberty to select what suits you, the whole cruel hour is at stake, the whole claims you, and you must answer - Him (Between 66).

In our ongoing participation in creation, we are constantly faced with ever new situations of choice to which we must venture to respond. In so far as we meet these situations in a spirit of dialogue, in so far as these situations become sacrament and revelation for us, we may receive the direction and 'inspiration' present in the divine address. And yet, we are not relieved of deciding and choosing again and again in favor of responsible, right action. God commands, but we practice responsibility for hearing and responding in a decisive, ethical manner.

This, then, is the "rhythm" at the heart of divine-human dialogue: God meets us - calls us and claims us - in the everyday situations of our existence, and we respond through our decisions and actions. Buber summarizes this dynamic in the following way:

In the infinite language of events and situations, eternally changing, but plain to the truly attentive, transcendence speaks to our hearts at the essential moments of personal life. And there is a language in which we can answer it; it is the language of our actions and attitudes, our reactions and our abstentions. The totality of these responses is what we may call our responsibility in the proper sense of the word (On Judaism 215-216).
Again, for Buber, at the most fundamental level, ethical responsibility, and thus ethical action, involves hearing the address of our fellow creatures, the address of our creaturely task, and the address of the Creator who speaks to us through creation, and responding with compassion and respect, integrity and direction.

For some readers, linking ethical responsibility with a personally apprehended divine address will appear as nothing more than a grasping at straws, a psychotic delusion, or worse, a specious apology for fanaticism. Whose voice are we hearing - God's? the devil's? or some psychological or societal demon's? Even Buber warns that Moloch may imitate the voice of God (Eclipse of God 118). How can we be sure that our actions - let alone the actions of others - are grounded in and embody the spirit of divine address? For Buber, of course, we cannot be sure in any arguable way; we cannot empirically and objectively 'prove' the rightness of our actions or justify them. And although we may commit ourselves with wholeheartedness and certainty to a particular course of action, nothing can remove the degree of insecurity and risk that accompanies our ethical responsibility. However, in his essay "On the Suspension of the Ethical," in which he takes up with Kierkegaard's famous treatment of the story of Abraham and Isaac, Buber offers the following practical advice: "In contrast to this, God Himself demands of this as of every man (not Abraham, His chosen one, but of you and me) nothing more than justice and love, and that he 'walk humbly' with Him, with God (Micah 6:8) - in other words, not much more than the fundamental ethical" (Eclipse of God 118). Buber never suggests that we
disregard such ethical injunctions as the one given in Micah or, say, the Ten Commandments (as a devout Jew and lifelong student of the Torah, it would be very strange if he did). And yet, he insists that such maxims are not prescriptions for ethical action; they serve as guidelines and signposts. They cannot substitute for our engaged participation in, and existentially grounded response to, the situations in which we find ourselves called upon.

According to Buber and Friedman, such ethical formulations can only become truly personal and meaningful for us in so far as we "rehear" them again and again in each new situation of choice. As Friedman explains,

> The God who speaks to the people, correspondingly, is not a cosmic God who guarantees a universal moral order, but the God of the Ten Commandments whose "Thou shalt" is apprehended by the individual person and by the group only in the unique, concrete situation - the ever renewed demand of the present. It is only modern man who has converted these commands into the impersonal "one must" of the social norm. The "ought" implicit in the command can be derived only from the responsibility of the person to what claims him in the particular situation in which he finds himself. One does not apply the Ten Commandments to the situation: one rehears them as utterly unique, present commands (Touchstones 137).

For both Buber and Friedman, ethical responsibility and action can never be reduced to the rote application of norms and maxims. The imperative force behind such moral guidelines can only be realized as we open ourselves to, and place ourselves at the disposal of, the address of the situation in which we find ourselves and respond to the claims and exigencies present within that threefold address.

But, by now, perhaps, I've said too much - and, undoubtedly, for some of my readers, too little. My preceding analysis of the threefold claim present
in the I-Thou dialogue shows the strain of dissection and burdens these holy relations with almost insupportable conceptual baggage. Clearly, our involvement in these ephemeral and evanescent I-Thou encounters does not matter-of-factly call up the range of thoughts and intimations it has taken me the past twenty-five or so pages to outline. I admit that such abstract theorizing and conjecture are as likely to miss the point as they are to connect. And yet, it seems to me that something of each of these three elements is present in the depths of our dialogical encounters with our fellow beings. In the clarity and immediacy of these meetings the meaning, wonder and non-instrumental value of these distinctly and independently other beings elicit our respect, while, at the same time, our intimate being-together evokes a sense of compassion and even solidarity. And such respect and fellow-feeling, likewise, seem inseparable from self-respect and personal integrity. For it is in our dialogues with our fellow creatures, as well as in our respectful and compassionate responses to them, that we come closest to finding personal fulfillment and an intimation of our potential; that is, we glimpse what is best and most profoundly worthwhile in ourselves as we meet others honestly and openly and respond decisively and whole-heartedly from the very depths of our person. Furthermore, over time our engaged participation in such encounters engenders within us a sense of coherence and vocational integrity. Finally, such meetings are charged with an overwhelming sense of ultimate significance and sacredness; a divine presence rests over them. It seems that a meaning and a purpose inform these dialogical encounters that are sponsored in neither the 'I' nor the finite 'Thou' whom it meets; they are pervaded by the mystery of Something Other, More and Less, and this
meaning and mystery cry out to be incarnated in the world of action. Viewed as a whole, then, it seems that our engaged participation in I-Thou encounters with our fellow creatures - and in the presence of the eternal Thou - does, indeed, offer us a glimpse of the meaning and truth available to us and empower us to act in a meaningful and truthful - an ethical - way.

Therefore, we can say that our capacity for truly ethical action is grounded in our finding bedrock meaning in and through the situations in which we are placed. Or, to paraphrase Henry Bugbee, it is only as we find "finality" in the everyday events of our existence that our decisions and actions are infused with the spirit of necessity and certainty and we come to know what is required of us. In his Preface to Inward Morning, Bugbee writes,

What I have called finality proves to be the unifying theme of the work. By finality I intend the meaning of reality as realized in true decision. The vein in which it comes to us is the vein of wonder, of faith, of certainty. It is the ground of ultimate human concern with which the will is informed (10).

And furthermore, the appreciation of finality comes to us as we encounter our fellow creatures in their meaning and depth - as "presences," to use Gabriel Marcel’s term. Again, from Inward Morning, Bugbee explains,

Only reality is given. But its givenness is consummated in the reception of things as presences - as we find finality in them. There is certainty in experience in which reality is given; but this does not seem to be a certainty of knowledge about anything we represent to ourselves and describe. ...

Givenness is decisive experience of reality, enabling decisiveness in our thinking and in such action as is really decisive. ...

I would be content to speak of things as given, but given only in the experience of them as presences, in their finality. They are, then,
reality manifest. But you cannot capture reality manifest in your description of those things (175-176).

That is to say, the appreciation of finality is open to us in and through our relations with the things and beings with whom we share our existence, but only in so far as we take up with them as presences and not merely as objects to study, describe, classify and manipulate. In other words, finality dawns upon us through our engaged participation in dialogue, where we meet our fellow creatures as Thous, not Its.

In turn, finality comes to us as both demanding and empowering; it carries with it a call to embody the meaning received in our decisions and actions. According to Bugbee, "Every appreciation of finality is charged with imperativeness for an active being, and becomes a liability to him in so far as he fails to fulfill its potential in active commitment" (Inward Morning 206). To realize finality in the particular situations of our lives is to recognize ourselves as being placed in a position of obligation and responsibility. And it is through our participation in these particular events that we come to appreciate the responsible character of our lives - writ large; we exist as responsible beings. Or, as Bugbee puts it, "[W]e are under obligation" (Inward Morning 68).

At the same time, however, the apperception of finality also empowers us to fulfill the obligations of responsible existence; we come to realize what is required of us - what is necessary. According to Bugbee, necessary action grows out of our awareness of the finality of things.
What I wish to suggest is that true realization of finality is ever the spring of necessary action, and not an achievement which renders action necessary as a means to it. Present realization of finality informs the will with concern in the imperative mood, and necessary action is the working out of the implications of informed will, ever renewable and subject to clarification in further realization of finality. And true realization of finality is to be marked in the readying of the will for what is yet to come - come what may - and for what yet needs to be done, as long as one may live (Inward Morning 207).

The realization of finality is not the terminus of our activities and involvement in reality but rather the underlying source of our capacity to act as we must. In fact, unless we find finality in our lives, we will be incapable of finding meaning and purpose in any action at all. As Bugbee explains,

If we fail to find finality in the world we will ultimately fail to find it necessary to do anything; and all that we have done will come to seem senseless. But if we can act on faith that is an appreciation of the finality of things, we may come to understand that neither ourselves nor any finite being should be counted at naught. We all stand only together, not only all men, but all things. To abandon things, and to abandon each other, is to be lost (Inward Morning 159).

Necessary action, then, is dependent upon our realization of the finality of things. In turn, as we venture to respond to our recognition of finality and commit ourselves in necessary, decisive action, we come to a renewed and deepened awareness of the finality of things and our co-existence with them. That is, to act out of necessity may be a deliverance of finality, and we find our lives informed with meaning through acting decisively and whole-heartedly. Thus, there is a reflexive rhythm here as well, as ever new realizations of meaning and finality sponsor and bring to fruition ever new and unforeseeable forms of meaningful and necessary action - and vice versa.
What necessary action may look like, specifically, however, cannot be said apart from the situation in which we are called upon to act. Like finality, necessity is an experiential category and cannot be divorced from, or distilled out of, the particular situations of our ongoing involvement in reality. According to Bugbee, "Both [necessity and finality] are experiential ideas, there is no conclusive meaning in the situation in which we live and move and have our being. And there is no demonstrable necessity about any course of action we can represent to ourselves" (Inward Morning 152). We search in vain if we look for finality and necessity exclusively from the standpoint of abstract and detached objectivity. "Nothing is necessary that is merely looked at" (Bugbee, Inward Morning 116). And yet, finality and necessity can and do grace our lives through our engaged participation with, and embeddedness in, the world in which we live. As we open ourselves to and receive the beings and things whom we meet along our way, we find ourselves affirmed and empowered. But, this affirmation (the realization of finality) and empowerment (the capacity and direction to commit ourselves in necessary action) depend precisely upon such unreserved immersion in reality and cannot be realized apart from it.

Therefore, we cannot say in advance of our involvement in a particular situation what we must do. If necessary action is an experiential category, then it is also a non-prescriptive one. As Bugbee matter-of-factly puts it, "We cannot know in advance what we must do" (Inward Morning 224). Genuine responsibility means responding to the address of the situation at hand. If we are to receive the experiential meaning and
imperative that sponsors our ethical response, we must remain open and attentive to the present situation; each one carries with it a unique and unforeseeable word of address. According to Buber,

In spite of all similarities every living situation has, like a newborn child, a new face, that has never been before and will never come again. It demands of you a reaction which cannot be prepared beforehand. It demands nothing of what is past. It demands presence, responsibility; it demands you (Between 114).

For both Buber and Bugbee, ethical action - and ethical theory - can never be reduced to prescribing and applying abstract and general moral maxims and principles to the concrete and particular situations in which we find ourselves obliged to act in an ethical manner. And while we may, at times, rely upon such norms as useful and helpful guidelines, they cannot substitute for our presence in, and attentiveness to, the situations themselves. Every unique situation addresses us in a way that demands our presence and genuine response; we practice responsibility in so far as we ground our response upon that address, received in its uniqueness and meaning.

Concerning the relationship between moral guidelines and ethical responsibility, Robert Wood writes, "To serve human fulfillment, these norms all have to be recast again and again in the fire of meeting. ... Morality has to be grounded ever anew in presence" (104). Ethical responsibility always involves hearing and responding to the claims of the present moment; only then do we find the strength and certainty to act in a decisive and non-arbitrary way.
However, certainty, like finality and necessity, is not subject to objective analysis or verification. For Bugbee, we may find certainty in what we do and, at the same time, be unable even to articulate, let alone prove, that of which we are certain. Near the beginning of *Inward Morning* Bugbee suggests that we... consider certainty, not as something quested for, like a pot of gold for which longing search is undertaken, and not as something that hangs on the fate of isolated truth-claims or of structures of hypothesis, and not as very strong conviction, but rather as pertaining to that animating base on which human enterprise becomes sound. I would wish to say that certainty lies at the root of action that makes sense. It is connected with the ultimate purport of our lives. Perhaps the last thing we should demand of an interpretation of certainty is that it show how we are entitled to some credo, once-for-all, incontrovertibly. ... Certainty may be quite compatible with being at a loss to say what one is certain of. Indeed, I seriously doubt if the notion of 'certainty of,' or 'certainty that' will take us accurately to the heart of the matter. It seems to me that certainty is at least very much akin to hope and faith (36).

If we cannot say what it is of which we are certain or prove the necessity of actions sponsored by that certainty, it is because our certainty cannot be reduced to objective, or even referential, terms. It involves a kind of knowledge that defies reduction to the categories of objective knowing. Like the knowledge received in the I-Thou encounter, it is an immediate and participatory knowing that is not a 'knowing about' anything. And while it may lack any objective content or referent, we come to know certainty in our lives and actions at the level of our most basic attitudes and dispositions; it is bound up with the faith that gives us the capacity to affirm the irreducible import of our being-with-others and empowers us to commit ourselves in decisive action.
It appears, then, that we can give no accurate account of ethical action, in terms of our ethical responsibility, if we approach the subject exclusively from the standpoint of spectatorial objectivity. The fundamental ground of our capacity to act in an ethical manner lies at a level that Bugbee refers to as the "meta-objective." In *Inward Morning* he writes,

> Here we may put the point by availing ourselves of a term of Marcel's: Action and reflection on the point of action are both *meta-technical*, over and above whatever technique may enter into them. And for convenience let us use a similar term, and say that both are *meta-objective* in the sense that they move in a dimension of meaning over which we cannot exercise the power of representation and control that obtains with respect to things in taking them as objects (55).

For Bugbee, ethical responsibility is intimately bound up with and rooted in our realization of finality, necessity and certainty, all three of which inform our lives at the meta-objective level. Therefore, although we may offer objective reasons and lucid, compelling arguments in attempting to justify our actions, such discourse is always secondary and at some distance removed from the fundamental, meta-objective sources of genuinely responsible action. In his Introduction to *Inward Morning*, Marcel puts it this way:

> Our reasons for acting, whatever they may be, cannot substitute for true affirmation in its depth. This is not to suggest the slighting of reasons which we may have for acting, but rather to point out that these reasons are derivative and bring us only abstract versions of a responsibility in depth from which the philosopher needs to derive his own fundamental impulse (25).

Here, Marcel returns us to the central and constant theme of this entire discussion: responsibility. Ethics is, above all, a responding to which involves, at the same time, a responding from. And, as I have tried to
suggest, what we respond to - the call of our fellow creatures received not as objects of analysis, manipulation and use, Its, but as presences, Thous, and the holy voice of the ineffable mystery in and out of which we exist - and what we respond from - those basic attitudes and faith postures that enable us to find and affirm meaning and finality in our co-creaturely situation - can only be received and realized through engaged participation in the concrete situations of our day-to-day lives. The address of these situations, in which this threefold address comes to us in a singular evocation, cannot be heard in so far as we take up with things from a detached and 'distant' viewpoint. Nor can this address be translated and represented in abstract and objective terms; it comes to us with an untranslatable and irreducible immediacy and concreteness.

Because of this, we may be unable to articulate any justification for our actions in objective terms, even though we are quite certain of what we must do - cannot but do. However, neither Bugbee nor Buber view our inability to justify ethical action in explicit terms as a failure (although, at times, it may be most unsettling). This is because, according to Buber, as quoted earlier, the meaning received in the situation of dialogue, "does not wish to be interpreted by us - for that we lack the ability - only to be done by us" (I and Thou 159). Finality, necessity and certainty come to us so that we may incarnate them - "put [them] to the proof in action," as Buber says - in the world of action. In Inward Morning Bugbee expands on this theme when he writes,

Perhaps our truest actions, as Meister Eckhart suggests, are those for which we can give no justifying reasons at all, there being no
separation of meaning from the act in which it is realized. If you believe profoundly in what you are doing, this doing itself is the mode of being relevant, and it constitutes your manner of being articulate (53).

And later on, he explains it this way:

Yet when you come right down to it, is it not clear that really believing in the categorical (i.e. genuine) imperativeness of what one is doing, or better, really believing in what one is doing, carries with it the realization that one has not proven, and could not prove the necessity of doing what he does? We can only bear witness to the necessity of what we do, and through that action which is necessary, rather than through showing how what we do fulfills specifiable conditions by virtue of which it must be acknowledged as necessary. Appreciation of necessity cannot be forced (153).

Our ethical responsibility, then, finds its fulfillment and realization, not in our ability to prove the ethicality of our actions to ourselves or our would-be judges, but in our capacity to embody the meaning received in acting as we must. The address of the situation makes claims upon us, and we fulfill those claims through responsible, ethical action - not by offering cogent arguments in defense of those actions.

Claim and response. As mentioned earlier, this dynamic rhythm lies at the heart of our ethical responsibility. And, in case we should forget (as is so often the case), we do not make the claims; rather, we are claimed - in the moment and from the root of our very being. According to Bugbee, "[O]ur true position in action would seem to be this: that it is one of being called upon to act, and not one of calling the moves" (Inward Morning 71). As such, ethical responsibility presupposes a spirit of attentiveness and availability on our part, a readiness to receive and respond to the call of each new situation.
For, unless we open ourselves to receive that call, how can we respond truly? Surely, we cannot practice ethical responsibility when we shout down the claims made upon us in our desire to stake a claim; when we neglect the command present in the situation in our attempts to take command; when we ignore the charge of the moment in our need to be in charge. In such cases, we impose our own will upon the situation forcefully and to such a degree that we can no longer hear that address to which we may have responded directly and decisively - ethically. According to Bugbee, our forcefulness, assertiveness and insistence prevent us from practicing responsibility and acting with necessity. In Inward Morning he writes,

I would be inclined to say that where the use of force is to the fore the appreciation of necessity is absent. Thus, for example, when we are imperious, realitywithholds its instruction from us. We learn of necessity in all gentleness, or not at all. ... It may be of help to bear in mind that the imperative mood is not the mood of assertion. It is the mood of affirmation, the mood in which we truly respond. It seems to me that I have to discover over and over again that I am wrong when I insist; decisiveness is quite other than insistence. Only reality in its necessity can give finality to what we say or do (117).

We cannot respond truly to things in so far as we attempt to take the world - and the things in it - by storm; conversely, passive non-participation is equally bankrupt. And yet, if we meet the world in a spirit of openness and availability, we may find ourselves addressed and receive the gift of meaning along with the command and the capacity to embody that meaning in our decisive and ethical response.

In closing, there remains a series of questions that cannot be ignored. What about the apparent muteness of the things around us? What about our
isolating deafness? How are we to respond in these situations of paralyzing silence? Admittedly, there are times (many times) when we do not feel ourselves called upon, commanded, directed, and yet we must still venture to decide and act. And if, under these circumstances, we must fall back upon certain general ethical principles, let us act with humility and acknowledge the limitations of such a 'response.' Even 'responsibility' can be turned into an abstract ethical ideal that we employ to guide our actions; however, in doing so, we no longer respond to the utterly unique and irreducibly concrete address of the particular situation. Genuine responsibility cannot be divorced from the call to which we respond; our capacity for responsible action depends upon our ever-renewed participation in dialogue. As Maurice Friedman explains,

> Although I do not necessarily cease to deal lovingly with another even when I am no longer in dialogue with him, it is just in the concrete that I meet reality, and it is this which prevents dialogue from degenerating into "responsibility" to an abstract moral code or universal idea (Touchstones 267).

In the moment of dialogue, we receive the address of the Thou in all its otherness and co-creatureliness, and this address elicits our respectful and compassionate response. And, in general, our recollection of our fellow creature as Thou, and the awareness that each being and thing we encounter may potentially become Thou for us, will suggest that we treat everyone and everything we meet respectfully and compassionately. However, even our recognition of the potential Thouness of all things cannot substitute for the dialogical encounters in which we meet them, in all actuality, as Thou. As
Manfred Vogel points out, genuine ethical responsibility, for Buber, cannot be based upon such abstractions.

Yet, enticing as this answer may be, it is not open to us in the context of Buber's thought. For were we to follow it, we would fall straight into the trap of the It, in as much as "thouness" is a predicate, an aspect, and as such an abstraction, a principle, but not a concrete being, a person (180).

Ethical responsibility means responding to the call of the situation in which we find ourselves. In so far as we hear this call, we may receive meaning and direction and the capacity to respond in an ethical manner.

Admittedly, this is a huge task and we fail regularly. It would be tempting to suggest that we modify our expectations a bit, provide a bit more security, minimize the risks wherever possible. And yet, in doing so we do an injustice to the meaning inherent in the moment, as well as the independence, uniqueness and value of our fellows, the integrity of our personhood, and the enduring and gracious presence of the divine mystery. All of these seem to beckon to us, or from within us, and demand that we acknowledge and respond to them - here and now. This is the responsibility that seems inescapably - and liberatingly - ours and which we must fulfill to the degree we are able. And so, I'll close this chapter with one final quote from Bugbee's Inward Morning:

If it be urged that much of the time we can do no better than a kind of objective fairness in our relationships with one another, let us not suffer the confusion of taking this as a paradigm of what it may mean to be responsible by reason that "we cannot be held responsible for more than this." Because a profound concern of man for man [sic] cannot be legislated into us does not mean that anything short of such
concern can guide us into an adequate interpretation of the meaning of responsibility (210).

Responsibility means responding - from the heart, to that which speaks to our heart.
EXPLANATORY NOTES

1 - Again, what follows must be qualified as a regional ontology. Much of what will be discussed here could be described as philosophical or theological anthropology. In other words, I do not think a question like "Do rocks have a 'creaturely task'?" is relevant - let alone answerable - here.

2 - A note on Deep Ecology here. It seems to me that the initial impetus behind what's loosely called Deep Ecology lies in a wholly justifiable rejection of an exclusively objectifying approach to nature, where all nonhuman beings and things are relegated to It-hood - means to human ends, resources to be manipulated and used. But, within the limited framework of Deep Ecology's discourse, the only alternative to nature's It-hood is to have it become a part of the self, the I - hence their self-identification, self-realization approach. That is, they attempt to give the other its due by claiming that the other and the I are, at root, One. In doing so, however, any sense of genuine and non-negotiable otherness and independence is trivialized or lost entirely, and dialogue becomes monologue. Jim Cheney's articles "Eco-Feminism and Deep Ecology" and "The NeoStoicism of Radical Environmentalism" critique Deep Ecology along these lines (see the List of Works Cited for full citations of Cheney's articles). Several years ago I took up with this topic in some detail in a paper I wrote for Tom Birch entitled, "The Monological self/Self of Identification: A Critique of Deep Ecology Based on the Work of Martin Buber."

3 - Buber's translation of Lev. 19:18, as given a few sentences above, is translated into English by Friedman in "The Question to the Single One" as "Love your neighbour as one like yourself." Such an unusual translation is common for Buber, who, along with Franz Rosenzweig, completed a rather unorthodox translation of the Hebrew Bible from Hebrew to German. In a translator's note to Between Man and Man, Friedman explains this particular translation as follows:

"Love your neighbour as one like yourself": this departure from the customary rendering of the Authorized Version is again an effort to render the original more precise (In this case the Hebrew of Lev. xix. 18) in order to keep before the reader the stark objectivity of the command - the other whom you are required to "love" being one with a real life of his own, and not one whom you are invited to "acquire" (208).
And yet, in the passage from Touchstones of Reality I quoted in the text, Friedman interprets the verse in terms of "equality." In the context of my paper, this seems unfortunate and potentially confusing, especially in the realm of environmental ethics where the notions of "equality" and "equal rights" have been more troublesome than helpful. I prefer Buber's original translation then, which emphasizes our almost familial affinity with our fellow beings rather than the more abstract and legalistic idea of equality. The respect of which I am speaking here grows out of a kinship relation, and the notion of equality, although useful and perhaps even essential in another context, seems rather beside the point here.

4 - For Bugbee, the answer is less clear. His understanding of creation does not imply any notion of a creator, much less a theistic one. In fact, he sees such a designation as potentially dangerous in several ways. First, it introduces a moral heteronomy to human agency, especially when interpreted in its more predestinarian forms - a danger I tried to address in the previous section concerning our created task as a destiny as opposed to fate. He discusses these ideas in his entry of Friday, October 25 in Inward Morning, which covers pages 221-226. Secondly, the notion of a divine creator also implies the designation of the religious object - some object, entity, or being that referentially corresponds to our word God. And for Bugbee, such "object-mindedness" is the exact opposite of the "religious attitude" he regards so highly. Here, I will quote Bugbee at length - again from Inward Morning - on this subject, if for no other reason than to show just how closely he comes to Buber's theistic understanding of many of these same themes.

I recall some comments of Richard Niebuhr's near the close of his course last fall in 19th and early 20th century religious thought. He question the tendency marked, for example, in William James' Varieties of Religious Experience, to concentrate upon religious attitude to the exclusion of its 'objective basis' as I believe he put it. How can the religious attitude be understood properly without placing it in orientation to God? - that seemed to be his question; and he also seemed disposed to demand a conception of God, with whatever necessary qualifications about its analogical or symbolical character, as object upon which religious attitude must depend, if religious attitude is not to degenerate in the end into something subjective and gratuitous.

Much as I concur against the psychologizing interpretation of religious attitude, and with the belief in the possibility of religious attitude of a non-gratuitous character; much as I think such attitude must be interpreted as having relevance, and relevance to what can be referred
to; I cannot but think that the very notion of object incorporates a mode of thinking with respect to reality which is cut loose from religious attitude. No 'object' can serve to explicate the non-arbitrariness of religious attitude. If it could, there would be no element of faith requisite in religious understanding; and I mean, for example, that element of faith in the experience of finite things which has led me to consider 'the object' as abstract, and to attempt reevaluation of the conception of things in distinction from the conception of objects. Thus, too, I have questioned the interpretation of the 'otherness' of other finite beings in terms of the 'standing-over-againstness' which seems inherent in the notion of objectivity. What I should wish to call religious attitude challenges the ultimacy of any interpretation of reality which is 'objective' in the sense of abstracting from the depth of our experience as responsible beings. Thus to the demand that we conceive the groundedness of religious attitude with reference to the objectively conceived, no matter what qualifications are placed on the possibility of an adequate conception of the religious object, seems to me tantamount to a request that religious thought be undertaken from a standpoint not merely independent of religious attitude but also tending to oppose it (217-218).

Like Buber, Bugbee rejects both subjectivism and objectivism as meaningful and 'accurate' ways of taking up with and interpreting our world; both attempt to describe meaningful existence in terms of the knowledge (which is not a knowledge about anything) and truth received through our engaged participation in dialogue. As such, both thinkers reject the either-or of subject-object mindedness when applied to our religious sensibility. This is the basis of Buber's notion of God as the eternal Thou - who, by its very nature, can never become an It, an object. As such, we can never know anything about God in any objective sense. And yet, for Buber, this God is a God whom we can meet and with whom we can enter into 1-Thou dialogue (for Buber, his entire religious tradition - biblical, talmudic, mystical, rabbinical, hasidic - is a testimony to the reality of the ongoing dialogue between God and humanity). Therefore, Buber, like Bugbee, refuses to reduce God to the object of religious attitude, while at the same time bearing witness to the reality of God's enduring Presence in the world.

5 - The reference here is, most obviously, to the book of Genesis, where God calls to Adam following the fall. However, the full meaning of Friedman's explanation is rooted in the Hasidic legend attributed to Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Ladi. According to the story, the rabbi was in jail and awaiting trial for being a political agitator. While in his jail cell, the chief of police came to
visit him, and they began to talk about various religious matters. The tale culminates as follows:

Finally he [the chief of police] asked: "How are we to understand that God, the all-knowing, said to Adam: 'Where art thou?'"

"Do you believe," answered the rav, "that the Scriptures are eternal and that every era, every generation and every man is included in them?"

"I believe this," said the other.

"Well then," said the zaddik, "in every era, God calls to every man: Where are you in your world? So many years and days of those allotted to you have passed, and how far have you gotten in your world?" God says something like this: 'You have lived forty-six years. How far along are you?'"

When the chief of gendarmes heard his age mentioned, he pulled himself together, laid his hand on the rav's shoulder, and cried: "Bravo!" But his heart trembled (Buber, Tales of the Hasidim: Early Masters 268-269).

Here, the emphasis is placed upon practicing responsibility for the unique creaturely task for which each one of us is created - for one's own destiny, authenticity. However, the question also comes to us in each new moment of relation and decision, with the finite being with whom we have to do echoing this same call. In "What is Man?" Buber writes,

Life is not lived by my playing the enigmatic game on a board by myself, but by my being placed in the presence of a being with whom I have agreed on no rules for the game and with whom no rules can be agreed on. This presence before which I am placed changes its form, its appearance, its revelation, they are different from myself, often terrifyingly different. If I stand up to them, concern myself with them, meet them in a real way, that is, with the truth of my whole life, then and only then am I "really" there: I am there if I am there, and where this "there" is, is always determined less by myself than by the presence of this being which changes its form and its appearance. If I am not really there I am guilty. When I answer the call of present being - "Where art thou?" - with "Here am I," but am not really there, that is, not with the truth of my whole life, then I am guilty. Original guilt consists in remaining with oneself (Between 166).

Thus, for Buber, this biblical call of "Where art thou?" speaks unisonously of the threefold calling to which we must respond in our lives - the call of God, the call of our creatureliness, and the call of the present other.
6 - Buber's sense of mystery, as he presents it here, is very similar to Ray Hart's notion of "problematic" and Gabriel Marcel's "meta-problematic."

7 - This, however, does not mean that, for Buber, we cannot also meet the eternal Thou in an exclusive I-Thou relation occurring between the human being and the Divine Presence. Admittedly, though, Buber's writings on this subject can be confusing. For example, in his essay "Buber's Philosophical Anthropology," Philip Wheelwright suggests that for Buber there is no relation to God independent of one's relation to "other finite selves" (78). Buber himself, however, in his "Replies to My Critics," confesses that he "read this with some surprise" and goes on to say that the "essential relation to man" and the "essential relation to God" are complementary and that this complementarity in no way contests "the direct relation to God" (710).

8 - Here, I want to stress the Hasidic notion of "making holy" so I have chosen Smith's translation over Kaufman's "[W]hen you consecrate life you encounter the living God" (128). The close association between "hallowing this life" and entering holy intercourse with one's fellows maintains and emphasizes Buber's inescapably dialogical meaning. And since, as Charles Hartshorne writes, this hallowing is "our proper vocation" (51), the charge to hallow the everyday carries the full force of the threefold call under discussion in a singular and unified way.

9 - Again, Buber's biblical translation is a bit unorthodox. Buber translates the Hebrew Ehyeh asher ehyey in Exodus 3:14 to the German Ich bin da als der ich da bin, which Kaufmann translates in the English I and Thou to "I am there as whoever I am there," and Friedman translates in other texts as "I shall be there as I shall be there." In each case, the emphasis is placed upon God's enduring (although ever-changing) presence as opposed to God's essence or Being. According to Friedman, "The Biblical verb does not include this shade of meaning of pure being" (Life of Dialogue 246).

10 - This is why I referred to Buber's theological position as a panentheistic pansacramentalism in the Introduction. According to Buber, the world exists in God, who is both wholly transcendent and wholly immanent. As he writes in I and Thou, "God embraces but is not the universe; just so, God embraces but is not my self" (143). For Buber, God transcends both the world and the self, and any attempt to limit God to this world, as in pantheism, or to my self, as in panpsychism, denies God's radical transcendence and Otherness. For Buber, a totally immanent and/or internal God is no God at all. And yet, neither is God exclusively transcendent for Buber (and, in fact, Buber's critics have often accused him of being a pantheist). "For," as
Friedman writes, "if God were simply transcendent we could have no relation to him at all" (Life of Dialogue 228). And whatever else Buber says - or refrains from saying - about God, he insists that God, as the eternal Thou, can be met as a partner in relation. Therefore, Buber maintains the tension between God’s transcendence and God’s immanence by placing the world in God [drawing, at times, on the vivid imagery of Lurianic Kabbalism, in which the world is created through the self-limitation, withdrawal, or contraction (tsimtsum) of the Godhead (YHVH) and the consequent emanation of the Divine into the worldly rungs or spheres]. In I and Thou, Buber sums up his panentheistic position as follows:

Looking away from the world is no help toward God; staring at the world is no help either; but whoever beholds the world in him stands in his presence. "World here, God there" - that is It-talk; and "God in the world" - that, too, is It-talk; but leaving out nothing, leaving nothing behind, to comprehend all - all the world - in comprehending the You, giving the world its due and truth, to have nothing besides God but to grasp everything in him, that is the perfect relationship. One does not find God if one remains in the world; one does not find God if one leaves the world. Whoever goes forth to his You with his whole being and carries to it all the being of the world, finds him whom one cannot seek.

Of course, God is "the wholly other"; but he is also the wholly same: the wholly present. Of course, he is the mysterium tremendum that appears and overwhelms; but he is also the mystery of the obvious that is closer to me than my own I (127).

For Buber, God is neither wholly other than the world, nor is God exclusively limited to this world. God is the all-encompassing, all-inclusive God who nonetheless may meet us and speak to us in and through the most seemingly commonplace events of our lives.

11 - As in the discussion of the character of I-Thou relations in Chapter 1, the qualifications are necessary here. Sacramental and dialogical relations are always a matter of "will and grace." Just as we are graced by the fundamental givenness of our being-together-with our fellows and the reciprocal involvement of the others whom we meet in dialogue, so, too, we are graced by the unprocurable manifestation of the Divine Presence in the sacramental encounter. Therefore, in speaking of "letting God in" or "hallowing the everyday," we must not assume an activism in which we have the power or capacity, in and of ourselves, to make the world a sacrament; there is no magic here, and the Divine Presence cannot be conjured up through human action (It is interesting to note that some Kabbalists and Hasidim occasionally
fell prey to the dangers of such an activism, resorting to various magical practices involving numerology and mystical *kavanots* - incantations or spells. Most often they did this in an attempt to force God's hand in human affairs, influence history or bring about the messianic age. Buber's "historical chronicle" entitled *For the Sake of Heaven* insightfully points out these excesses, even in as great a spiritual leader as the Seer of Lublin.). Like dialogical existence in general, we have an important role (but not the only, or even leading, role) to play in making the world a sacrament - but always as priests, not magicians or sorcerers.

12 - The long quote that follows is taken from Buber's discussion of the exclusive relation between a finite I and the eternal Thou (which, paradoxically, includes and encompasses all finite I-Thou relations in its halo-like glow). As discussed earlier, Buber acknowledges the possibility of such relations; what he dismisses entirely is the rejection of finite relations in order to devote oneself to God alone (His frequent discussions and critiques of Kierkegaard in this context are illuminating.). And yet, the ethical import of the quote should be obvious; even the exclusive encounter with God returns us to active participation in finite existence with our fellow beings.
I. INTRODUCTION

So, what about the martens and mountains, the ospreys and rivers, sequoias and bears? Having outlined, rather generally and abstractly, the main tenets of a philosophy of dialogue and its correlative ethic of responsibility in the two previous chapters, I now wish to return to the concrete, lived encounters with the nonhuman beings and things of nature described in the Introduction and attempt to interpret their sense and meaning within this theoretical framework. And yet, it seems unnecessary - and painfully redundant - to reconstruct this framework, in all its detail, as I narrow my focus to our relations with nonhumans and our ethical responsibilities toward such creatures. As stated at the outset of this paper, insofar as I have carried out this investigation of our relationality and ethical responsibility in general, noetic terms, from which no species of noema or relata has been a priori excluded, then it already includes an eidetic description and interpretation of human-nonhuman relations and an implicit environmental ethic. Therefore, given the scope and purpose of this paper, I hope that my audience has read the two preceding chapters with moose, wildflowers and seacoasts - among others - in mind.

Admittedly, however, such an implicit account of our relations with, and responsibilities toward, nonhuman creatures is, in itself, insufficient; in fact, it seems to raise at least as many questions as it answers. In the second half of this paper I will try to sketch out some of these implications a bit more explicitly and
attempt to answer several of the more obvious and/or serious questions that need to be addressed. Due to its excessive length, I have broken down Chapter Three into five separate sections. Following this brief introduction and forecast, I will examine what Buber and his interpreters have to say, specifically, about our relations with nonhuman beings and conclude by stating three general premises affirming the possibility, actuality and meaning of our dialogues with nonhuman creatures. In the following section - section III - I will submit these basic premises to critical scrutiny by outlining two potential sources of criticism and testing the validity and veracity of my premises in light of these challenges. Through analysis and argument as well as a basic re-affirmation of the primacy and meaning of lived experience, I will attempt to respond to these challenges - which might be labeled as the challenge of the noematic prejudice and the challenge of technology - and emerge from the fires of critical evaluation with these general premises intact - validated and, I hope, reforged, strengthened. In the two remaining sections of this chapter I will explain and then attempt to illustrate what the practice of ethical responsibility might look like in our relations with nonhuman creatures. Section IV will re-examine, in general terms, the rhythmic interplay between dialogue and responsibility - claim and response - as it informs our decisions and actions regarding nonhuman beings and things; section V will serve as the culmination of this entire chapter (and this entire paper up to this point), as I explore how we might properly reflect upon and speak about the way our particular, concrete encounters with creatures like martens and mountains sponsor, inform and direct our equally particular, concrete ethical responses to them - and to others.
Given the theoretical framework and style of discourse suggested at the end of Chapter Three, I would like to conclude this essay, in Chapter Four, by offering a few remarks on dialogue, responsibility and wilderness in the more narrative, testimonial and reflective manner appropriate to the interplay between these topics. I will suggest that wild places, for both conceptual and practical reasons, offer us a few remaining places where, despite our relational impoverishment, dialogue can flourish - a home of dialogue and a sabbath place of prayer and play. Of course, to say that we ought to preserve wilderness as a church or playground would be just another variation on an 'ethic' of human self-interest. Rather, because wild places are so overwhelmingly eloquent and evocative and also because, as we immerse ourselves in their gracious presence, we may be more ready to avail ourselves to the self-speaking voice of the others we meet therein, we find ourselves called forth and claimed by wilderness in a way that invites our most respectful and compassionate response. And in our respect and concern for wild places and wild creatures, engendered in intimate, knowing contact with them, we find ourselves obligated to protect and preserve the few remaining wild places left on this continent. And so, I'll conclude this final chapter, and this paper, by advocating a particular course of ethical - even legislative - action. In endorsing the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act (NREPA) as a respectful and appropriate response to the gloriously eloquent and soul-stirringly evocative voice of wild nature in our region of the world (as well as the eloquent, evocative voice of each particular roadless area included in the proposal), I wish to express both my wholehearted support for the Act and, at the same time, show that the rhythm of dialogue and responsibility informing our relations with nonhuman creatures, while perhaps seeming so ephemeral
and 'impractical' to some of my readers, can and does lead to specific, concrete courses of action. In other words, I wish to show that the ethical position put forth in this essay, while not 'applicable,' is both empowering and relevant.

II. DIALOGUE WITH NONHUMAN CREATURES

I find it reassuring, especially given the purposes of this paper, that Martin Buber's most detailed description of an I-Thou encounter in his book I and Thou is of a meeting that occurs between himself and a tree. In fact, given its placement at the beginning of the book and Buber's use of the account to introduce so many of the central themes that he develops later on, I would argue that this description is intended to serve as the paradigm of what the I-Thou relation is - and is not. In presenting the passage here in its entirety, I wish to employ Buber's account as both an experiential starting point (albeit once removed) for the second half of the paper and the basis of a general model of human-nonhuman, I-Thou relations around which to gather up and explicate several of the main themes of the first half of the paper.

I contemplate a tree.
I can accept it as a picture: a rigid pillar in a flood of light, or splash of green traversed by the gentleness of the blue silver ground.
I can feel it as movement: the flowing veins around the sturdy, striving core, the sucking of the roots, the breathing of the leaves, the infinite commerce with earth and air - and the growing itself in its darkness.
I can assign it to a species and observe it as an instance, with an eye to its construction and its way of life.
I can overcome its uniqueness and form so rigorously that I recognize it only as an expression of the law - those laws according to which a constant opposition of forces is continually adjusted, or those laws according to which the elements mix and separate.
I can dissolve it into a number, into a pure relation between numbers, and eternalize it. Throughout all of this the tree remains my object and has its place and its time span, its kind and condition. But it can also happen, if will and grace are joined, that as I contemplate the tree I am drawn into a relation, and the tree ceases to be an It. The power of exclusiveness has seized me. This does not require me to forego any of the modes of contemplation. There is nothing that I must not see in order to see, and there is no knowledge that I must forget. Rather is everything, picture and movement, species and instance, law and number included and inseparably fused. Whatever belongs to the tree is included: its form and its mechanics, its colors and its chemistry, its conversation with the elements and its conversation with the stars - all this in its entirety. The tree is no impression, no play of my imagination, no aspect of a mood; it confronts me bodily and has to deal with me as I must deal with it - only differently. One should not try to dilute the meaning of the relation: relation is reciprocity.

Does the tree then have consciousness, similar to our own? I have no experience of that. But thinking that you have brought this off in your own case, must you again divide the indivisible? What I encounter is neither the soul of a tree nor a dryad, but the tree itself (57-59).

In this account, Buber testifies to, and describes, the twofold way in which we may relate to nonhuman creatures such as trees. According to Buber, we may experience the tree as an It - the object of artistic appreciation and/or scientific investigation. We can observe it in terms of color and light, and we can also analyze it within the frameworks of biology and chemistry, studying its various biochemical and physiological processes, examining its anatomy and taxonomy, or determining its niche within an ecological community. Or, moving to increasingly higher levels of abstraction, we may submit the tree to study under the laws and principles of physics and mathematics. Through all of this, the tree
remains an It - an object of experience, something to observe and study, represent and classify, analyze and dissect.

However, Buber also says that we can relate to this same tree in an entirely different way - as a Thou, a partner in dialogue. In the I-Thou encounter we meet the tree in its wholeness and integrity, without the fragmentation of analysis and dissection. Likewise, the encounter is immediate and present; no conceptual framework intervenes, and no re-presentational placement within interpretive or experiential grids relegates the encounter to the past. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the I-Thou meeting with the tree is reciprocal; both I and Thou are actively involved. And although this reciprocity occurs at an other-than-conscious level and contains an element of inescapable and ineffable mystery, Buber is adamant in his conviction that the tree does, in fact, reciprocate.

But how? In what sense do we meet with reciprocity in our encounters with trees - or buzzards or creeks, for that matter? To answer this question we need to re-examine the fundamental nature of the I-Thou dialogue. For Buber, I-Thou relations are not mental acts that necessitate conscious awareness. They occur at the primal level of our very being. According to Maurice Friedman, "We address others not by conscious mind or will but by what we are. We address them with more than we know, and they respond - if they really respond - with more than they know. Address and response can never be identified merely with conscious intent or even with 'intentionality'" (Touchstones 324). In a similar vein, Robert Wood writes, "[I-Thou] relation, [Buber] insists, is not
psychological so much as it is ontological, i.e., a relation to the being of the
Other" (41). Since dialogue does not occur at the level of (human) consciousness,
but at the more fundamental level of being, its manifestation does not depend on
both partners' conscious awareness, or even that both partners have a
consciousness at all.¹

Therefore, reciprocity should not be understood as some kind of conscious
act or posture; it, too, is something ontic. And while, theoretically speaking, this
position is consistent enough, it is a notion that, admittedly, contains an element
of mystery. Acknowledging the potential for confusion and misunderstanding,
Buber directly confronts the question posed at the beginning of the previous
paragraph when, in his "Afterword" to I and Thou, he asks himself,

[If the I-You relation entails a reciprocity that embraces both the I
and the You, how can the relationship to something in nature be
understood in this fashion? Still more exactly: if we are to suppose
that the beings and things in nature that we encounter as our You
also grant us some sort of reciprocity, what is the character of this
reciprocity, and what gives us the right to apply to it this basic
concept (172)?

And since Buber asks himself the exact question I have raised, we might as well
let him answer it in his own words. After discussing the matter-of-fact
differences between our relations with plants and our relations with animals, he
writes, 'It is part of our concept of the plant that it cannot react to our actions
upon it, that it cannot 'reply.' Yet this does not mean that we meet with no
reciprocity at all in this sphere. We find here not the deed of posture of an
individual being but a reciprocity of being itself - a reciprocity that has nothing
except being" (173). Admittedly, this answer is not terribly satisfying. Aside
from the questionable science (which has no real bearing on the basic issue here), Buber's response is, to put it mildly, vague. To be sure, the reciprocity we encounter in our meetings with trees and other nonhuman things carries an element of mystery and ineffability, and I believe Buber's insistence on its presence in such relations, despite his relative inability to articulate it, testifies, above all, to his immediate apprehension of its experiential reality. That is, Buber maintains his position that trees and the like reciprocate, despite the fact that it might have been easier for him to equivocate on this point, because he had met with and known the force of their reciprocity as a fact of experience.

In our meetings with trees and the like, as we attend to them, we find ourselves attended; as we make ourselves available, they avail themselves to us; and, as we become present, they reveal to us their gracious presence. And while I remain somewhat uncertain about what I could possibly give a tree that would be of any real value to it, I have no doubt concerning the richness of the unwarranted gifts I receive from my arboreal partners in dialogue. The tree that I meet as Thou meets me as an active co-participant in the I-Thou relation, addressing me with its presence and responding to my address with the gifts of its being - and our mutual being-together. Although speechless, even 'thoughtless,' such mutual address and response is, most fundamentally, a form of reciprocity.

So, for Buber, trees, like our fellow human beings, may be either experienced as Its or encountered as Thous. And not just trees. In I and Thou, Buber also bears witness to the reality of I-Thou encounters occurring between
himself and a cat (144-146) and between himself and a "fragment of mica" (146-147). Also, in his essay entitled "Dialogue," Buber recounts an I-Thou encounter from his childhood occurring between himself and a horse (Between 22-23).

Rather than being exceptional or aberrant, the experiential reality of these I-Thou relations with creatures like trees, cats, rocks and horses is wholly consistent with Buber's understanding of the fundamentally dialogical character of existence. If, as I quoted Buber earlier, "[L]iving means being addressed" (Between 10), then it follows that, "Nature 'says' something to man" (Wood 116). I-Thou dialogue with the nonhuman beings and things of nature is possible, first and foremost, because, at the most primal level, these creatures address us; they speak to us out of the very depths of their being - in all their unrepeatable uniqueness, indivisible integrity, irreducible otherness and co-creaturely independence. More simply, they 'speak' themselves.

In turn, insofar as we hear and respond to this self-spoken, self-speaking address, received as such, we may meet these beings and things as Thous, mutually participating partners in meaningful and decisive dialogue. As such, the possibility of I-Thou dialogue occurring between a human being and a tree, depends - from the human side, at least - upon the recognition of our existential situation as one of being-called-upon and our capacity to open ourselves to the voice of such creatures as they address us in the particular and concrete relational events of our lives with them. As I discussed in Chapter One, Buber describes this recognition and readiness - this disposition or posture of the life of dialogue - as "becoming aware". And, according to Buber, we cannot draw
artificial boundaries or arbitrary limits upon this awareness. In "Dialogue" he writes,

But in each instance a word demanding an answer has happened to me. We may term this way of perception *becoming aware.* It by no means needs to be a man of whom I become aware. It can be an animal, a plant, a stone. No kind of appearance or event is fundamentally excluded from the series of the things through which from time to time something is said to me. ... The limits of the possibility of dialogue are the limits of awareness (*Between* 10).

Although dialogue is always a matter of will and grace, unless we become aware of ourselves as addressed by trees and the like, how can we hear them speak to us? And, in turn, how can we truly respond? A necessary pre-condition of I-Thou dialogue is hearing the address of the other as Thou, and this hearing seems potentiated in our readiness and capacity to listen - to whomever may, perchance, speak to us.²

And yet, for the most part, we lack this awareness of ourselves as called upon. Oftentimes, we do not - cannot - hear the address of our fellow beings, including our fellow human beings. They seem to have nothing meaningful or compelling to say to us, and we, in turn, take up with them as speechless and inert objects - things to experience or scrutinize, contend with or avoid, manipulate or use. In such a silent 'society,' monologue, rather than dialogue, seems to be the dominant pattern of speech. Consequently, speaking of things like trees addressing us and engaging us in reciprocal, I-Thou dialogue sounds rather far-fetched, perhaps even ludicrous (after all, as my more literal-minded readers will quickly point out, I'm coming perilously close to talking about
talking trees here). Clearly, within the exclusive framework of the It-world, a tree has nothing to say to us; it exists as a silent object, which we may subjectively experience according to the interpretive grids we project upon it, and/or a resource, a maleable thing that we may use according to our purposes and intentions. As an It, the evocative self-speaking voice of the tree, arising from the depths of its otherness, uniqueness and integrity, is silenced or ignored; whatever voice it has, it receives from the I of the I-It relation, according to the I's categories of experience and use. As such, the entire relational event occurs as a monologue within the mind of the I. Concerning our monologue with nature, Buber writes,

He who is living the life of monologue is never aware of the other as something that is absolutely not himself and at the same time something with which he nevertheless communicates. Nature for him is either an c'tat d' ame, hence a "living through" in himself, or it is a passive object of knowledge, either idealistically brought within the soul or realistically alienated. It does not become for him a word apprehended with senses of beholding and feeling (Between 20).

According to Buber, it makes little difference whether we appropriatively identify with nature (The Deep Ecology approach), subjectively romanticize nature, or 'objectively' reduce nature to simple, lifeless "matter in motion." Each approach bears the mark of the I-It monologue, where we fail to acknowledge, respect and honor the non-negotiable, irreducible otherness of nature's creatures, who, despite - and because of - their otherness, we may encounter as partners in I-Thou dialogue.
Given the impoverished state of our relational lives, I would be the last person to suggest that I-Thou encounters with nonhuman beings and things are commonplace occurrences, although I do believe we often fail to recognize such encounters because of their fleeting, often unspectacular, nature and lack of consciously perceived content. Or, if we acknowledge them at all, oftentimes we dismiss them as superfluous, inconsequential or romantic, overly sentimental or subjective responses to seemingly ordinary events. But, just because they may be infrequent, ignored or explained away, that doesn't mean that they can't or don't happen - or that they aren't important.

What I wish to suggest concerning the possibility, actuality and meaning of our I-Thou relations with nonhuman beings and things can be broken down into three basic premises. First, despite the onerous obstacles and conceptual baggage that may rise up and prevent the actuality of I-Thou dialogue between human and nonhuman creatures, such encounters are, indeed, possible. Emil Fackenheim articulates this first premise very clearly when he writes, I-Thou relations are possible not only with other human beings, but with anything whatever. This is not to say that such relations are easy or possible to anyone, or possible at any time. It is merely to say that there are no a priori limitations to the possible partners I may have in an I-Thou relationship (279).

Secondly, not only are such I-Thou encounters a theoretical possibility but, on occasion, they may also become actual, and it is wholly legitimate to speak of our engaging and compelling encounters with martens, mountains, bears and trees as I-Thou relations and attempt to interpret their sense and meaning according to the tenets of a philosophy of dialogue. As these creatures address us in their
own right, as they 'speak' themselves from the depths of their being, their speech may resonate within the available (disponible) and responsive soul, and the possibility of dialogue may, in such miraculous instances, become incarnate among us. And thirdly, as the possibility of dialogue with nonhuman creatures becomes, on occasion, actual for us, we find our lives graced beyond all measure or possible merit. We receive the gift of the present other as we come to know it - this stretch of seashore, that stand of forest - in an altogether fresh and intimate way, and, at the same time, we receive the gift - and consequent responsibility - of our own existence, recognized as meaningful, even vocational. Through our sacramental co-participation in such dialogue, we find the capacity to affirm both these nonhuman others and ourselves as well as the strength and direction to embody this meaning and mutual affirmation in respectful and compassionate - genuinely responsible - action.

III. CRITICAL SCRUTINY: THE CHALLENGE OF THE NOEMATIC PREJUDICE AND THE CHALLENGE OF TECHNOLOGY

And yet, I cannot simply state these three premises and then naively move on to a discussion of their ethical import for our relations with nonhuman creatures without first acknowledging and responding to several challenges that these premises may prompt. Two challenges, in particular, come to mind, and, while I'm sure there are others, I will limit my discussion here to these two: the challenge of the noematic prejudice as presented in - and articulated in the very title of - John Kultgen's article entitled "Saving You for Real People" and,
secondly, the challenge of technology. In very different ways, both of these
c Challenges question the veracity of the first premise I presented above, regarding
the very possibility of I-Thou dialogue occurring between humans and
nonhumans. Similarly, I have chosen to respond to these two challenges for very
different reasons. Technology, as the widely and deeply instantiated paradigm
that informs and defines the way we take up with reality at the most primary
level, seems to present the most serious challenge to the possibility of human-
nonhuman dialogue. On the other hand, Kultgen's argument, while not terribly
compelling or persuasive, offers an exemplary illustration of the noematic
prejudice discussed throughout this paper.

To set the context a bit, Kultgen's article comes as a critical response to an
earlier essay by John Tallmadge entitled "Saying You to the Land." In his article,
Tallmadge "use[s] Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, as expounded in Land
Thou, to shed light on the spiritual roots of our environmental crisis and show
how we can appreciate beings in nature if we encounter them as persons rather
than things" (Tallmadge 351). He suggests that this appreciation can instill
within us - each of us - the enlarged understanding of community prerequisite
for practicing Aldo Leopold's "land ethic." And finally, Tallmadge offers
something like a dialogical tao of backpacking as a method by which
"individuals develop habits of mind conducive to I-You relations, thereby
enhancing our life with other people as well as our natural environment" (351).
Although I find his analysis lacking in a number of ways, I am, quite obviously,
sympathetic to the spirit and sensibility of Tallmadge's article. However, my
purpose here is not to defend his essay against Kultgen's criticisms, a few of
which I even find justified. Rather, I want to address the basic presuppositions underlying Kultgen's critique and illustrate how these presuppositions distort and prejudice his understanding of relationality and dialogue.

In the short abstract preceding his article, Kultgen describes the general purpose and intent of his article as follows: "I critique John Tallmadge's attempt to derive an environmental ethic from Buber's suggestion that we can enter into I-Thou relations with nature. I-Thou relations flourish only with beings who enter into dialogue with us, viz. human beings, and we can value other natural kinds without anthropomorphizing them" (59). According to Kultgen, Martin Buber is simply wrong to say that I-Thou relations can "flourish" between humans and nonhumans. Upon even slight reflection, this seems to be a rather odd accusation to make. After all, it was Buber who first articulated the understanding of I-Thou dialogue under discussion here and who described and defined such relations to include our immediate, present, integrated and reciprocal encounters with nonhuman creatures. It's sort of like telling the home plate umpire - or even the head of the official rules committee - that he/she doesn't understand the strike zone because she/he insists that a waste high pitch down the middle falls within the category of a strike. Given the terms agreed upon to determine what constitutes a strike (an I-Thou relation), one cannot fault the umpire for reasoning that such a 'pitch-event' (an I-Thou relation occurring between humans and nonhumans) falls into the class of things we call strikes. One can argue that the strike zone be redefined to exclude waist high, down the middle pitches from being called strikes, but to continue playing by the current
rules while insisting, "Those aren't strikes," seems to be an odd position to maintain.

Of course, what Kultgen is really doing is, in fact, redefining the rules under which he chooses to play the game. Kultgen, while still employing the language of dialogue and I-Thou relationality, simply redefines what constitutes an I-Thou dialogue in accordance with the noematic prejudice he brings with him to the ballpark. By saying that "I-Thou relations flourish only with beings who enter dialogue with us, viz. human beings," Kultgen chooses to predicate his definition of I-Thou relations upon the type of relata involved; for him, I-Thou dialogue can occur if and only if the participants are human beings. Here, the possibility of dialogical relations depends, not upon the nature of the relations themselves, but upon the nature (species) of the participants. As such, any relations with nonhumans, regardless of the nature of these relations, are a priori excluded from consideration as I-Thou dialogues. Phenomenologically speaking, Kultgen interprets our relationality strictly in terms of the noema involved in the relation and, because of this, falls prey to the noematic prejudice this entire paper is intended to overcome - or at least thoughtfully and actively bracket.

In addition, because this prejudice is so deeply entrenched, Kultgen makes several other groundless accusations. First, in the passage from his abstract quoted above, he suggests that by calling nonhuman creatures Thou, we - Buber, Tallmadge and I - are somehow anthropomorphizing them. This is a gross misunderstanding. For Buber, as I have plainly shown, all sorts of beings - trees, horses, humans, divinities - may become a Thou for us. And furthermore, this
potential has nothing to do with their nature, so to speak; it has to do with the nature of the relations in which we encounter them. Again, I-Thou is a noetic description of a certain form of relational event. To call someone/something a Thou means that we have encountered - or may yet encounter - that being in such a relationship. Clearly, there is nothing inherently anthropomorphic about such relational descriptions - not until the I-Thou relationship is redefined in noematic terms, where humanness has become the necessary condition of participation in these relationships. Only when "Thou" is read and understood exclusively as "human-Thou" does a philosophy of dialogue become anthropomorphic.

Similarly, Kultgen's noematic prejudice fosters great confusion in his understanding of personhood. For Kultgen, person can only mean one thing: human person. Therefore, he argues that, "His [Tallmadge's] central proposal, that we treat beings of 'wild nature' (and eventually of 'humanized nature,' too) as persons, is a theoretical and ethical disaster" (59), and he concludes his essay by stating that, "[I]t is a blind alley to misrepresent things as persons and deny the precious difference between the two. This is an injustice to the things as much as to the persons" (67). Here, Kultgen sets up a firm noematic duality between two kinds of beings: persons (human) and things (nonhuman). But what if we look at personhood and thinghood noetically, as Buber and Kohak would have us do? From a noetic perspective, a person is a being whom we encounter as a Thou, while a thing is an object experienced as an It. The terms depend upon the nature of the relational event in which the relata are apprehended, and all finite creatures - human as well as, say, feline or mineral -
can be encountered as Thous or experienced as Its. According to Kohak, "A person is a being who meets you as a Thou. ... Humans are beings capable of being persons. The category of Person, though, is both higher and deeper - and broader" (Embers and Stars 122). Here, Kohak defines personhood noetically, in terms of the I-Thou relations in which we come to know our fellow beings - not just human beings - as persons, Thous. And clearly, by saying this Kohak does not "deny the precious difference[s]" between human beings and cats and rocks (let alone the very real differences between my nephew and the born-again Bible thumpers at my door earlier today). Rather, he simply acknowledges the rich diversity and illimitably wide scope of our relational lives. Further down the same page, in fact, Kohak details the textured plurality of our 'interpersonal' lives when he concludes, "I would not apologize for my distinctiveness: I cherish the millenia of humanitas whose heir I am. There are, though, the cellar holes; there are the raccoons and the birches, there is the moon and the spirit of God, ever present amid the hum of the sun-warm forest and the ageless boulders" (122-123). Cellar holes, raccoons, birch trees, the moon and God are, obviously enough, radically other than, and different from, human beings; who would want to argue otherwise? And yet, like human beings, they, too, can be encountered as persons. Only when "person" is equated with "human person" - as it is within the framework of Kultgen's noematic prejudice - does this shared personhood cause misunderstanding.

Rather than creating a "theoretical and ethical disaster," as Kultgen would have us believe, our experiential knowledge and reflective recognition of the actual and/or potential personhood of our nonhuman fellow creatures provides
a fertile ground in which our respect and compassion for such creatures may be sown and/or cultivated. To know our fellow beings as persons, and not merely things, opens up the possibility of treating them in a respectful and compassionate - ethically responsible - manner. According to Kohak,

In the encounter of persons, categories of respect - moral categories - are in order. Not simply categories of purpose: purpose can also be mechanical and pointless. Nor categories of causality. Rather it is the categories of respect, of good and evil, of right and wrong, that govern the encounters of persons. ... That is the fundamental sense of speaking of reality as personal: recognizing it as Thou, and our relation to it as profoundly and fundamentally a moral relation, governed by the rule of respect.

It is in that sense that any consistent ethic must needs be personalistic, and doubly so - according to all beings the respect due to persons and recognizing the model of a community of persons which Kant described as the "kingdom of ends" as the root metaphor for understanding the moral sense of reality. For a person, ultimately, is not just a being who possesses a psyche or manifests certain personality traits as much as a being who stands in a moral relation to us, a being we encounter as a Thou (Embers and Stars 122 & 128-129).

Our respect - and compassion - for our fellow beings is rooted in our encounters with them as persons recognized as such; ethical responsibility involves, above all, treating our fellows as persons, respectfully and compassionately. Rather than an ethical disaster, this seems to provide a promising, although necessarily contextual and ambiguous, framework within which to pose our moral questions and enact our ethical responses.

However, such a personalistic understanding of ethical responsibility is incompatible with Kultgen's moral vision; and it is here, as he outlines his own moral agenda, that Kultgen reveals the source of his stubborn adherence to the
noematic prejudice and his consistent misreading of Buber's ideas. In Kultgen's own words,

The core of morality in my view consists in respect for persons as persons and the consideration of their interests on a par with one's own. The moral person also cares in a lesser way for the interests of creatures other than persons when they have interests. And lastly he or she accepts responsibility for the environment insofar as his or her actions affect it and it in turn affects the interests of persons and other creatures with interest (63).

Two mutually informing engines drive Kultgen's ethical vision: an implicit definition of personhood and an acknowledgment of, and respect for, the interests of persons - and, to a lesser degree, of other interest-holders. Both engines are fueled by a noematic and atomistic understanding of relationality - and thus, reality - in which certain beings are (or are not) persons and certain beings have (or do not have) interests. With these categories in place, Kultgen's next step involves setting up criteria to distinguish the persons from nonpersons and the interest-holders from those who lack interests. And this he does with amazing ease and confidence. "As far as we can tell with any certainty, only humans are true persons and perhaps not all of them" (64). While Kultgen insists that his "conception of ethics makes it fundamentally dependent on science, technology, and social engineering" (63), the scientific bases for such claims escape me. One criterion for evaluating personhood, however, seems to be the ability to articulate one's interests. Later on he writes,

The most distinctive thing about persons is that they speak when spoken to. They tell us things about the world and especially about themselves which we could not otherwise know. Most relevant to ethics is that they tell us that they have interests which we should take into consideration in interacting with them. Contrapositively, a being who does not speak about its interests is, taking it for what it presents itself to be, a nonperson (68).
However, Kultgen admits that some "nonpersons" also have interests even though they can't articulate them. "Higher animals are not persons, but they have interests that deserve our consideration. Other organisms may have interests, though personally I find it impossible to feel moral obligations toward microbes, mildew and the like. I can see no reason at all to attribute interests to inorganic objects or obligations toward them to ourselves" (64). In sum, it seems that in order to warrant ethical consideration a being must have interests (a determination which we presumably make through rigorous scientific investigation), and in order to be a person, that being must be able to communicate those interests. More simply, person = human person. And since the communication of interests assumes that one has an understandable and acknowledged voice among the arbiters of personhood, it will remain an issue open to debate whether or not the very young, the comatose and those with severe developmental disabilities/challenges, as well as blacks, women, Jews, Catholics, Native Americans, homosexuals, the homeless and very poor - name any group of human beings that is or has been denied full personhood within the dominant discourse of the times - qualify as persons.

And while I find absolutely nothing "scientific" about Kultgen's analysis, the narrow scope and rigid inflexibility of his moral agenda do, in fact, allow him to meet his other primary criterion for a viable ethic: efficacy. On page 64 he writes,

Furthermore, the moral person not only wants to be moral, but he or she also wants morality to work - that is, for moral attitudes and practices to be widely shared and effective in promoting the interests of beings that have interests. But for morality to work,
then, we must distinguish persons rigorously from subpersons, and both from nonpersons. Saying "You" to everything, far from nourishing You-saying to those who really count, trivializes it and may even in the end sap our appreciation for the distinctive nature of nonpersons.

Indeed, once we know who the interest-holding persons are (and who they are not), our ethical decisions become much simpler, less ambiguous, and their legislating and administering become fairly straightforward affairs. Of course, whether or not such a 'morality' rings true to experience, is at all just, or can even be called moral in any real sense, are questions left unanswered by Kultgen's search for efficacy; campaigns of genocide and wholesale extermination - not to mention the countless individual cases of brutality, violation and victimization - are often carried out with extreme efficiency once the perpetrators have effectively denied the potential personhood of their victims and relegated them to the exclusive status of nonpersons or subpersons (I have no idea to what this latter designation refers; Kultgen never defines it. From the context in which he uses it, it appears to be another category of beings who aren't full-fledged interest-bearers able to tell us about their interests.). A workable 'ethic,' purchased at the price of narrow definitions, limited scope and the wholesale exclusion of so many beings from ethical consideration, is, at best, a fanciful pipe dream and, at worst, a license for brutality. Despite our desire to simplify the complexities attendant to our moral decisions and actions, ambiguity and risk - and the uncertainty and doubt that (fortunately, at times) accompany them - must remain. This seems especially so when we recognize the potentially universal scope of our ethical responsibility, where any creature may address us as a Thou - a person - and call forth our ethical response. And yet, to deny
categorically this possibility and the claims it may make upon us, simply for the sake of efficacy, is nothing less than a failure of moral courage.

Kultgen, then, in his desire to articulate a workable, interest-based environmental ethic, has defined personhood in such a narrow and noematic way that his entire understanding of relationality - and, consequently, I-Thou relations - is skewed by the noematic prejudice through which his analysis is filtered. Given his definitions, where Thou = person = human, and his exclusively noematic understanding of dialogue, Kultgen is quite correct to say that human beings cannot encounter nonhumans in I-Thou relations. And, in truth, we cannot - as long as such a vision impairs our capacity to see things otherwise. For if we insist that nonhuman beings are exclusively Its, then this insistence will define our relations with them, and Its they will be - objects to experience and use, resources to develop (or perhaps even manage and conserve) for the good of human persons of intelligible voice. However, once the noematic prejudice is bracketed and we once again define personhood in noetic terms, where a person is a being whom we may encounter as a Thou, a very different conclusion emerges - one that is not only phenomenologically correct but also true to our experience of nonhuman creatures as Thous. Liberated from arbitrary definitions and prejudicial projections, we are free not only to entertain the possibility of I-Thou relations between humans and nonhumans, but we are also free to testify to their actuality in our lives as well as their compelling imperative power as they inform and guide our ethical decision-making and action.
What about the more formidable and fundamental questions posed by modern technology? Understood as the deeply entrenched and widely pervasive pattern that informs and shapes the way we live in, and take up with, our world, technology presents a serious challenge to the very possibility of I-Thou dialogue occurring between human and nonhuman beings. Within the framework of modern technology, our relational life with nature and nonhuman creatures loses its vocative character. These creatures do not speak to us of themselves; we do not hear or acknowledge - let alone respond to - their self-speaking address. In such a silent world, any talk of dialogue with nonhuman beings sounds absurd or, at best, nostalgic, primitivist. Consequently, ethical responsibility, as outlined in the previous chapter, becomes impossible with regards to such creatures. As such, I believe the challenge of technology poses a fundamental threat to the relevance of my essay and requires both a serious examination and a thoughtful response.

According to Martin Heidegger, our relations with nature - indeed, reality - are set within the framework of modern technology, the essence of which Heidegger calls "Enframing" (Ge-stell) (The Question 19). In his essay entitled "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger defines Enframing as "the gathering together that belongs to that setting-upon which sets upon man and puts him in position to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing reserve" (The Question 24). From this definition of Enframing it is clear that, for Heidegger, technology, in its essence, is no mere human instrument or tool. Instead, Enframing comes to us as a "destining" (Geschick) out of Being that challenges us to take up with reality as standing reserve. As challenged out of
Being, we, in turn, challenge reality - probing it, ordering it, securing it for our own use.

Experienced within the framework of the dual challenge of Enframing, nature, too, is revealed to us as a standing reserve or resource (Bestand). According to Heidegger, "Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering" (The Question 17). We, in turn, respond to nature-as-standing reserve by ordering it, making it available, procuring it for our use; in other words, we respond to nature-as-resource by developing it. Here, the challenge and the response go hand in hand. As Henry Bugbee observes, "Why, the very category of resource commits one by implication to development of it" ("Wilderness" 8). As a resource, nature is revealed - and has its being - only in terms of its ordered and secured function. According to Heidegger, nature-as-resource is no longer even an object standing over-against us, but rather, "completely unautonomous, for it has its standing only from the ordering of the orderable" (The Question 17).

Within the mode of Enframing, then, the relations between human beings and nonhuman, natural resources can never approach the character of a dialogue. Challenged out of Being, we cannot meet or attend to nature's beings; we can only challenge them. And nature, as a wholly unautonomous resource, has nothing to say in its own right. Given this silent commerce, nature receives its 'voice' according to the way it is revealed to human beings within the framework of technology. This projected voice says "standing reserve" or
"resource," and we respond to it by ordering, securing, developing. But such commerce is not a dialogue and carries none of the intimacy, meaning and knowledge that dialogue so graciously bestows. Instead, under the rule of technological Enframing, only truthless Being is revealed, and nothing is left "free to be as it genuinely is" (Lovitt, Ed. note 13 in Heidegger, The Question 45).

A similar form of technological commerce between human and nonhuman beings occurs when, according to Albert Borgmann, we take up with reality within the framework of the device paradigm. For Borgmann, the mechanical device best illustrates the dominant pattern modern technology stamps upon our lives. "Positively speaking, the paradigm of the contemporary world is the technological device. ... The technological device is the radical and increasingly sharp separation of means from ends" ("The Explanation" 110). In the technological device, means and ends are clearly determined according to the function of a particular device. For example, a "moving sidewalk" is a device designed to move a person from point A to point B effortlessly. This is the device's function - its end. All of the machinery and energy required to make such effortless movement possible are merely the means to procure that end. Furthermore, the desired end is a very clearly defined and highly isolated function of a far more complex event - walking. In this example, one function of walking is highlighted while others are neglected or dismissed, and the means by which this is accomplished - in effect, a giant conveyor belt for humans - is hidden and/or made as unencroaching as possible. According to Borgmann, "In the progress of technology, the function increases in prominence and purity whereas the machinery shrinks and recedes" ("The Explanation" 111). Ideally, the
goal of technology is the deliverance of the pure function unencumbered from the means by which it is procured.

While this pattern of separating means from ends and isolating functions manifests itself most clearly in mechanical devices such as moving sidewalks, television sets and microwave ovens, our relations with nature are similarly marked by the stamp of the device paradigm. In *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* Borgmann writes, "When we look at a tree accordingly, we see so much lumber or cellulose fiber; the needles, branches, the bark, and the roots are waste. Rock is 5 percent metal and the rest is spoils. An animal is a machine that produces so much meat. Whichever of its functions fails to serve that purpose is indifferent or burdensome" (192). In these examples, Borgmann illustrates how we take up with nature's creatures within the device paradigm, where means and ends are strictly separated. Here, the desired ends - lumber, metal, meat - are singled out as the sole (important) functions of the tree, rock and animal resources. Borgmann calls these isolated functions commodities (*Technology* 43). Lumber is the commodity desired from the timber resource; metal is the commodity desired from the mineral resource; meat is the commodity desired from the animal (either game or livestock) resource. As resources, nature's creatures are perceived in terms of the commodities they deliver - the humanly designated ends they serve; in turn, we study, manipulate, control, even conserve, these natural resources for the purpose of procuring the commodities they offer us.
Of course, defining these creatures solely in terms of a single, isolated function is terribly reductive, and in so defining them, they become flat, one-dimensional and fragmentary. Accordingly, they can no longer address us in their own right and speak to us of their richness, depth and integrity. Under the commodious functionalism and instrumentality of the device paradigm, the self-speaking voices of the nonhuman beings and things of nature are silenced, and nature becomes nothing more than a mute and lifeless aggregate of natural resources. As Borgmann explains, "The rule of instrumentality, in Langdon Winner's expression, allows us to take possession of things and overpower them. But in the process we extinguish the life of things and lose touch with them" (Technology 59). In the language of dialogue, we can no longer meet them in I-Thou intercourse. Instead, our relations with the beings and things of nature are limited to those occurring between a developer or consumer and a resource or commodity. Unable to speak of itself, and existing solely in terms of human purposiveness and instrumentality, nature is revealed to us as an assemblage of resources whose function is to produce commodities for our consumption. In turn, we respond, as consumers - or developers, or manufacturers, or distributors, or salespersons along the path traveled by a resource on its way to becoming a commodity available for the final goal of human consumption. But, as was the case within Heidegger's technological Enframing, such commerce is not a dialogue, and any discussion of dialogical relations occurring within this commercial setting sounds absurd.

Both Heidegger and Borgmann attempt to describe the dominant pattern by which we take up with reality - including nature - under the rule of modern
technology. And while these patterns differ, certain similarities exist. In both cases, our relational life with nature is severely attenuated. Within the technological paradigm, the deep and engaging voice of nature is reduced to the flat, one-dimensional utterance of a resource to be set upon, ordered, secured and stockpiled, or whose function is to be isolated and procured as a commodity. In turn, the range of appropriate responses available to us involve the enactment of development and consumption. Framed within these patterns and defined by our respective roles, dialogue - the reciprocal and meaningful encounter between an I and a Thou - seems unlikely, if not altogether impossible. Resources and commodities have no voice apart from that projected upon them according to our needs and desires, and any capacity for attentive listening in us, as developers or consumers, is shouted down by the mandates of instrumentality, purposiveness and commodious intentionality.

I agree with Heidegger and Borgmann that the pattern of modern technology colors and informs every aspect of our relational lives - including our relations with nature. For me, however, the crucial question remains: does this pattern exclusively and exhaustively define our relations with nature's creatures, or can we also take up with them outside of the technological paradigm? If we can only experience nature within the framework of technology, then my entire project is doomed from the very beginning. However, if we still have access to reality outside the rule of technology, then it remains possible for the nonhuman beings and things of nature to speak to us as other - both more and less - than standing reserve, resources, commodities; in other words, dialogue - I-Thou
dialogue - between attentive humanity and eloquent, self-speaking nature may indeed occur.

Neither Heidegger nor Borgmann understands the technological pattern he describes as exhaustively determining the possible ways human beings may take up with nature. According to Heidegger, at this point in human history we are "destined" out of Being to set upon nature as a resource under the challenge of Enframing, which is the essence of technology. This destining is neither a matter of human choice nor human activity. As Heidegger puts it, "Always the destiny of revealing holds complete sway over man" (The Question 25). And yet, at the same time, this destiny is not simply fate but rather the potential birthplace of freedom. In the sentence following the one just quoted, Heidegger explains, "But that destining is never a fate that compels. For man becomes truly free only insofar as he belongs to the realm of destining and so becomes one who listens and hears, and not one who is simply constrained to obey" (25). Freedom, for the person living under the rule of technological Enframing, involves recognizing oneself as destined out of Being in the mode of Enframing and acknowledging this situation for what it is. In that recognition and acknowledgment, one becomes aware of that destining as a great danger - but a danger that, recognized, may also save. Enframing is the "supreme danger" because, "As a destining, it banishes man into that kind of revealing which is an ordering. Where this order holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing" (Heidegger, The Question 27). However, recognized as a danger, the danger is one that saves, for in our awareness of the danger, we allow for the possibility of the "turning" of Being and the replacing of Enframing with a new mode of
revealing. In this turning, the truth of Being flashes into the truthless Being revealed in the mode of Enframing (Heidegger, *The Question* 45); through such an in-flashing, humans gain "insight into that which is" (Heidegger, *The Question* 47).

In his essay "The Thing," Heidegger describes a new mode of revealing that this turning or in-flashing may usher in to replace technological Enframing. Here, reality reveals itself not as standing reserve to be aggressively set upon, ordered and stockpiled, but a place - a 'home' - of authentic human "dwelling," where we stand back and allow for the thinging of things in a worlding world.

As Albert Hofstadter explains,

> There is a world of difference between man's present life as technological being under the aegis of *Gestell*, frame, framing - in which everything, including man himself, becomes material for a process of self-assertive production, self-assertive imposition of human will on things regardless of their own essential natures - and a life in which we would genuinely dwell as a human being (Ed. Introduction to Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* xv).

As dwellers, we take up with and acknowledge things not according to the interpretive grids of intentionality we impose upon them as resources, but as the things they are. In letting things thing we let them speak of their being, and in turn, such speech resounds with the truth of Being. According to Heidegger, "If we let the thing be present in its thinging from out of the worlding world, then we are thinking of the thing as thing. Taking thought in this way, we let ourselves be concerned by the thing's worlding being. Thinking in this way, we are called by the thing as the thing" (*Poetry, Language, Thought* 181). In the mode of dwelling, humans are capable of vocative relations with things
(including the things of nature), where these things speak/enact themselves and we acknowledge their self-articulating address.

And, as I've suggested throughout this essay, such vocative relations imply *vocatio* - a summons or call to vocation, vocational response. Address and acknowledgment - speaking and hearing - invite response, and in and through this dynamic the possibility of truth, meaning and authentic human existence, which involves, above all else, humane action, graciously opens up to us. According to Hofstadter, by authentic human dwelling - and thinking - Heidegger means

... to exist as a human being in an authentic relationship as mortal to other mortals, to earth and sky, to the divinities present or absent, to things and plants and animals; it means, to let each of these be - to let it presence in openness, in the full appropriateness of its nature - and to hold oneself open to its being, recognizing it and responding to it appropriately in one's own being, the way in which one oneself goes on, lives; and then, perhaps, in this ongoing life one may hear the call of the language that speaks of the being of all these beings and respond to it in a mortal language that speaks of what it hears (Ed. Introduction to Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, x).

Obviously, I find this picture of human being as dweller very attractive; it resonates deeply with the ideas of Buber and Bugbee that I have laid down as the hermeneutical foundation of this essay. To think and dwell, in Heidegger's sense, means to live among "the fourfold" and all that has being in something akin to a spirit of dialogue.

Despite these affinities, however, two related question remain unanswered. First, how do we move from being enframers to becoming
dwellers? Or, in other words, how can we take up with things as things and not resources? In "The Thing": Heidegger writes,

> When and in what way do things appear as things? They do not appear by means of human making. But neither do they appear without the vigilance of mortals. The first step toward such vigilance is the step back from the thinking that merely represents - that is, explains - to the thinking that responds and recalls. The step back from the one thinking to the other is no mere shift of attitude. It can never be any such thing for this reason alone: that all attitudes, including the ways in which they shift, remain committed to precincts of representational thinking. The step back does, indeed, depart from the sphere of mere attitudes. The step back takes up its residence in a co-responding which, appealed to in the world's being by the world's being, answers within itself to that appeal. A mere shift of attitude is powerless to bring about the advent of the thing as thing, just as nothing that stands today as an object in the distanceless can ever be simply switched over into a thing (Poetry, Language, Thought 181-182).

For Heidegger, the fundamental way in which we take up with reality is not exclusively - or even primarily - dependent upon human consciousness or volition. To suppose that reality is so plastic that by a conscious shift of attitude we can alter the nature of our relations with things is merely another variation on the theme of that setting upon characteristic of Enframing - another ordering, re-ordering of the order, another manipulation of the manipulanda. To say, for example, "I will shift the way I think in order to replace Enframing with Dwelling," only mires us deeper within technology and distances us further from any new mode of revealing. For Heidegger, the way we take up with things is informed at the level of Being. And just as we have been challenged out of Being to set upon reality as standing reserve, so, too, the turning by which a new mode of revealing - characterized by dwelling, for example - comes to pass also occurs within Being.
And yet, it also seems clear that in order for the turning to happen, human beings do play a role. In the quote cited above, Heidegger talks about the importance of human "vigilance," which involves a "stepping back" (an image that contrasts strikingly with the setting upon of Enframing) from representational thinking and its coincident ordering, manipulating and controlling. In fact, for Heidegger, vigilance seems to define the proper essence of the human being living under the rule of technology and recognizing the dangers therein. As he explains in "The Turning," "Man is indeed needed and used for the restorative surmounting of the essence of technology. But man is used here in his essence that corresponds to the surmounting. ... Modern man must first and above all find his way back into the full breath of the space proper to his essence" (The Question 39). Several pages later Heidegger describes that essence as "the one who waits, the one who attends upon the coming to presence of Being, ... the shepherd of Being" (42). To recognize our role in the turning within Being to involve vigilant waiting, attending and shepherding (and perhaps, above all, poetical thinking) is no easy task under the rule of technology, where a host of aggressive, purpose-laden activities like setting upon, ordering, manipulating and developing hold sway. So it appears that the proper essence of the person living within the technological framework involves a subtle and patient subversion of the essence of technology - a subversion we practice as we await the "granted gift" of the turning within Being and the replacement of Enframing with a new mode of revealing (Lovitt, Ed. Introduction in Heidegger, The Question, xxxvi).
But as we vigilantly await this gift, what can we say about our relations with nature's creatures? Until the advent of the turning within Being, can these creatures speak to us as something other than natural resources? According to Heidegger, nature may, potentially, be revealed (indeed, has been so revealed at other times in human history) as other than a resource, but still held in the destining of Enframing, we cannot actually know nature as other than a resource. Until Enframing is replaced by a new, more truthful mode of revealing, our commerce with nature remains just that: the commercial interaction between a resource and a developer. Technological Enframing does not completely and exhaustively define all potential relations with nature in the future (so, in this sense, Heidegger is not a determinist), but it does appear to inform and determine all relations occurring under its present, all-encompassing rule. As long as Enframing holds sway, things cannot thing; they cannot articulate themselves independently of our imposed representations and projected purposes.

And it is this seemingly inescapable conclusion of Heidegger's description and interpretation of the modern technological paradigm with which I must take issue. The basis of my disagreement with Heidegger is not theoretical, per se; for the most part, I find his treatment of technology remarkably compelling, insightful and on the mark. And yet, for me, it fails the ultimate phenomenological test - the test that all paradigmatic explanations must pass if they are to be truly illuminating and elucidating: the test of experience. And here, instead of ringing true, it clanks sharply against my own experiences and those witnessed to by others. Despite the pervasive imprint of the pattern of
modern technology upon every facet of our lives, I cannot agree with Heidegger that this pattern exclusively and comprehensively determines our present relational life with our fellow beings - human or otherwise. Experience suggests, and I 'faith' ('believe' sounds too hollow and arbitrary here), that the things and beings with whom we share our existence can and do speak themselves to us, and we, in all our habituated, technologically-conditioned deafness, still retain the capacity, however truncated, to hear their self-speaking address apart form our purposes and intentions; and what's more, we can respond in a manner commensurate with their eloquent evocation. In other words, we can not only experience our fellow creatures as resources - Its - but also, on occasion, meet them as something more, less and other than resources - Thous; dialogue remains a possibility that may be graciously actualized - here and now. For me, any satisfactory account of technology, if it is not to mis-speak or betray the bedrock "reality" of such encounters, must allow for their possibility and attempt to interpret their significance for the way we live our lives.

So now, let's return to Albert Borgmann's treatment of technology, where we find a present and actual counterpart to the technological commerce instantiated under the device paradigm. Clearly, for Borgmann, the pattern of technology dominates; nature speaks to us (is given 'voice') primarily as an assemblage of resources and commodities, and we respond primarily as developers and consumers. But nature can also speak to us as a "focal thing," "a unique and eloquent thing that addresses us in its own right" (Borgmann, Technology 181). In fact, according to Borgmann, "On this continent nature in its pristine state is the focal power which is most clearly eloquent in its own right
since it has, through definition as it were, escaped the rule of technology" (Technology 182). For Borgmann, wild nature can speak to us as something other than a resource; it can speak in its own right, and, presumably, we can receive and acknowledge its self-speaking address. Within Borgmann's understanding of technology, dialogue with nature's creatures remains a possibility that may be realized, not at some unspecified future time, when a rather abstract and mysterious turning within Being ushers in a new mode of revealing, but here and now.

But how can we encounter the beings and things of nature outside the device paradigm? How is it that nature may also speak to us as a focal thing and not merely a collection of resources and commodities? Obviously, we cannot hear the self-speaking voice of nature as long as we take up with nature's creatures exclusively as developers and consumers. For Borgmann, the counterpart of these 'commerical' activities is active engagement and participation in a focal practice commensurate with a focal thing. According to Borgmann, "Such a practice is required to counter technology in its patterned pervasiveness and to guard focal things in their depth and integrity" (Technology 209-210). If such practices are truly to "counter technology" and "guard focal things," they must be practiced in a way that challenges the modus operandi of the technological pattern. For example, walking or backpacking is a focal practice that corresponds to the focal thing of wild nature. But, wilderness walking is not, of necessity, a focal practice that challenges the basic agenda of the device paradigm. I may walk in a wilderness area (for an afternoon or two weeks) fully entrenched within a thoroughly technological framework - setting out in order to
"bag a peak," get some exercise, find some solitude, or even have a wilderness experience, meet God, engage in a focal practice or just have a few I-Thou dialogues with the critters. In all this, the procurative intentionality and instrumentality of technology remain firmly in place; I remain a consumer shopping about the wilderness for commodities, regardless of the sublime or 'spiritual' nature of the goods I seek. And despite - and maybe just because of - the near-comic loftiness of my intentions, encountering nature as a truly focal thing will almost surely escape my 'grasp.' For by definition, focal things, experienced and acknowledged as such, cannot be reduced to commodities; they are unprocurable, and all our efforts to procure them only work to distance us further from their gracious and meaningful presence as focal things. As Borgmann explains,

Such [focal] experiences require openness on our part, but openness cannot produce or guarantee them. They are essentially unforeplanned and amazing. Even when they are preceded by calculation and preparation, when they truly come to pass, we acknowledge them as surpassing our shrewdness and merit. What is so experienced is the strict counterpart to the device. It is in principle unavailable and it is so procured on pain of destroying it as a truly focal thing or event ("The Explanation" 114).

We come into contact with focal things, not simply because we are well-disposed or open to such contact (although this does play a role), and surely not because we set out to make such encounters happen; rather, through participation in a focal practice we place ourselves in the presence of, and engage ourselves (body and mind, heart and soul) with, focal things that are so staggeringly and shatteringly eloquent.
More than anything else, it is this evocative power of eloquent, focal things to break through the silence of our technologically-conditioned deafness that offers us access to reality - and nature - outside the device paradigm. So, to return to my earlier example of wilderness walking, in the process of accomplishing my realizable backcountry goals ("bagging" my peaks, exhausting my body, temporarily escaping the societal demons that haunt me), and even in my counterproductive striving after those other, essentially unprocunable, goods (contact with wildness, intimations of divinity, integrated engagement, participation in dialogue), the eloquence of wild nature may still overwhelm me and bestow upon me a grace and fulfilment above and beyond any I so hopelessly sought. And, perhaps with time and regular enactment, my wilderness walking may become a focal practice truly commensurate with wild nature as a focal thing. As a genuine focal practice, I no longer walk in wild places in order to accomplish anything - although I may still do and/or discover all that I've listed above; focal practices are done for their own sake. So, I walk in wild places to walk in wild places, to immerse myself in the inexhaustible richness and abiding grace of this wild, focal thing - because, as John Muir so beautifully put it, it's "the time that will not be subtracted from the sum of your life" (Quoted in Kittredge 105-106).

What I believe Muir testifies to in this phrase is the life-bestowing, life-affirming and life-directing contact with what is real and what really matters, contact with that which offers meaning for our lives, contact with that which orients and guides us and whose touch we abandon only at the risk of losing our way - contact with, in Borgmann's terminology, "focal reality." For Borgmann,
The term "focal reality" in an essay such as this is simply a placeholder for the encounters each of us has with things that of themselves have engaged mind and body and centered our lives. Commanding presence, continuity with the world, and centering power are signs of focal things. They are not warrants, however. Focal things warrant themselves. To present them is never more than to recall them (Crossing 119-120).

To speak of focal reality and to testify to our participation in, or access to, that reality, is to accept neither the naive and no longer tenable realism of modernity, in which reality readily presents itself as a stable, block universe, a flat field of objects on hand to be experienced, named, understood and manipulated, nor the anthropocentric hubris of so much postmodernism, where whatever we mean by reality has no standing apart from that conferred upon it by human subjectivity and where what the philosopher really means by nature is "nature-construct" and what the theologian (or better still, the faithful devotee) really means by God is "god-construct." Instead, focal reality, as I understand it, seems to point to reality, not as a static field, but as an occurrence or event rising up between a thing as a presence - firm and 'thick' with its own being, its non-negotiable otherness - and a co-presence receptive and responsive to this other, beckoning presence. And it seems that the reality of focal things is not so much 'proven' by our ability to kick them, as Berkeley's empiricism would have it, as it is by these things' self-articulating capacity to step up to us and, at times, stomp on our heads.

Of course, if we shut ourselves off from eloquent things or shout them down with our projections and conceptual representations, we may come to doubt or altogether deny the eloquence of anything and everything. As
Borgmann points out, "When a postmodern theorist makes that claim [that things lack eloquence] in a windowless lecture hall containing hundreds of humans, speaking up on behalf of the voices silenced by the auditorium walls requires more sensitivity and courage than most of us can muster" (Crossing 51). Within the confines of a world thoroughly dominated by human artifice and fabrication, such a postmodern perspective often seems incontrovertibly true. But step outside the lecture halls and haute espresso bars, and walk in Muir's - or Thoreau's - footsteps awhile.8 What had seemed so undeniably correct in that sterile and unengaging world will, I believe, be exposed as arrogantly false by a deeper truth as one picks one's way carefully across a steep and crumbly scree slope, or keeps vigil in an alpine meadow on a fullmoon night, or as one just sits to watch a pika gather hay among the rocks on a sunny October day at 9,000 feet. Focal realism, as I read Borgmann, seems to allow for the eloquence of things like scree slopes, alpine meadows and pikas, while at the same time, it also acknowledges the significance and meaning - the reality - of our encounters with them. And while this reality cannot come to fruition apart from, or outside of, our engaged participation in it, neither can it be reduced to a mere reality-construct, the product of our conjuring and willful imposition. Focal reality occurs between us and those things that we come to know as non-negotiably and irreducibly other than us and our constructs - as focal things that engage us, speak to us and meet us.

In sum, then, Borgmann's treatment of technology, unlike Heidegger's, seems to allow for the present possibility of taking up with nature outside of technology's rule. Although the device paradigm is widely and deeply
instantiated, it is not exhaustive. Nature is not only an assemblage of resources and commodities, the passive recipient of our purposive and consumptive projections; it can also be an eloquent and self-speaking focal thing. In turn, we are not only developers and consumers whose commerce with nature is limited by our procurative and commodious intentions; we also have the capacity, particularly through our active participation in focal practices where we become fully engaged with, or immersed in, the things of nature, to hear and acknowledge nature's voice as it speaks of itself and in its own right. Through the resonance of this eloquent speech within the engaged - 'attuned,' perhaps - respondent, focal reality emerges: a reality where we find ourselves face to face with something real, some "dense and opaque" (Bugbee, Inward Morning 163) other whose non-negotiable otherness confounds all attempts to explain it away as one more product of human intent and/or making; a reality where we recognize and affirm the meaning and value of these others as well as our being-together-with-them; and, finally, a reality where we may find a center of meaning from which we can venture forth to live and act - meaningfully and responsibly.

For me, it is the twofoldness of Borgmann's account of technology that rings true. Obviously, even overwhelmingly, technology informs, and usually dictates, the terms of our relations with nature. But, there is also focal reality and our encounters with nature as a focal thing. Neither mode of taking up with nature can be dismissed in any satisfactory account of technology - or experience, in general. And within this twofoldness, as Borgmann describes, acknowledges and interprets it, I see room for the relational twofoldness of which Buber speaks
- both I-Thou and I-It. Put negatively, I find nothing in Borgmann's account of our life under the pattern of modern technology that excludes the possibility of our meeting nonhuman creatures in dialogue. So, while I fully recognize the indelible mark technology stamps on our relations with nature, I feel confident, despite this recognition, in maintaining that I-Thou dialogues with martens and mountains, canyons and ponderosa pines not only can occur, but, in all actuality, do occur, and that such occurrences are important for the way we live with, and act toward, such creatures.

With the possibility and actuality of dialogue comes the possibility of ethical responsibility. Nature as a resource or a commodity makes no self-speaking claims upon us; under technology's rule, we do all the claiming. Therefore, we cannot talk about our ethical responsibility to nature in any meaningful sense of the word. Of course, we may still speak of environmental ethics and employ the rhetoric of conservation - resource management, sustained yield, wise use, multiple use, etc. But to practice ethical responsibility to nonhuman nature, nature's creatures must speak to us, not as natural resources, but as and of themselves, independent of our categories of use and purpose. Practicing ethical responsibility requires the presence of an eloquent, self-speaking other to whom one responds. Only as the beings and things of nature address us in their own right, and we receive their address, can they call forth the respect and compassion upon which we may ground our ethical response.

IV. ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO NONHUMAN CREATURES: A GENERAL OVERVIEW
So now, having responded to both the challenge of the noematic prejudice and the challenge of technology, and having, I hope, maintained the veracity and integrity of the three premises stated earlier, I would like to return to Buber's philosophy of dialogue and examine what the practice of ethical responsibility toward nonhuman creatures might look like - for him and for me. And while Buber makes it unmistakably clear that I-Thou relations can and do occur between human and nonhuman beings, he and his contemporary interpreters say very little about how the meaning and knowledge received in these encounters are embodied in ethical response. The account of his I-Thou relation with the tree, for example, does not proceed beyond the description of the encounter I quoted earlier; he does not move on to suggest how such a meeting claims us and calls us forth to actualize its meaning responsively - ethically. However, while discussing our relations with nonhuman beings (and, quite specifically, non-sentient beings in this particular instance) in his "Afterword" to I and Thou, Buber writes, "What matters in this sphere [our relations with non-sentient things] is that we should do justice with an open mind to the actuality that opens up before us" (173). While I suppose it is possible to read this passage in a less explicitly ethical way, I believe Buber means for us to "do justice" in our relations with trees and rocks (a fairly radical notion for his day - for our day - no matter how one chooses to read the passage) not only by becoming aware of the self-speaking address of such creatures, but also by practicing responsibility - ethical responsibility - as we move to actualize and incarnate the meaning and knowledge received in these encounters through our actions and/or non-actions.
In addition, given the rhythm of dialogue and responsibility outlined in Buber's work and in this paper, it is inconceivable that trees and the like could address us, and we could enter into dialogue with them, without such events making claims upon us and informing our decisions and actions regarding these creatures. For, as stated in Chapter Two of this paper, the very meaning of the address received in the moment of dialogue lies in its evocative force; it is a summoning address that calls for an answer, beckons for a response. The evocative voice of the other, heard and acknowledged as such, places us in a situation of responsibility, regardless of whether or not the particular other whom we meet is human, sentient or alive. As Emmanuel Levinas explains, "[A]nd the tree, too, instead of being of use to me or dissolving into a series of phenomenal appearances, can confront me in person, speak to me and elicit a response. ... I am in a measure obligated by it" (145). And yet, the summoning address of the tree not only places us under obligation; through the knowledge and meaning received in such an encounter we may also find ourselves empowered and directed to act with decisiveness, commitment and integrity. In receiving the self-spoken address of the tree in the I-Thou relation, we come to know the tree in an intimate and meaningful, although decidedly non-objective way, recognizing its otherness, independence, integrity and non-instrumental value, while at the same time acknowledging the ties of our co-creaturely kinship - our fundamental being-together. Here, the obligation and knowledge - the responsibility and meaning - received in the I-Thou dialogue come together. As we attempt to respond to the exigencies present in the call of our fellow beings, we will, at the same time, seek to embody our dialogically-sponsored knowledge of these beings - as both other and kin - in respectful and caring, compassionate
action. And, conversely, to know these beings in such an intimate way engenders and/or deepens our desire to affirm them in committed, responsible action. In such instances, we find ourselves obligated in a way that has nothing to do with the more compulsory or heteronomous connotations that so often distort our understanding of obligation; we are obliged to respond to the evocative claim of the other and from the depths of our concern and mutual affirmation. For Buber, such affirmation is critical in our relations with nonhuman beings such as trees. As Malcolm Diamond writes, "What is of central significance for Buber is our ability to affirm the tree as existing just as it is, in its own right, independently of our purposes" (30). Clearly, such affirmation, if it is truly genuine, will manifest itself in our decisions and actions concerning these creatures. Examined in this light, then, "doing justice" in our relations with trees - or bears or mountain ranges - becomes, most fundamentally, a matter of 'affirmative action,' so to speak; it is an attempt to "put to the proof in action" (as Buber says) our affirmation of the other - and, at the same time, ourselves - sponsored in the sacrament of dialogue.

As we come to recognize that not only human beings but also trees and wildflowers and mountains speak to us in ways that call forth our response, the fundamentally vocative and responsive character of our existence, writ large, dawns upon us with increasing clarity. That is, we become aware of ourselves as creatures who are called upon and who must venture to answer, not only to the call of the particular, finite beings whom we meet in the countless relational events of our daily lives, but also for the very meaning of our creaturely existence. According to the philosophical/theological anthropology outlined in
the previous chapter, our creatureliness comes to us as a summons or vocation—a
task that we, in our uniqueness, are called upon to fulfill and for which we alone
are responsible. Furthermore, we practice responsibility for this task—to become
ever more fully the creatures we are created to be—in and through our
participation in meaningful, dialogical relations—holy intercourse—with our
fellow creatures in the ongoing process of creation. Therefore, as we step out to
meet our fellow creatures in dialogue and attempt to actualize the meaning and
knowledge received in such encounters through our concrete actions, we come to
recognize our existence as, at root, vocational and, at the same time, move
toward fulfilling the very task for which we have been summoned.

For Buber, this existential vocation is all-encompassing and finds its
fulfillment only insofar as all aspects of our relational life are informed by the
spirit of dialogue, including our relations with creatures like trees and herons
and waterfalls. We cannot practice responsibility for the creaturely task
entrusted to us if we close ourselves off from, and fail to acknowledge, the
address of our nonhuman fellow creatures as they speak to us in their own right.
In his essay entitled "What is Man?" Buber explains,

In virtue of his nature and his situation man has a threefold living
relation. He can bring his nature and situation to full reality in his
life if all his living relations become essential. And he can let
elements of his nature and situation remain in unreality by letting
only single living relations become essential, while considering and
treating the others as unessential.
Man's threefold living relation is, first, his relation to the world and
to things, second, his relation to men—both to individuals and to
the many—third, his relation to the mystery of being—which the
philosopher calls the Absolute and the believer calls God, and
which cannot in fact be eliminated from the situation even by a
man who rejects both designations.
The relation to things is lacking in Kierkegaard, he knows things only as similes. In Heidegger it can be found only as a technical, purposive relation. But a purely technical relation cannot be an essential one, since it is not the whole being and the whole reality of the thing one is related to which enter into the relation, but just its applicability to a definite aim, its technical suitability. ... But besides, and in the midst of this, there is a manifold relation to things in their wholeness, their independence, and their purposelessness. The man who gazes without purpose on a tree is no less "everyday" than the one who looks at a tree to learn which branch would make the best stick (Between 177 & 178).

If we are to become more fully and authentically the human creatures we are created to be, our relations with nonhuman creatures must become, in Buber's words, "essential." Our creaturely task extends to our relations with animals, plants and rocks, as well as human beings, and approaches fulfillment as we take up with these creatures in a spirit of dialogue, ready and available to meet them as Thous who may speak to us of themselves from out of the depths of their otherness, integrity and non-instrumental value. Conversely, we fail to practice responsibility for this task - and deny ourselves that degree of authenticity available to us in our brokenness and finitude - if our relations with nonhuman beings are defined exclusively in terms of It, where we deny or silence the self-speaking eloquence of the beings and things we meet and summarily reduce them to resources that exist solely for our appropriation, development and use. For Buber, to become the creatures we are created to be we must remain open and alive to the voice of all creation (singing out in and through all its particularity) and the possibility - unlimited and, at the same time, always unprocurable and unforeseeable - of I-Thou dialogue, even with trees and mountain streams.
In and through our participation in dialogue with our fellow beings we practice responsibility for our creaturely task and come to know, albeit partially, a sense of authenticity and vocational integrity in our lives. We receive an intimation - oftentimes perhaps no more than a hazy apparition - of who we are and who we are called to become, as well as the finally unbridgeable gap between the two, and this sensibility funds our conscience (in Buber's sense) and informs our decision-making and acting. It is from out of the depths of this personal awareness of who we are (and who we are not) and our sense of creaturely vocation that we respond to the address of our fellow creature as we struggle to incarnate both the meaning of a particular relational event and the meaning of our existential being-called-upon in ethical action. And if, as discussed above, the self-speaking call of our nonhuman fellow creatures, received as such, elicits our respect and compassion, then our awareness of the task entrusted to us to fulfill through our co-creaturely participation in the mutuality of creation may provide us with the personal strength and direction to embody that respect and compassion in non-arbitrary, committed action - ethical action. As we come to recognize ever more clearly who we may be - in all our creatureliness - we may find the capacity and knowledge to act as we must - with regards to our fellow creatures.

Finally, in and through the I-Thou dialogues with our fellow creatures shines the presence of the sponsoring and enduring Creator, who addresses us in and through the multitude of events that make up the ongoing process of creation. As we avail ourselves to the address of the tree and the mountain goat and meet them in I-Thou dialogue, we meet, co-presently, the eternal Thou.
According to Buber, "But what is greater for us than all enigmatic webs at the margins of being is the central actuality of an everyday hour on earth, with a streak of sunshine on a maple twig and an intimation of the eternal You" (I and Thou 135-136). Certainly, neither the maple twig nor mountain goat is the eternal Thou; like us, they are finite creatures - derivative beings sponsored and animated from a source outside themselves. And yet, as we meet these fellow creatures, in all their - and our - creatureliness and finitude, we find our lives graced by the presence of the non-derivative and unconditioned, which Buber calls the eternal Thou. Illuminated by this holy - and wholly Other - glow, our I-Thou relations with trees and goats become nothing less than sacrament and revelation, in and through which the divine presence becomes manifest and, to a degree, even articulate as it dwells among us - between us.

And, as we participate in these sacramental, revelatory encounters, we find ourselves called upon - commanded - to incarnate the grace and meaning received in them through our actions and non-actions. That is, we receive not only the grace and guidance of the divine presence but also the concomitant responsibility of the divine imperative. For Buber, this is the core of the divine-human dialogue: God speaks to us - and summons us - in and through the particular events of our everyday lives, and we respond to this divine address - and claim - through our decisions and actions regarding these same events. Concerning the specifics of this "contentless" divine address and our attempts to respond to it in an ethically decisive manner, we can say nothing apart from the concrete particularity of the situations in which we find ourselves divinely called upon. In each moment, God calls upon us, in wholly new and unforeseeable
ways, to decide and act, in equally new and spontaneous ways. And yet, as stated in the previous chapter, what God demands of us may be nothing other than the Ten Commandments or the divine injunction in Micah, which demands "justice," "love," and that we "walk humbly" with God. But we must remember that these are not prescriptions for ethical conduct that we may apply universally and abstractly to the unique events of decision and choice. Rather, they are commands that we must hear afresh and anew as they are spoken to us - equally afresh and anew - in the concrete, particular and altogether unforeseeable situations of our lives; as Friedman explains, we must "re-hear" these commands again and again, according to the unique exigencies of each situation (Touchstones 137).

With this in mind, then, let us return for a moment to the tree and the mountain goat, considering the fresh and radical ways we may re-hear these traditional imperatives within the context of our I-Thou relations with such creatures. What might "justice," "love," and "humble walking" entail with regard to trees? What if, in our dealings with mountain goats we find ourselves obliged to curb, or refrain altogether from, those actions by which we "steal" from them, "covet" what seems to be rightfully theirs, "bear false witness" against them, and, more plainly perhaps, "do murder" against them? In suggesting that such considerations are relevant for our treatment of trees and mountain goats, however, I am not arguing for yet another version of "moral extensionism," in which traditional norms or rights are stretched and applied to cover our relations with all creatures. That kind of universality and abstraction is antithetical to the practice of ethical responsibility. Rather, I wish to acknowledge the possibility
that in our encounters with such creatures we may re-hear these guidelines, perhaps with a meaning and richness heretofore unconsidered, and find ourselves called upon to act in consonance with them. Furthermore, it seems that only in such instances, in which we are able to re-hear these commands anew (as they are revealed and re-revealed anew), do we discover their relevance and meaning in terms of our uniquely personal ethical responsibility. For, as suggested throughout this paper, responsibility means responding, which can never be separated from the claims which one hears and to which one responds.

Therefore, like our ethical responsibility in general, our capacity for responsible action with regards to nonhuman creatures like trees and buzzards is rooted in our actual participation in the sacrament of dialogue. As we meet our fellow creatures in dialogue we find ourselves addressed not only by a present, finite other - this very larch or that particular stand of aspens - but also by the meaning of our creaturelness and by the ineffable meaning and mystery that permeates and circumscribes our co-derivative, co-creaturely being-together-with creatures like larches and aspens. And, in the reception and acknowledgment of this threefold address, which comes to us as the call of the situation in toto, our lives are graced by a sense of what Bugbee calls finality - that deep and abiding awareness and affirmation of the primal meaning and fundamental reality of our mutual co-existence. Moreover, for Bugbee, finality comes to us as the "spring" of responsible, necessary action (Inward Morning 207). The knowledge and meaning received in the situation of dialogue cry out for incarnation and place us in a position of responsibility, while at the same time empowering us and guiding us to act with integrity and commitment - certainty.
That is, as finality dawns upon us, we may find the strength and direction to act as we must, and, likewise, through the embodiment of necessary action our apperception of finality may come to us anew, renewed and deepened. For, it also seems that in acting as we must, we may gain access to integrity, meaning and that deep-seated capacity for affirmation which is called faith.

This, then, seems to be the rhythm at the heart of the relationship between dialogue and responsibility described generally, and in considerable detail, in the two previous chapters and briefly sketched out here within the narrower scope of our relations with nonhuman creatures. Our I-Thou relations with trees and bears and rivers, no less than our I-Thou relations with human beings, are characterized by the animating and empowering dynamic of claim and responsibility. These creatures, too, address us in ways that demand our response - our ethical response.

V. REFLECTIVE EXPLORATIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

But how, specifically, do we practice ethical responsibility towards trees and bears and rivers? How does this rhythm of dialogue and responsibility manifest itself in our real-life decisions and actions? Well, that all depends - upon the meaning and knowledge received in those situations in which we find ourselves addressed. Although certain readers may want something a bit more tangible and substantive here, perhaps something bearing more resemblance to a comprehensive, widely-applicable theory of environmental ethics, I must insist
on the experiential, non-prescriptive, non-verifiable and non-objective (meta-objective) nature of ethical responsibility. In a certain sense, such an ethic is not 'applicable' to the questions and scenarios of environmental ethics as it is often understood. We cannot practice responsibility toward nonhuman creatures by applying universal norms and maxims to the concrete, particular situations in which we must decide and act with regards to them; responsibility always means responding from the depths of who we are and to that which addresses us - here and now.

However, just because ethical responsibility is non-applicable, that does not mean that it is irrelevant or somehow limiting. In fact, I would suggest that it liberates our ethical discourse and frees us to speak plainly about those things that matter to us most. No longer are we bound to formulate universal principles, such as, say, "Equal rights for all species," which, despite the residual afterglow of truth toward which it points, strikes us as somehow disingenuous, trivializes and reduces the richness and diversity of our co-creaturely being-together, and makes a farce of our actual practices. And yet, bound within a universalist framework, to say less betrays our experience of certain things - especially non-sentient and non-living things - as deeply and irreducibly meaningful, non-instrumentally valuable, and eminently respectworthy, while, at the same time, potentially justifies all manner of morally reprehensible and irresponsible actions. Here, it seems that our insistence on universally prescriptive norms has trapped us in an untenable and unsatisfying either/or situation. What is called for here, however, is neither a pointless default to relativism and subjectivism nor frustrated and resigned silence; what is called
for, perhaps, is a different way of speaking. We need to reflect honestly and articulate faithfully concerning those things which have spoken to us most forcefully and eloquently, and which have called upon us to act with respect and concern. Our ethical discourse needs to take on a more reflective, descriptive and testimonial voice, rather than the prescriptive, normative, universalist one that seems to mis-speak or distort the fundamental sources that ground and sponsor our actions. Within the framework of ethical responsibility, we are freed from these corrupting limitations and free to tell our ethical narratives - to bear witness to the eloquence of things that have spoken to us of themselves and in their own right. And through the telling, insofar as we speak honestly and from the heart, we reveal the empowering experiential roots of our decisions and actions and, in a sense, validate them, while, at the same time, call others to a shared receptivity regarding like things and invite them to tell their own stories of concern and commitment.

So, for a moment, let's consider Buber's tree in the discourse of ethical responsibility. Would the ethical response to such an I-Thou encounter involve chopping the tree down to make a parking lot or to clear a 'view'? Not likely. But suppose the tree became infected with a terminal disease and posed a serious threat to the life and health of all the trees around it. Now our decision is not so easy; we may have to consider the option of chopping down the tree. What have we learned from this scenario? Very little, really - except that our I-Thou encounter does not exclude the possibility of chopping down the tree; our ethical responsibility cannot take place in a vacuum of exclusive concern.
And yet, even in such a brief and superficial account, we learn how quickly the discourse of ethical responsibility can degenerate into precisely the kind of hypothetical arm-waving and conjecture we are trying to avoid. For really, Buber gives us absolutely no context for his encounter, and when we attempt to 'fill in the blanks' with hypothetical scenarios and circumstances, the event and its consequent meaning lose all sense of reality. Buber's encounter with the tree was embedded in a rich contextual matrix; we have only the isolated event to interpret. But it is precisely this isolation that makes the event uninterpretable - in Albert Borgmann's words, "ambiguous." According to Borgmann, "Every term is ambiguous in isolation, but normally ambiguity is resolved in context" (Technology 54). Removed from its meaningful contextual milieu, this tree, which may have been so eloquent for Buber, says nothing - or at least nothing meaningful or intelligible - to us; we receive nothing of the strength or presence upon which we may ground an ethical response. Like the particular encounters that ground and sponsor them, our ethically responsible decisions and actions are always deeply situational, contextual affairs. It seems fair to say that the rhythm of dialogue and responsibility at work here can only be employed within the concurrent and encompassing song of "immersion and commitment," which Bugbee discusses in Inward Morning (and which, incidentally, he introduces by way of two narratives) (42-54). The gracious manifestation of dialogical encounters with our fellow creatures not only requires our engaged participation in the ongoing process of creation; it is precisely our immersion in this flow that allows us to hear the self-speaking address of things and to respond wholeheartedly within a larger framework of meaning.
So, what about the ethical import of my encounter with the pine marten? Here, this event comes to me fully embedded within a rich and, to some degree, interpretable context; ambiguity, while not entirely lacking, is surely lessened. I encountered the marten in late afternoon, on a summer day, in western Montana, on the Flathead National Forest, the Mission Mountain Wilderness, Piper Creek drainage, etc. And, concurrent with this superficial account of the temporal and geographical context, I can also draw upon the recollection of the state of my spirit that day, my happy tiredness, thirstiness, and carelessness, the memory of a companion and our happy banter, the loose-armed, gravity-driven bounce of my walk as we ambled along the gradually descending trail, and the angles of afternoon light and shadow, the warmth of splintered, diffused sunshine; all this, along with a million other stimuli - some remembered, others forgotten or never consciously acknowledged - surely inform this relational event and my response(s) at some level. Although far from exhaustive, I can place the event within this context of meaning and, likewise, place my attempt to articulate a response.

And, as is often the case in such instances, my initial response was to do nothing, really, beyond lingering for a moment to bathe in the halo of joy and grace circumscribing the event. And yet, clearly, the story doesn't end here; I carry something of that light - the strength and power of reciprocity, immediacy and presence - with me, and this illuminates and informs my subsequent decisions and actions. Of course, that particular marten is most likely dead, and, if it were alive, it seems unlikely that I will ever see it again and even more
unlikely - quite impossible, really - that, were I to see it again, I'd recognize it as that same marten I encountered so many years ago. In this instance, then, it seems that the force of address received in that particular meeting extends outward in concentric circles of inclusiveness.

On the wall of a certain roadhouse/lodge in central Idaho hangs a fairly recent photograph of a trapper proudly displaying the several hundred dead martens that he caught that season - in, I would assume, steel leghold traps. On the few occasions I visit that place each year, I find the picture unsettling and disturbing. No, I would not trap martens; I would not buy their fur or that of other "fur-bearing mammals" (a term that, in itself, betrays an exclusively instrumentalist orientation with regards to such creatures - now reduced to, and defined as, a fur resource, an It). Yes, I would support a ban on using leghold traps to capture and eventually kill such animals. And finally, and most importantly, I would place the highest priority on the preservation of relatively undisturbed marten habitat, so that a healthy and thriving breeding population of martens could evolve independently of heavy-handed human manipulation and interference.

Having stated these few, and relatively tame, positions, I will most likely face a whole battery of charges to which I must respond. And that's as it should be; in attempting to articulate a response to these charges I am forced to return to the source(s) that engendered and/or informed the positions in question, while, at the same time, I am confronted with their possible repercussions and open myself to other, perhaps competing claims, to which I may also be, to a certain
degree, responsible. In my defense of martens, for example, I may find myself being accused of denying someone their livelihood, of being a sentimentalist, and of being altogether too parochial in my vision.

What about those people whose livelihoods may be threatened by advocating and implementing measures born out of such positions - most obviously, the trapper, but also the logger, heavy equipment operator, mining industry executive, corporate lawyer, and others whose access to income or profits from potential timber and mineral resources may be denied in certain forested areas by efforts to preserve sufficient marten habitat? On what ethical grounds might we attempt to adjudicate between these competing claims? What about the Buddhist notion of Samma-ajiva, or Right Livelihood? Not an ethical prescription, Right Livelihood is a basic tenet of the Noble Eightfold Path (one of three precepts dealing specifically with ethical conduct, sila), the practice of which may lead us to a fully and properly human life. According to Walpola Rahula, "Right Livelihood means that one should abstain from making one's living through a profession that brings harm to others" (47). Surely, such a straightforward, common sense notion has relevance for those of us outside the Buddhist religious tradition. It suggests that how we earn our income or means of subsistence is subject to evaluation under superceding claims, such as those concerning the life and well-being of others; our livelihoods cannot be justified morally if they involve the unwarranted endangering, injuring or killing of others. And so, weighed against my knowledge of martens, my experiential and reflective recognition of their non-instrumental value and respectworthiness, I am not swayed by the trappers' claims to their "right" to kill martens so that they
can get money for their fur, make a living or maintain a certain lifestyle. Like employment in the nuclear weapons industry, perhaps fur trapping is another profession that can no longer morally justify its continued existence in our society. As for the logger, road builder, exploration geologist or lawyer, the situation seems different. These livelihoods, in and of themselves, are not necessarily objectionable and may even be necessary within the present framework of our society. But the particular "how" and "where" and "what for" questions that attend each new plan to log trees or search for minerals must always be approached in a way that gives the non-instrumental values of a potential logging or mining site - and the creatures that call that site their home - are given their due. It seems altogether possible that while felling trees may be a morally justifiable and "right" livelihood in one situation, it may border on criminal in the next. Here, the onus of juggling competing claims - and their consequent responsibilities - and minimizing the deleterious effects of their actions must rest with those who wish to alter the landscape for their specific purposes. That is, the burden of proof ought to rest with the developer, not the conserver/preserver - and while this may have been how environmental regulatory processes were supposed to work, the situation, in practice, now seems to be reversed.

And what about the charges of sentimentalism and parochialism? "You only care about fuzzy little critters with inquisitive eyes and endearing faces. What about the majesty and beauty of that elk, now dead, whose giant hide hangs on the wall adjacent to your picture of the several hundred marten pelts, and which, if you were honest with yourself, you'd have to admit doesn't really
bother you at all? And what about your leather boots? Elk and cattle are also beings with whom one can enter I-Thou relations (concerning elk, you even testified to the reality of such an encounter in your Introduction). Where's your responsibility regarding them?" Although at times it's tempting to follow the lead of those espousing a strictly communitarian or organismic approach to environmental philosophy and quickly dismiss such nagging questions as petty and narrow-minded (unimportant from the ecological or even planetary perspective), I believe that such charges are valid and merit both serious reflection and thoughtful response. It's just too easy to gobble up elk burgers or beef kabobs and hold forth on the supreme good of habitat, while ignoring and/or denying the value of individual creatures or failing to consider what might make a notion as essentially abstract as habitat something to value in the first place. And yet, in responding to these questions, I must avoid being drawn in by the implicit universalism of such charges. Ethical responsibility, as presented in this paper, is always grounded upon and sponsored in the experiential reality of our dialogues with particular things, not in our abstract and universal notions of the "potential thouness" or "equality" of all things. Such a universalist egalitarianism not only betrays experience, it also paralyzes any possible response. This is not to say that such generalizations aren't useful checks against exclusivism and prejudice. In fact, the guiding sensibility behind such generalizations, and the mental processes of perceiving and acknowledging identity and difference that foster them, play an important role in our ethical reflection and meditation. But an abstract awareness of the potential thouness of like things, while useful (like the Ten Commandments or a Kantian maxim or a Buddhist precept concerning ethical conduct), is a weak substitute for our actual
knowledge of the other as Thou, a knowledge from which the preceding
generalization is derived and from which it obtains its usefulness and efficacy.

But what about the elk hide? and hunting? and eating "game" (again, the
purposive, instrumentalist nomenclature betrays the dominance of I-It
experience in our relations with nonhuman creatures)? I cannot imagine anyone
arguing against the overwhelming eloquence of an elk encountered in the wild.
As I reflect upon my own experience, even the haunting sound of their bugling
conveys a presence so arresting and immediate that it may initiate dialogical
'contact' with a creature one cannot even see.13 None of my visual encounters
with elk have been so intensely engaging and awe-inspiring as that autumn
morning in the Pintlers, as I walked in a high bowl just below the Continental
Divide accompanied by the seemingly sourceless, intermittent echoing of these
bugling ghosts - the very song, it seemed, of the mountains themselves. And yet,
that hide in the Idaho bar doesn't bother me, and, while I've never killed an elk,
I've eaten of their bodies on several occasions. Surely, this is hypocritical and,
what's worse in an ethical tradition so insistent on universal applicability,
inconsistent. Perhaps. But I also believe there is a real difference between fur
trapping and elk hunting, and so I cannot advocate a ban on the latter. Given
their numbers and limited habitat, as well as the eradication of top level
predators throughout much of their range, hunting elk for food seems justifiable.
The real ethical question here lies in preserving and maintaining enough critical
elk habitat - and also elk predator habitat - to allow a region's elk population to
thrive - to live, reproduce and die in their 'elk-ly' way. Or, maybe I'm just trying
to justify my callousness and, at root, unjustifiable behavior?
And what about domestic cattle? Obviously, humans can and do enter I-Thou relations with cows. Stories abound of ranch and farm children devastated by the loss of a favorite cow - or pig or sheep - after the fair is over or the stock truck rolls away to the auction or stockyards. To deny the significance of such events, and the loving relationships that spawned them and give them their tragic force, as 'childish' sentimentality not only denies the value of children's experience but implicitly denies the reality of experience in general. What's more, such a denial is nothing other than a subjectivist - albeit in the name of "objectivity" - projection of the kind so often associated with sentimental and romantic excess, only now in reverse, so to speak. "It's only a cow. She's got to learn sometime," says the coolly detached, "realistic" parent. But what is this parental "realism" except an interpretive projection of a purpose-specific vision (in which, perhaps, cow=beef=§) that would dismiss and displace the reality and meaning of the intimate encounter between the child and a cow? Or, to interpret this situation in phenomenological terms, we might follow Kohak and say that,

Until we consciously "remind" ourselves that what we are dealing with is "only an object," we frequently do experience and treat the things of this world as fellow beings, as thou's ... It is questionable whether it [phenomenology] can ever legitimately resort to a hermeneutic analysis which applies an external criterion of reality to experience - in this case, the doctrine of transparent consciousness - and claims that while things may "appear" as thou they really are objects of manipulation or speculation. If the word "really" does not mean "in actual experience as it in fact presents itself to consciousness," it loses all univocity. ... Only on the level of immediate experience, prior to the introduction of any special purpose and perspective, can the term "real" be used univocally: immediate experience is what it is. On any other level, primacy or "reality" of this or that aspect becomes contingent on the purpose, on the needs of the activity from which we derive our criterion ("I, Thou, and It" 51).
If anyone can claim access to "reality" in my example, it is the child, and not the parent; the child meets the cow in all its unmediated, integrated actuality, independent of categories of use and purpose. The cow is, really and actually, Thou for the child, and the reality and meaning of this encounter cannot be explained away by invoking some transcendent or objective - really real - reality independent of that encounter.

And yet, examined honestly, it seems that in my experience not all things are equally eloquent; cows simply do not speak to me with the same evocative power as martens or elk. Undoubtedly, this has something to do with my deafness regarding cows (how does one regain a child's receptivity and freshness of vision?), but it also seems that their domestication and reduction to resources defined in terms of their function as milk or beef producers has muted some of their eloquence. However, even my impoverished relational life with cows does not lead me to exclude them from ethical consideration. Here, I must pause to reflect and tread lightly in the silence of dialogue's absence. For clearly, cows suffer and feel pain. I cannot dismiss the all-too-obvious manifestations of their sentiency. As such, it is difficult for me to eat cows, and I find their treatment under the machinations of the cattle industry, for the most part, appalling. And while the stock pens and processing practices of this industry strike me as unnecessarily cruel, I also find the wanton and careless destruction of Western rangelands and riparian zones by grazing cattle no less unconscionable. How can we continue to 'permit' our public rangelands to be trampled under hoof - and at ridiculously and artificially low prices, no less? And what about the
untenable waste, in terms of biomass and energy production, of some people eating cows while others starve from want of basic grains, or the insensitivity and injustice of the social and political milieu that prevents such foodstuffs from being distributed equitably and among those who most desperately need them? Can we really still justify eating beef - or tacitly complying with politics as usual?

All of which is a long way from my encounter with a pine marten in the Mission Mountains one late summer afternoon. And, lest my readers think I've lost all sense of organization and coherent, sustained development over the past couple pages, I must confide that the tangential route of this journey and my cursory treatment of complex issues is, to a large degree, intentional. I had intended to sketch out an ethical exploration - an unchartered venture into unknown territory - and find out where these reflections would take me. Hopefully, I have also illustrated that ethical responsibility is a messy, open-ended and far-flung business, one usually fraught with ambiguity and, sometimes, even apparent contradiction. This seems excruciatingly so in the case of an environmental ethic of responsibility, where the field of ethical consideration is all-encompassing and where we are not allowed the reductionist luxury of drawing a priori boundaries on the limits of our ethical concern. As we bracket the noematic prejudice, our ethical responsibility becomes potentially universal, while, at the same time, it remains inextricably embedded and rooted in the actual, concrete particularities of our existence. Ready to respond to all things, we must nonetheless decide and act in response to particular things, events and occasions.
And so, I set out on the preceding ethical exploration from the experiential reality of my actual encounter with a pine marten. However, the choice of this starting point, while certainly very specific and personal, is not arbitrary. Ethically responsible reflection and action need to be grounded upon those decisive meetings in which we may come to know a particular being, such as a marten - and, concurrently, ourselves, and the trees and mountains and creeks and birds and bugs around us and co-existent with us - as meaningful, apart from any instrumentalist and purpose-laden reductionism. Graced by such experientially funded meaning - finality - we find the capacity for that deep affirmation - faith - that engenders respect, compassion and integrity in our thoughts and actions. Inspirited and empowered by my sacramental encounter with the marten - and with that measure of knowledge, meaning and faith sponsored and/or renewed therein - I set out to reflect upon what it may mean to act responsibly with regard to my fellow beings - not only with regard to that marten or martens in general, but also with regard to creeks, cows and human beings just to name a few. And as the implications of this single event radiate outward in concentric circles, intersected, at the same time, by a host of mutually informing waves from other events (so that the mental image here is not so much of a single rock tossed into a pond but rather, perhaps, the ploppings of big, summer raindrops on what had been only a moment ago a still and motionless pool), and as these waves wash upon the shores of divergent, but related, issues (habitat preservation, hunting and dietary issues, grazing practices, the politics of injustice and starvation), I struggle to respond to the manifold, and perhaps competing, claims that confront me in a spirit born of dialogue. If this seems a messy and ambiguous way to do ethics, open to abuse and dishonesty from
every side, so be it. Ethics, understood in terms of responsibility, demands that
sincerity, honesty and humility inform our ethical reflections as well as our
ethical actions. Admittedly, this is a serious and challenging demand. But to
demand less of either our thoughts or our actions strikes me as escapist, a failure
of moral courage, and a concession to our impulse to shrink from sustained
reflection upon, and committed response to, the often overwhelming
complexities and contradictions of our existence. Ethics cannot be modeled on a
computer; we cannot simply buy the ethical software package, learn the system,
plug in a few variables, and then receive a comprehensive program that tells us
what to do under a given set of circumstances. Obviously, ethical responsibility
is a great deal more messy and ambiguous than such a computer-age fantasy.
And while it requires courage in the face of inescapable uncertainty, it also seems
to offer the possibility that through our acknowledgment of, and reflection upon,
the meaning of experience we may find the capacity and direction to act with
commitment and, ironically, certainty; we may be empowered to act as we must.
In other words, I believe that an ethic of responsibility is relevant to a sincere
examination of how we, in fact, decide and act concerning those things that
matter most to us.

And yet, there is something about my previous example that I don't like. Perhaps it's the far flung nature of my associations, or the gross superficiality
with which I take up with serious and complex matters, or maybe it's the
lingering presence of the hypothetical that taints the questions I've raised -
whatever it is, something disturbs me. In traveling so far and wide - in
attempting to illustrate the interconnectedness of our ethical concerns and point
to a few of the issues that warrant our careful moral consideration - I've lost touch with many of the actual events that, along with the encounter with the marten, co-sponsor my thoughts and actions in regard to these matters. To return to the previous paragraph's image, I've focused on a single 'raindrop' while briefly noting one or two more and completely neglecting the rest; and, in doing so, my illustration strikes me not so much as inaccurate, but rather lopsided, distorted. The pool seems so large, and the deluge so steady, that I can't even begin to do it justice here.

So, let's test the waters of a smaller and, hopefully, more focused pool for our reflections. What might this environmental ethic of responsibility look like with regards to Lolo Peak, the Missoula Valley's most unambiguously eloquent mountain? What might it mean to practice responsibility to this particular mountain? Would I propose or support the development of a destination downhill ski resort on its slopes? No. Would I actively oppose such plans? Yes. On what grounds? To make an informed decision on such an issue, we are told, environmental assessments must be performed, environmental impact statements prepared and feasibility studies undertaken. Then, if it is decided that such development will not degrade water and soil quality below acceptable standards, and that the wildlife and fisheries resources of the area will not be negatively impacted, and that all the potential social and environmental threats can be mitigated, and that there is enough snow (or if there isn't, we'll make more with our machines), and that people will come, and it will make money and create jobs, who are we to oppose such well planned, economically salvific and eco-friendly development? And why? Because the mountain has spoken to us
and told us "NO!"? Might this not be, at root, our most honest and fundamentally truthful response? EAs, EISs and feasibility studies are all fine and good; this kind of scientific data is useful, important and never to be ignored. But what if all our stated scientific and legal concerns are found unwarranted and all our scientific and legal appeals exhausted? Do we then, in the face of good science, hard facts and incontrovertible evidence, give our full support and stamp of approval to the development of "Ski Lolo" or some such desecration? Of course not - because the halls of science and the courts of law have only addressed the derivative reasons (our most efficacious strategies, were we honestly to admit it) for our opposition; they have not - and cannot - address that opposition's fundamental origins. For our position, finally, is an ethical one, and ethical responsibility, as presented in this paper, is funded by a meta-objective knowledge that dawns on us through our immediate and engaging encounters with things as self-speaking presences. Don't we oppose the idea of a ski hill on Lolo Peak because it seems a terribly inappropriate, disrespectful response to the eloquent and enduring presence of that mountain in whose shadow the residents of this valley live out their lives - that beautiful, though deceptive, dual summit that measures the seasons, orients our lives, and speaks to us of a realm beyond and other than (and yet increasingly at the mercy of) the human fabrication and artifice of our city and our city ways; in sum, that ultimate temporal and spatial reference point for our locale? In the course of living with and under this peak, a relationship evolves. And it is the meaning and knowledge sponsored in this relationship - to be sure, a composite of countless I-It and I- Thou relations - that anchor and ground our opposition to such development schemes. In all its seasons and moods the mountain has, at
times, spoken to us immediately and compellingly, and we, in all our seasons of
the spirit and shifting moods, have received this address, heard in the fullness of
its grace and meaning. These occasions of dialogical intercourse with this
eloquent mountain elicit our respect and obligate us to act respectfully toward it.

And yet, I cannot move from such experientially grounded respect and
say, by way of general prescription, that everyone else ought to respect the
mountain in the same way. Aside from any theoretical objections to such
prescriptions, what good would it do? Here, my insistence on the non-
prescriptive nature of ethical responsibility, which, up until now, may have
seemed derived and clung to as the necessary conceptual conclusion of a cogent
theoretical argument, takes on matter-of-fact, experiential force. My respect for
Lolo Peak does not grow out of my conscious and willful obedience to some
prescriptive mandate, and it seems impossible that anything approaching
genuine respect could. Upon my arrival in Missoula I was not told by the
Chamber of Commerce or the City Council, or even the faculty of the
Environmental Studies Department, that I ought to respect Lolo Peak; my respect
was born out of daily interaction and, occasionally, incandescent moments of
holy intercourse, in and through which I came to know Lolo Peak as deeply and
eminently respectworthy. And while I cannot prescribe such knowledge, I can
testify to it - attempt to articulate and share the ways this mountain's presence
has graced and informed my life - and invite others to examine their own life
with the mountain and offer their own testimony to its eloquence - or silence, as
the case may be.
Does this mean that I am universally, unilaterally opposed to all downhill ski resorts? Not at all. So, perhaps I've simply fallen prey to the 'NIMBY' (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome? Perhaps. And yet, our truest and most compelling testimonials and enduring commitments will bear witness to the beauty and meaning of those things we know most intimately and importantly. Like the non-prescriptive quality of ethical responsibility, its non-universal character arises not so much from theoretical conclusions as from the demands of everyday existence. Yes, Lolo Peak is particularly meaningful to me. I have looked up to it, from below, in full winter's moonlight, in dawn's first sun, noon's full glare, and evening's shadowing and silhouetting, in joy and misery and paralyzing confusion; with a glance toward its cool summit, I have sought a summertime refuge in the midst of yet another day of stiflingly alienating and dehumanizing work; I've checked it daily to gauge weather, snowfall, air quality; upon returning from an extended absence, I've anticipated its appearance with an insatiable thirst, craning my neck to find its massive presence and begin the process of reorientation. And I've stood atop both summits, looking back toward my suddenly small and insignificant - although, now, somehow 'placed' - town and beyond into the unbroken beauty of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness as well as the indiscriminant clearcuts on the Lolo and Clearwater National Forests. Yes, Lolo Peak is particularly meaningful to me, but this does not necessarily mean that my efforts to protect it against the development of a ski resort are myopic or somehow selfish. I have come to know it, respect it, even care about it - not abstractly, but actually, deeply; as such, this experientially grounded knowledge, respect and concern will foster the strongest commitments and most enduring vigilance.
However, this inescapable particularity does not mean that my respect and concern, commitment and vigilance are exclusive. My relationship with Lolo Peak leads me to question the need for additional ski resorts anywhere. Do we need to carve up any more mountainsides with our recreational clearcuts, turn any more mountains into winter recreation resources? Maybe we have enough already - in this particular region of the country we certainly seem to.

Intimacy with, and respect for, particular things also sponsors reflection on the possible eloquence of like things. And while such reflection can never substitute for that sponsoring intimacy, I would be the last one to suggest that abstract, associative and analogical thinking should be dismissed from the ethical decision-making process; rather, what we need to remember is that, as abstractions from, associations with and analogies to, they are necessarily derivative, secondary. Experiential engagement must be the primary, animating source of ethical reflection. So, while I'm not ready to outlaw new ski resorts universally, I would be extremely doubtful and hesitant regarding any such proposals. Again, it seems the burden of proof in such cases must rest squarely upon the prospective developer to find a suitable place (perhaps like Silver Mountain outside Kellogg, Idaho) where such development would not only be socially and environmentally benign, but also where it would not silence or compromise the still self-speaking eloquence and integrity of a mountain.

Are these scattered remarks, and those concerning the marten that proceeded them, my idea of an ethical argument? Not really, but then it seems to me that ethical arguments may be part of the problem and our attempts to
construct them the cause of so much counterproductive frustration. Perhaps it's
time to start telling each other our ethical stories, and it is this which I have tried
to do over the last few pages. Of course, our stories, no matter how insightfully
and skillfully told, will never be comprehensive, encyclopaedic or all-inclusive.
Fortunately, such criteria are irrelevant within an ethic of responsibility. Rather
than air-tight arguments, our stories will hopefully offer compelling testimonies,
resonant invocations and open invitations. In their telling, we testify to the
meaning of those things that matter to us most, to their self-speaking eloquence
and the experiential ground of our respect and concern for them. And, in
testifying to their value, we may call forth, stir up and awaken in our audience
shared feelings and concerns, perhaps inspiring within them a renewed
commitment to resolute action. Finally, as we venture to tell our stories, we
invite others to respond, perhaps by enriching the stories we tell, or by telling
their own unique stories, or by showing us our prejudices for what they are, or
by objecting to the ways we seek to embody the meaning of our experience in
action. Because our stories are partial, particular and personal, they invite
enrichment, ammendment and challenge. "But what about...?", that seems to be the
question our stories invite and to which we must respond honestly and
without defensiveness. So, tell me about your horror at my eating elk meat;
perhaps you can clarify and help resolve my own ambivalence here. Suggest
alternative materials for my "manly footwear" (Merle Haggard). State your case
for supporting a ski resort at Lolo Peak or harvesting a particular stand of timber;
I will try to remain open and receptive to what you have to say. But if we want
to make an ethical decision, let's keep our ethical concerns in plain view without
sounding self-righteous, parroting party lines and rhetoric, or getting bogged
down in our efficacious stratagems and derivative justifications. To be sure, this will be a terribly messy, pluralistic affair; but business as usual seems just as messy and usually leaves us feeling misunderstood, frustrated and somehow disengenuous. We can make informed, scientifically sound decisions, but let's keep the fundamental, experiential ground of our actions in the forefront of our discussions.

For in reality, it seems that the sponsoring sources of our concern are rarely mentioned. And, within the "environmental movement" this silence seems especially apparent and, I believe, debilitating. Most environmentalists, I think, believe they carry the banner of the morally good, true and right; their position, and not that of the greedy industry or the corrupted agency, is the ethical one. At the same time, however, many environmentalists seem discouraged with, or have given up on, abstract environmental philosophizing that does not speak to their experience or, in one way or another, reduces or betrays that experience. And yet, should they try to speak of that experience (even among those sympathetic to their concerns) and articulate its imperative power in a narrative, personal manner, they find that their testimonials fall on deaf ears in a society that finds stories and "nature writing," although entertaining, merely subjective and untranslatably relative, lacking in any illuminating, empowering or compelling force. So, many environmentalists, to champion their causes, turn to the 'story' that our society finds most persuasive and compulsory: science. When asked why they do what they do, most environmental activists will reply, "To preserve habitat and endangered species," "To maintain biological diversity, ecosystem integrity or a viable gene pool," "To
protect the quality of a watershed or aquifer," etc. But these are scientific justifications and explanations, and by themselves they carry no animating or orienting power. Why are we concerned about habitat, endangered species, ecosystems, gene pools and such in the first place? What has focused our attention on these things and fostered our active commitments to preserve, protect and safeguard them? Surely not science; science, for all its explanatory power, cannot explain the events that sponsor our concern, attention and commitment.18 Surely not abstract ethical theories, no matter how biocentric or egalitarian, which we find neither satisfying, practicable nor 'true.' And surely not the rather bankrupt (although, I believe, well-intended) bumper sticker alternatives of Deep Ecology, Gaia spirituality and the like.

What grounds our concern, calls forth our respect and fosters our deepest commitments? I believe our relations - our dialogues - with concrete, particular beings and things do - creatures like grizzly bears and mountain ranges, orchids, tide pools, prickly pears and great horned owls. Abstractly considered, these creatures do not necessarily warrant our respect and compassion; if we maintain enough objective distance, even a grizzly bear can still be perceived as nothing other than an object, an It. But as we come into the presence of such creatures, we may hear their self-speaking, evocative address and come to meet and know (and recollect) them as Thous, eminently respectworthy and non-instrumentally valuable beings. Through participation in the sacrament of dialogue we become aware of our fundamental being-together-with our fellow creatures - despite their non-negotiable, multiform otherness - and find the capacity to affirm -
actively and respectfully - not only them and ourselves but also the holy, tragic flux of the creation in which we find ourselves placed - together.

Meaning and knowledge, grace and affirmation - these blessings (at once animating and obligating and empowering) come to us, if at all, through engaged participation in the particular events of the unique existence that has been lent us. And so, if we are to speak of these things, and the decisions and actions they engender, we must speak out of our particularity and uniqueness, of who we are and who we may yet become. That is, we need to tell our stories. How else can we point to the bedrock meaning and reality things may come to hold in our being-together-with them? How else could we attempt to speak of the sponsoring sources of the respect and compassion they call forth within us?
EXPLANATORY NOTES

1 - At the same time, I must remind my readers of the anthropological nature and limits of this account of dialogue. As for whether or not dialogue may occur between two non-conscious beings (two rocks, say), I cannot venture to say. Buber and Bugbee offer a description and interpretation of human relationality, and even where ontological questions are raised, the ontology offered is always a regional one, in which we speak about being from the perspective of being human.

2 - Furthermore, this readiness and capacity is, as discussed in Chapter One, inextricably bound up with the issue of faith, that fundamental, non-verifiable, perhaps even non-referential, affirmation of our co-creaturously existence and, correlatively, our co-existents. To requote Bugbee's beautiful statement on the relation between faith and dialogue, "If we have looked upon the mountains time and again, and they have called upon us, and we have responded, let us remember that we have looked upon them with the eye of faith" (Inward Morning 116). For me, it is the issue of faith that seems to mark the crucial difference between Buber's meeting with the tree and another philosophically famous human-tree relation: Roquentin's mental wrestling-match with the chestnut tree in Sartre's Nausea (126-135). At first, I returned to Sartre's account of this meeting because I thought it would be an exemplary counterpoint to Buber's I-Thou encounter with the tree - the perfect model of the I-It relation. However, as I re-read the passage several times, I was struck by how many characteristics the two human-tree relations have in common; both are exclusive, intensely engaging, immediate and fully present. For me, the telling difference between the two relations seems to lie in what is absent in Sartre's account: any recognition of reciprocity and any sign of faith. What Roquentin takes away from his meeting with the chestnut tree is the final conclusion that the tree, himself, indeed all existent things are "in the way," "absurd," "contingent" and "superfluous." It is this conclusion, which, at the same time, is also an underlying predisposition, an as-yet undefined premise, that is so antithetical to the spirit of both Buber and Bugbee. Again, Bugbee's words seem especially relevant here when he says,

And the story seems something like this: as we take things, so we have them; and if we take them in faith, we have them in earnest; if wishfully--then fantastically; if wilfully, then stubbornly; if merely objectively, with the trimmings of subjectivity--then emptily; and if in faith, though it be in suffering, yet we have them in earnest, and it is really them that we have. That is, the order of occurrent
meaning in which we are placed with them is one in which we may find our place with them, and in so doing place ourselves ("Sublime" 7).

According to Bugbee, rather than being "in the way," our lives hold the gracious possibility of meaningful participation with our fellow beings in, to use another phrase of Bugbee's, "the sacrament of co-existence." This is the voice of faith that is utterly lacking in Sartre's description and interpretation of his protagonist's 'revelatory' run-in with the chestnut tree.

3 - A response driven, so this line of thinking runs, by a particular mood or emotional condition that we can quickly and easily overcome by falling back on our objectivizing categories and interpretive grids. For example, regarding my so-called dialogical encounter with the pine marten, I may safely, passively - and with complete accuracy and correctness - report that a siting has occurred of a "semiarboreal slender-bodied mammal of the genus Martes" in the Mission Mountain Wilderness (on the Flathead National Forest). What we are then left with is but a dessicated, although perhaps useful, bit of information, with the richness and depth of the encounter going unrecognized and unheeded.

4 - Like Buber, I am convinced that the manifestation of such encounters in our lives is always a matter of "will and grace." And yet, the 'proportion' of will and grace seems to vary from meeting to meeting. Especially evocative presences can at times overwhelm us even in the most unlikely places and when we are at our most unresponsive. On clear days in Seattle, for instance, I've heard even the most prosaic souls begin waxing poetic at the sight of Mt. Rainier's hulking mass in the seemingly-not-so-distant distance. Conversely, in meeting certain people and reading certain books, I have come across individuals and authors who exude a sense of readiness - a predisposition - to step out and engage the world in dialogue, finding beauty, holiness and joy in the most seemingly unengaging events and circumstances. Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, by James Agee and Walker Evans, stands out as a text that bears witness to both men's intense desire and astounding capacity to meet the world - and, more specifically, the world of tenant farmers in central Alabama in the late 1930's - in all openness and earnestness and that represents their sincere attempt to articulate, through word and picture, what they encountered. In his Preamble to the written text, Agee describes with unshakeable faith the operative premise that informs and permeates his 'phenomenological method.'

For in the immediate world, everything is to be discerned, for him who can discern it, and centrally and simply, without either dissection into science or digestion into art, but with the whole of consciousness seeking to perceive it as it stands: so that the aspect
of a street in sunlight can roar in the heart of itself as a symphony, perhaps as no symphony can; and all of consciousness is shifted from the imagined, the revisive, to the effort to perceive simply the cruel radiance of what is (11).

And if, as Bugbee maintains, "as we take things, so we have them," then Agee, not surprisingly, speaks frequently of receiving and celebrating things in the fullness of their actuality. For example, of summer nights spent sleeping - and lying awake - on the porch of his hosts' shack, he writes,

The dead oak and pine, the ground, the dew, the air, the whole realm of what our bodies lay in and our minds in silence wandered, walked in, swam in, watched upon, was delicately fragrant as a paradise, and, like all that is best, was loose, light, casual, totally actual. There was, by our minds, our memories, our thoughts and feelings, some combination, some generalizing, some art, and science; but none of the close-kneed priggishness of science, and none of the formalism and straining and lily-gilding of art. All the length of the body and all its parts and functions were participating, and were being realized and rewarded, inseparable from the mind, identical with it: and all, everything that the mind touched, was actuality, and all, everything, that the mind touched turned immediately, yet without in the least losing the quality of its total individuality, into joy and truth, or rather, revealed, of its self, truth, which in its very nature was joy (225).

Despite the tragedy that surrounded so much of his life, Agee maintained that such events of "joy" (which approaches the level of a philosophical or theological category in Agee's non-categorized thoughts) can happen anywhere and at any time, and that the circumstances of their occasioning are boundless. Several pages later he continues his discussion of joy, when he writes,

This lucky situation of joy, this at least illusion of personal wholeness and integrity, can overcome one suddenly by any one of any number of unpredictable chances: the fracture of sunlight on the facade and traffic of a street; the sleaving up of chimneysmoke; the rich lifting of the voice of a train along the darkness; the memory of a phrase of an inspired trumpet; ... the stiffening of snow in a wool glove; ... walking sleepless in high industrial daybreak and needing coffee; ... the taste of a mountain summer night: ... the mulled and branny earth beneath the feet in fall; a memory of plainsong of the first half hour after receiving a childhood absolution; ... aside from such sudden attacks from
unforeseen directions, gifts which as a rule are as precarious and transient as the returns and illusions of love for a girl one no longer loves, there are few ways it can give itself to you. Wandering alone; in sickness; on trains or busses; in the course of a bad hangover; in any rare situation which breaks down or lowers our habitual impatience, superficial vitality, overeagerness to clinch conclusions, and laziness (227-228).

The fact that I have cited Agee several times, and at some length here, does not mean that what he speaks of is identical with the notion of dialogue outlined by Buber and Bugbee - although some of the parallels are striking. Rather, I am struck in reading Agee by his apparent readiness to take up with the world anew everyday; his writing bespeaks an insatiable desire and unquenchable thirst to meet things in their fullness and to receive the abundance of their gifts in earnest. All of which, to me, seems rooted in a deep faith that truth and beauty and holiness can be found through engaged intimacy with, and unreserved immersion in, the particularities of our existence.

5 - In speaking of the "pattern" of technology, I am following Albert Borgmann's suggestion that we use a "paradigmatic explanation" when trying to understand the imprint of modern technology upon our lives. For his treatment of other possible types of explanations - substantive, instrumental, pluralistic - see his Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life, p.9ff. Generally, the following discussion of technology and technological patterns is based upon a paper I wrote for Professor Borgmann several years ago entitled, "Technological Dialogue, Genuine Dialogue, and the Possibility of Environmental Ethics." Hopefully, this revised and expanded treatment will not only be more accurate but also nearer the mark of what I'm trying to do in this essay.

6 - Two notes on my treatment of Heidegger seem in order here. First, and quite obviously, Heidegger and Kultgen use the term "thing" in very different ways. For Heidegger, things may thing insofar as we let them presence themselves in a dynamic, vocative relational event. Kultgen's analysis merely treats 'thing' as a static, intrinsic label for nonpersons and subpersons.

   And yet, while Heidegger talks of our letting things thing in a vocative relation, I doubt he would say that we could "meet" them, as I have used that term throughout my paper. Here again, I must refer back to Kohak's treatment of Heidegger in his article, "I, Thou, and It: A Contribution to the Phenomenology of Being-in-the-World." As Kohak reads Heidegger, our relations with things like jugs or bears can be described in terms of mitsein but not mitdasein, a term which designates our relations with fellow subjects, i.e., human beings. Therefore, according to Kohak, Heidegger's a priori limiting of
possible partners in *mitdasein* to *Dasein* constitutes a form of noematic prejudice, albeit one a great deal more subtle and sophisticated than Kultgen's. In Heidegger's defense, however, Kultgen's prejudice manifests itself in an argument that he makes while uncritically employing Buber's language of I, Thou and It, while Heidegger uses his own set of terms, which Kohak critiques and denounces as prejudicial according to Buber's terminology. This seems an important distinction to make, as both Heidegger and Buber speak in idiosyncratic ways that may not always directly translate into the other's 'dialect.' Still, Kohak, as a well-respected Husserl scholar and phenomenologist in his own right, offers a compelling argument, and I find his comparisons and critiques illuminating and insightful. So, while I agree with Kohak's analysis, I'll tread lightly around Heidegger and try to stick closely to the texts of the few Heidegger essays I've read, sincerely attempting not to misinterpret Heidegger and his highly poetical treatment of the issues under discussion.

7 - According to Borgmann, paradigmatic explanations must be both efficacious and clarifying. For his discussion of paradigmatic explanations, in general, as well as possible ways of evaluating them, see his *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*, pp.68-78. So, given that Heidegger's account of modern life under the pattern of Enframing does not allow for a vital portion of my experience, in the end, I find it lacking both efficacy (it doesn't 'work' as a way of explaining part of the pattern of our lives) and clarifying power (by not allowing for these encounters it sheds no interpretive light on them and, in fact, casts a shadow of doubt over them).

8 - This is, in a nutshell, Kohak's phenomenological method in *The Embers and the Stars*. In a forest clearing in New Hampshire he finds the clarity of vision required for his phenomenology; away from the world exclusively defined in terms of human artifice and busy-ness, and schooled by what he can learn from darkness, solitude and pain, Kohak finds the capacity to re-affirm the personal and moral sense of reality. Whether or not one shares all his convictions, his method, commanding intellect and keen insight produce a down-to-earth and beautiful book of philosophy.

9 - Both the slightly unorthodox rendering of the Fifth Commandment as "Thou shalt do no murder" and the whole idea of re-thinking the Ten Commandments in terms of our relations with nonhumans have their source in Kohak's *The Embers and the Stars*, pages 79-81. For example, in speaking of the Fifth Commandment, he writes,

"Thou shalt do no murder." Wanton killing, be it of a person, of an animal, a plant - or of a love or an idea - is an act of profound disrespect, of dehumanization so radical that it makes its
perpetrator an outcast and shatters the peace of the land. Yes, there is a food chain. There are, too, the bitter works of love. Killing a wounded animal swiftly - the frog impaled on my scythe, the baby rabbit disemboweled by a cat - can be the most agonizing act of love, letting it suffer an act of moral cowardice. ... Still, an act of killing remains an act of deep horror. Perhaps we have learned to objectify our world so that we could kill without remorse. Unquestionably, having objectified it, we do so kill, and easily. Like Cain, we find ourselves outcasts, taking what is not our own (80).

And in discussing the Ninth Commandment: "Thou shalt not covet," he writes,

This is not an injunction against the rightful striving of all beings whose being is projected into temporality. It is an urgent warning against turning the world from the place of our dwelling into an object of possession, rendered dead and soulless by greed. Of all the commandments governing the relationship of finite beings to each other, it is, perhaps, the most basic (79).

Here Kohak enriches our usual understandings of these two commandments by bringing to the forefront of his interpretations the dangers of our objectifying and greed, which have been so pervasive in our dominant way of taking up with nature as an assemblage of silent and lifeless resources or commodities. For me, the Eighth Commandment - "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" - also seems especially relevant here. In the particular instance under discussion, bearing false witness against a mountain goat is, above all, a matter of denying its eloquence and capacity to speak to us in its own right. Judged against the truth of experience, nothing seems more outrageously false. In fact, my several encounters with goats in their mountaintop habitat (here, the huge billy standing no more than ten feet below the summit of Alpine Peak in Idaho's Sawtooth Mountains or the monstrous power of yet another big male making a bee-line straight up the 30 degree talus slope leading to the top of Mount Pinchot in Glacier Park stand out as especially strong memories of these animals' evocative powers) would lead me to suggest that perhaps no other animal is more undeniably and overwhelmingly eloquent - speaking not only of themselves but also of the wild and rocky alpine country they inhabit. And yet, how easy has it become for us to take up with them as mute creatures, objects? To answer this question one needs only to consider how strange it sounds in the context of our everyday speech to suggest that mountain goats 'speak' to us at all.

10 - Animals in a zoo seem to be an especially good example of this. Removed from the natural context in which they may speak of their awe and beauty, even
so awesome and beautiful an animal as a polar bear is rendered silent (or, at best, speaks tragically and brokenly, at worst, comically, of its now enslaved and castrated glory) within the artificial confines of a zoo.

11 - It is, at best, a marginal profession already. The few people I've met or heard about who still trap mammals in this part of the country are loggers, school teachers and others who do it as a seasonal supplement to their income. As for native Alaskans and others in very different cultural, economic and ecological settings, I respectfully refrain from drawing even these tentative conclusions. This is not to say that we may not, at times, have to decide and act in cases where cultural values, attitudes and/or behaviors conflict; rather, I refrain from offering any such conclusions here because a serious and sensitive examination of the particulars of such situations is far beyond the scope of this essay.

12 - Building new roads in currently roadless areas is another story. At least in our region of the world, it appears that we have exceeded acceptable road densities, and any new roads will only increase erosion, stream sedimentation, habitat fragmentation, behavioral disruption caused by an increased human presence, and may exacerbate a host of other ecological problems.

13 - It seems unwarranted to suppose that vision is in any way privileged as the necessary sense through which we meet our fellows as Thous. In fact, given the strongly 'auditory' imagery used throughout this discussion of dialogue, hearing seems to be an especially potent and receptive sense through which we may encounter another being in dialogue. In addition, given the tactile and even sexual imagery employed in this essay, touch also seems to be a sense through which we can come into contact with another as Thou.

14 - The minds and spirits of children seem to predispose them to regular and frequent participation in dialogical encounters. As an example of this, Kohak sites those occasions where our food too closely resembles the living animal that it was. In particular, he notes holiday feasts with Martinmas goose and Christmas carp, where a child's horror and outrage are appeased and the festive spirit restored "only by adult ability to re-objectify" ("I, Thou, and It" 55). This 'childish' immediacy and purposelessness- "realism," even - is central to the whole notion of play that I will discuss in the following chapter.

15 - BLM and USFS grazing permits are artificially cheap - unless, of course, they're subleased from profiteering leaseholders. Here the hypocrisy behind the stereotyping of "welfare mothers" and welfare fraud reaches the almost comically sublime. "Although we feel entitled to sublease public lands to less fortunate ranchers (whose ties to the industry don't date back to the glory days of the Cattlemans Association) at ten times the price the federal government charges us
on the original lease, we better not catch you selling your food stamps (at 50% of their face value!) or trying to peddle your commodity cheese for a little cash. And no, we don't care if your wife (with whom you cannot legally co-habit unless you're willing to forfeit or reduce certain entitlements) is lactose intolerant and can't eat the cheese without "luxury" medications she can't afford. We've got to start cracking down on you folks who are exploiting the system!"

16 - It's all too easy to imagine the general response to such a statement were it offered at a public hearing on the issue; to speak of talking mountains borders on nonsense within the context of our society's everyday speech. And yet, as Ron Erickson asks, how often do we let such imaginings keep us from saying what we know to be true - what we know needs to be said? And furthermore, how can such ways of speaking ever be taken seriously unless we venture to articulate them in the public sphere? Coming from someone who has, in his own life, exhibited the courage to speak out from the heart on such matters, I greatly appreciate and value Ron's insight on this point.

17 - This silence in regards to telling stories of concern, I believe, is a symptom of the heavily 'Protestant' leanings in most adherents of the "gospel of ecology" (Nash). To use distinctions most often applied to the differences between Protestants and Catholics, environmental devotees place a decided emphasis on the Word (often the gospel of science) over Sacrament, and while they make excellent prophets, they tend to neglect their priestly calling. Of course, given the Nineveh-like proportions of this country's environmental sins, this prophetic leaning is perfectly understandable. And yet, we need to celebrate the sacraments as well, and we do this, unavoidable, when we tell our stories. As we bear witness to our encounters with things as presences (in which the Divine Presence dwells among us) we acknowledge and celebrate our participation in the sacrament of dialogue. And, as discussed earlier, these sacramental events carry a commission to go forth and embody the meaning received in our actions. In the end, the two go together; through our priestly celebration of the sacrament of dialogue we are empowered to challenge and critique the status quo with all the power of the prophetic tradition. What gave Jeremiah his voice but the touch of God's hand on the prophet's mouth? What power lies in Hosea's words apart from his intimate contact with the Divine, which the Bible describes in such straightforward sexual imagery? The voice of the prophet comes to him/her through direct contact with the fundamental sources of meaning, and his/her challenges are issued out of such intercourse.

Forgetting these holy sources of our concern and commitment not only divorces us from our most potent animating powers, it also makes us fall prey to another distinctively Protestant vice. The personal pietism and self-righteousness of certain environmentalists can only be rivaled, at least in my
experience, by a few tongue-clucking, blue-haired Scandinavians of the Lutheran persuasion (and specifically those who pledge allegiance to the Missouri Synod) and those sanctified, sealed-in-the-blood Southern Baptists or non-denominational fundamentalists. And unfortunately, and quite seriously, such self-righteousness has turned away potential adherents to the gospel of ecology much in the same way as holier-than-thou church-going folk keep so many others away from organized religion.

18 - For a discussion of the limits of scientific explanations, see Albert Borgmann's *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*. Particularly relevant here is his description of the differences between apodeictic, deictic and paradeictic (paradigmatic) explanantions (pp. 22-26 and pp. 68-78).
"Wilderness: Land of No Use." Several years ago, back before "I Heart Spotted Owls - Fried!", and even back before those little green signs touting the timber industry as our region's economic jockstrap, this anti-wilderness slogan could be seen on bumper stickers all across western Montana. In the minds of those who printed, distributed and displayed them, the slogan offered a compelling argument against designating any more of Montana's remaining roadless lands as wilderness.

Of course, the phrase on the bumper sticker, in and of itself, is only part of an argument. In order to arrive at the intended conclusion, the reader must add an implied second premise, one that we find displayed on an embroidered nicknack decorating the wall of Halverson's home outside Glacier Park, in William Kittredge's story "We Are Not In This Together." Attributed to Cotton Mather, the saying reads, "That which is not useful is vicious" (103).

Now we have an argument. Complete the syllogism, and you get the desired anti-wilderness conclusion:

Wilderness is not useful.
What is not useful is vicious.

Ergo, Wilderness is vicious - bad, unnecessary, to be resisted.

Logic 101.
The first time I saw the "Land of No Use" bumper sticker it was displayed on the back of the pick-up truck I parked alongside at a gas station/convenience store in Thompson Falls. Two friends and I had stopped in to buy a few more items for our weekend trip into the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness - a weekend, as I remember it now, of swimming through steamy willow thickets by day and keeping a close watch on burnt out tree stumps with ears at night. It was late spring, June I think, and I was nearing the end of my first year in the Environmental Studies Program, well informed on the "wilderness issue" (all year long I had attended wilderness seminars and lectures religiously and drank a lot of beer with very knowledgeable and committed Earth First'ers) and a strong (though "realistic," "reasonable," "practical") wilderness supporter - or so I liked to fancy myself. And, having had a semester of logic in college, I knew that when you find yourself disagreeing with the conclusion of a cogent, well-formulated, logical argument, you go back and examine the validity of the premises upon which the conclusion rests.

So, inspired by the wilderness weekend ahead and armed with my graduate school knowledge, I plunged into battle - mentally, anyway - with the implied argument on the bumper sticker. In my head, I quickly rattled off a grocery list of reasons why wilderness is so valuable. Just consider the recreational, aesthetic, spiritual, economic and medicinal values of wilderness, or its importance for maintaining and preserving habitat, wildlife resources, fisheries, endangered species, genetic variation, biodiversity, water quality, etc., etc. See how "useful" wilderness is!
At the time, though, it never occurred to me to take issue with the unstated second premise of this anti-wilderness argument. Sure, I was well aware of that whole 'intrinsic value' v. 'instrumental value' angle, but none of that seemed terribly concrete or persuasive here. Like most Americans, there's a lot more of Cotton Mather's spirit in me than I'd care to admit. The "bottom line" is that if wilderness is good, it better be good for something, useful. But what if uselessness, rather than being vicious, is redemptive, healing, empowering? even necessary? What if, instead of trying to sell wilderness as a prudent investment, we celebrated the gifts and acknowledged the responsibilities that use-less wild places simultaneously bestow upon us and call forth from us?

Now, half a dozen years and a lot of walking, reading, and reflection later, and with the wilderness debate still raging in this region of the country, I'd like to try to think through a very different response to that bumper sticker I saw in Thompson Falls; I'd like to affirm the radically subversive and potentially transformative importance of uselessness in a society dominated by instrumentality and intentionality and, at the same time, affirm the potential significance and meaning of wilderness as a use-less anti-resource, a sabbath place of prayer and play. Finally, through our sacramental engagement with wild places and wild creatures, I'd suggest we return from our wilderness sabbatical not so much re-created as re-attuned to our co-createdness, re-oriented and, above all re-commissioned to embody the respect and concern engendered in our holy intercourse with these places and creatures, even within the all-too-profane busy-ness of our daily strivings. That is, through our intimate contact with, and immersion in, wild places I believe we receive a knowledge and
instruction that may inform and transform every facet of our work-a-day lives as well as the non-negotiable imperative to "Remember the sabbath place and keep it holy."

I realize that for some readers, speaking of wilderness as an anti-resource borders on sensationalism. And yet, to speak of wilderness as a resource only strikes me as terribly reductive and superficial. Even talking about wilderness as a non-resource - although I believe it is this, too - says too little and trivializes the potentially transformative power and compelling imperative force that may come to us in and through intimate contact with wild places and wild creatures. I believe wilderness offers not merely an alternative but a radical challenge to the technological patterns and objectifying, representational, and instrumentalist postures that dominate and distort our relational lives. For both conceptual and practical reasons, wilderness offers us a potential home of dialogue - a place where eloquent nature may speak to receptive humanity and elicit our most respectful response in thought, word and deed.

That, I am convinced, is the potential of wilderness as an anti-resource; the prevailing attitudes of the present situation, on the other hand, militate against it. Both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, the two government agencies that manage the majority of public wildlands (both de facto and designated wilderness), operate under the guiding principle of "multiple use." Wilderness recreation (sic), like timber harvesting, cattle grazing, wildlife and fisheries management, is just one among a host of uses. That's why the agencies, on their brochures, posters and educational publications, so often refer
to it as "the enduring resource of wilderness." You've got the wilderness resource alongside the timber resource and the fisheries resource; they're all there for our use. Each stands ready, according to Heidegger, to be set upon, secured, ordered, controlled and stockpiled for human development and use. Or, in Borgmann's depiction of the pattern of modern technology, each provides the raw materials - the means - from which we may isolate, extract and make available for consumption the commodities - the ends - we desire. Of course, the commodities we seek from wilderness are often less tangible than 2 x 4s and trout filets, but the technological paradigm that informs such commerce remains the same. The wilderness resource offers the recreational, aesthetic and spiritual commodities - to name just a few - that we set out upon wilderness to procure and consume. And while this acquisitive agenda is usually doomed to frustration and failure by the fact that what we often seek to procure from wilderness is fundamentally non-commodious and unprocurable, it remains that wilderness-as-resource is no exception to the rule of technology. It is defined - exists - in terms of human purposes, intentions and desires, and we develop, manage and use it accordingly. As Henry Bugbee explains, "Why, the very category of resource commits one by implication to development of it, and to pose wilderness as a resource implying the contrary would carry contradiction to the point of perversity indeed" ("Wilderness" 8). 'Resource' is, unavoidably, a term of humanly imposed instrumental meaning and value; what resources 'mean' and what they're worth are determined according to human desires and capacities to develop and use them. As such, to conceive of, and talk about, wildlands under the auspices of "the enduring resource of wilderness," and to develop, study, manage, and conserve them as such, frames these places squarely
within the pattern of technology and relegates them to entities - objects - that exist in terms of, and for the gratification of, human wants, needs and desires.

And yet, there's something going on in our relations with wild places and wild creatures that doesn't quite fit the pattern; the contradictions that Bugbee mentions above hover all about our experience of and attitudes toward wilderness. To speak about and treat wilderness exclusively as a resource seems to overstate the case a bit; it leaves too much unexplained. If wilderness is just another resource, how do we account for the life-affirming joy we so often receive in our travels in wild places? Or the deep and abiding respect and wonder these places elicit? Or the committed and passionate efforts of so many people to preserve the few wild places that remain on this continent? Surely no mute and unautonomous resource could call forth such heartfelt joy and faith, respect, wonder and commitment. There's something about wilderness that's evocative and compelling in a way that a resource is not. True, we may often reduce wilderness to a resource, but, at times, we also encounter it as something more and other than that; it's a resource, alright, but with a wrinkle.

For one thing, wilderness areas are set aside and protected from most of the 'industrial' forms of development that have historically defined our country's relations to forest and range lands. Although exceptions abound, in general, you can't build roads, harvest timber, drill for oil and gas or mine coal in a designated wilderness area. As the proponents of these industries so often remark, wilderness is a "lock-out;" it "locks up" the resources. And, in terms of our history of traditional natural resource development, extraction and exploitation,
they're right. Wilderness designation, for the most part, precludes developing and using forest and range resources the way we've always done it - no more bulldozers, chainsaws, skidders and drill rigs. That's why that bumper sticker was on the truck in Thompson Falls; to the owner, use of the wilderness resource seems so contrary to traditional notions of resource development that it appears to involve no use at all. Or, at best, wilderness is a mis-use of the resources, inappropriate development, wasteful (again, Cotton Mather's puritanical ghost haunts our wilderness debate wherever we turn). Setting aside certain wildlands from traditional, high-impact, aggressive, industrial development and designating them as wilderness areas (even under the rubric of wilderness-as-resource) marks a point of departure from business as usual with regards to nature. Even as another variety of natural resource, wilderness encourages us to pause and re-think the question "What is nature good for?" And while, at this level, we may still remain entrenched within a purely instrumentalist stance, "locked up" wilderness areas at least offer an experiential and reflective starting point for a deeper questioning of the technologically-informed instrumentality that has for so long defined our relations with most nonhuman creatures.

Secondly, wilderness is an atypical resource in the sense that, by definition, wilderness areas are places where human beings are visitors. And while it's written this way in the Wilderness Act, the word is, unfortunately, rarely mentioned by the managing agencies. For example, in the Forest Service the resource management ethos is so deeply engrained that when wilderness researchers write up their studies, they consistently speak in terms of "user impacts," "user days," "R.U.D.s" (recreational user days), "user groups" and the
like. For a management agency that has, for so long, functioned as an all-too-cooperative extension of resource development industries, to talk about visiting a resource just doesn't make sense; the words don't correspond. We use resources; we visit family, friends, and neighbors, shrines, museums and cemeteries. 'To visit' carries connotations and invokes images contrary to the rhetoric of resources. As visitors we don't set out to assault and aggressively transform the people and places we visit. Instead, we come into their presence, in a place outside our jurisdiction of immediate control; we "pay our respects," and, after awhile, we return home. And even though the Forest Service continues to talk about wilderness "use," our actual travels within wilderness seem more accurately described as visits. In this sense, our practical, on-the-ground experience as wilderness visitors offers us a glimpse of an alternative model for our relations with wild nature that stands in contrast to the model of relations instantiated in our respective roles as developers or consumers and resources or commodities. As wilderness visitors we may venture forth into the presence and company of those whom we respect and care about, enter their homes with all due respect, avail ourselves to receive their gifts (graciously bestowed, gratefully accepted and acknowledged), tarry awhile, and then leave with their blessing upon us and our love for them and commitment to them renewed and deepened.

In addition, humans are visitors in wilderness areas in a second, important sense: we do not and cannot live in them. In a very practical, matter-of-fact way, you've got to check your proprietary claims and development schemes at the trailhead. I've never heard anyone in a wilderness area utter that 'appreciative' statement so often heard along seacoasts and lakeshores or amidst rolling hills
and wooded hollows: "Wouldn't this be a great spot to live? build a cabin? have a second (third?) home?" In designated wilderness, it's out of the question. Even the richest dude can't buy his/her own chunk of the Bob Marshall or Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. It's just not for sale - unless, of course, you're a guide or outfitter with well-placed friends who can use their influence to make sure your airstrips, riverside resorts, hunting camps, stock pens, year-round caches and other "semi-permanent" structures remain above the law. In theory, however, wilderness is not intended to be a place where humans live, build structures or exert proprietary rights; and, for most of us, this holds true in practice as well. Wilderness is not a place to live or own property; in wilderness, we come into a place that is not our home nor our own, pay our respects, and leave.

Thirdly, our wilderness visits, examined within the context of our goal-oriented, technologically-conditioned society, can appear pretty pointless. At the ground level, the "Why?", "What for?", and "What's the point?" questions can be pretty disconcerting as you walk along in a wilderness, especially when you're carrying a full pack, or being drenched by rain or plagued by insects, walking on blistered feet, or when you're just plain sore, tired, cold, hot, sunburned and/or sick. That cynical question, "Are we having fun yet?", can take on a whole new meaning in the backcountry. After all, if we're out using the recreational resource of wilderness, shouldn't we be having fun? Isn't that the point? Of course, even under ideal conditions, wilderness walking can appear, quite literally, pointless. Of the three main types of hiking routes available, the point of departure for two of them - the in and out trip and the loop - doubles as your
intended destination. You walk in, do your wilderness thing, and arrive back at the same vehicle at the same trailhead you left only a few hours, days or even weeks ago. As for the point-to-point trip, you end up at a different trailhead where, most likely, a car you dropped off earlier will be waiting for you - to shuttle you back to pick up the vehicle left at the trailhead where you started your trip. In each case (and in any imaginable variation on these three alternatives), in accomplishing your goal you accomplish nothing at all, and you end up back where you started. Nothing's changed, except you're older than you were when you started your trip - that much closer to your death one could argue.

In addition, if you travel in wilderness to get some exercise, test your mettle, find beauty, meet God or accomplish some other specific task, you'll soon realize that there are better, safer, more convenient and time-saving ways to try to achieve these same goals (of course, you might also realize, in the process, that meaningful health, self-respect, beauty and holiness defy commodious procurement and elude our purposive grasp). Spend a couple of intense hours in the weight room or gym, museum or church, and you can say you've attended to your physical fitness, recreational, aesthetic and religious needs, and you'll still have time left over to ... watch TV or go to the mall or catch up on some work at the office. Walking in wild places, judged by the standards of our society, appears to be, at best, a rather impractical and inefficient way to accomplish our specific goals and tasks.
The exaggeration and hyperbole of the two previous paragraphs are, to a large degree, intentional. Walking, and specifically walking where roads don't go, seems to encourage what Thoreau, in his essay "Walking," calls the "extreme statement" (93). What's more, I believe that not only Thoreau's penchant for startling overstatement (awakening as the cry of the chanticleer atop his roost in *Walden*), but also his radical perspective and critical prophetic voice are rooted in his "method" of taking up with and reflecting upon the world in which he found himself - a thinking on one's feet that Bugbee calls "peripatetic philosophy" (*Inward Morning* 139). Perhaps it is precisely the pointlessness and inefficiency of our wilderness travels, as well as that uniquely pedestrian pace that encourages face-to-face engagement with what we meet and reflective rumination on the import of such meetings, that force us to confront the "What for?" question of our walking in circles (or some slight variation on that theme) and which, at the same time, push us to extend this same question to all aspects of our lives. And as we honestly examine our lives in this context, we may come to recognize that many of our strivings and purposive pursuits - our "busy-ness" dealings - are no more than so much diversion and idleness, a tail-chasing performed by animals without tails. It seems that walking in wild places and among wild things offers a critical perspective from which we may think more clearly about the meaning of the technological project of developing and using resources and procuring and consuming commodities that so often defines our lives and dictates our actions.

In these few paragraphs I've presented three of the practical, matter-of-fact ways in which wilderness is an atypical resource, ways in which it contradicts,
suspends or calls into question the intentional representations and categories through which we usually experience, develop and use nature as a resource. To be sure, wilderness is still a resource, but, just as surely, we encounter and perceive it as something other than a resource as well. By prohibiting many forms of high-impact, industrial usury practices, wilderness designation flies in the face of our traditional understandings of resource development on public forest and range lands. By defining humans as visitors in wilderness areas, wilderness designation offers us an alternative model for our relations with nonhuman nature; in wilderness we may take up with nature not just as developers and consumers or owners exerting proprietary claims, but as humble, respectful visitors, perhaps even pilgrims. And finally, by traveling along the circular (or dead end) path of wilderness we may find ourselves confronted with questions of purpose and meaning that challenge the acquisitive strivings and goal-oriented pursuits of our lives and sponsor reflection upon the very sources of ultimate meaning and purpose. These three anomalies - among others - seem to suggest that certain things about the wilderness resource don't quite fit with our usual understanding and use of resources in general; it's an odd resource that restricts the development of nature's creatures according to our historical understandings of what they're 'good for,' that defines us as visitors within its boundaries, and that offers no clearly defined goal or purpose for 'accessing' it at all. These oddities - these non-resource qualities - of wilderness seem to cause endless confusion and frustration in discussions among wilderness managers and users, proponents and opponents, adamant in their insistence to fit the square peg of wilderness in the round, resource hole.
What I've presented above, however, offers not so much a challenge to our technological patterns as a starting point for deeper reflection - a few incongruities to puzzle over. And while a certain amount of confusion regarding the mis-fit resource of wilderness may lead to a re-thinking and enriching of the sense and meaning of our relations with wild places and wild creatures, I believe the potentially radical challenge of wilderness as an anti-resource comes from the instruction we may receive from wildlands themselves, despite all our efforts to shout down, ignore or misunderstand what they have to teach us, as we come into their presence. Wild places and wild things, I believe, have a word to speak to us (to invert Thoreau's famous phrase), a word that, heeded, communicates a sense of meaning and direction that may ground and orient our lives and inform our actions. Speaking of his time in the Canadian Rockies during the autumn of 1941, Henry Bugbee writes, "And it was there in attending to this wilderness, with unremitting alertness, yes, even as I slept, that I knew myself to have been instructed for life, though I was at a loss to say what instruction I had received" (Inward Morning 140). What I believe Bugbee so eloquently testifies to here is the deep and abiding knowledge we may receive through contact with, and immersion in, wild places. It comes to us - if at all- as an immediate and participatory knowledge (quite apart from our knowing about anything) of inexhaustible and, to some degree, ineffable meaning and potency - a knowledge that may take a lifetime of reflection to begin to understand, let alone articulate or enact. And yet, this much seems clear: in and through our knowing intercourse with wild places and wild things we touch something we are not, something that we did not make; we touch something non-negotiably other and densely real, something that is not the product of human handiwork, artifice or
fabrication but, like us, receives its existence from a source outside itself, something that we recognize as co-derivative, co-creaturely and mutually co-existent. And, standing together in the presence of our fellow creatures, we acknowledge, with joy and affirmation, the goodness and respectworthiness of these beings as existing in their own right, apart from our objectifying representations and instrumentalist categories. Intimate contact with wild, nonhuman nature teaches us the arrogance at work in our reduction of nature to an aggregate of raw materials and resources as well as the sinfulness of what Buber calls "our lust for overrunning reality" (Origin and Meaning 65).

According to Bugbee what we may learn from wilderness, what he refers to as a "wilderness ethos," stands in "dialectical contrariety" to the basic posture our culture assumes with regards to the nonhuman natural world: "the claimant's stance, speaking in terms of want and use, resources at our disposal, the exertion of control, the projection of goals, and the humanly conferred status of 'values'" ("Wilderness" 6-7). As claimants, we cling to and assert "a vested interest, a proprietary demand ... a kind of appropriative willing in which, however tacitly, a claim is staked to having what we want. ... 'Nature' then assumes the defining aspect of the exploitable resource; and no thing can be sacred" ("L' Exigence " 12).

As we come into the presence of wild places and wild things, we may find ourselves positioned with respect to them in a way that counters and challenges the claimant's stance. Rather than staking a claim and demanding whatever we want and desire, in wilderness we find ourselves claimed by the self-speaking and evocative voice of wild nature and placed in a position of responsibility. Contact with wilderness may teach us the arrogance of our incessant efforts to 'call the shots,' as well as what it means to be called upon in a way that demands
an answer. The overwhelmingly eloquent voice of wilderness, I am convinced, has the capacity to break through the silence and profanity of the claimant’s world and re-awaken us to the vocative - and thus, vocational - and sacred character of our relations with not only wild places and creatures but with all creation.

Of course, in order to receive the instruction of these places and creatures we must let them speak and remain open and receptive to their address. As I explained in the previous chapter, resources have no voice apart from that projected upon them according to human purposes and desires; resources are, by definition, mute and speechless things, objects, Its. Therefore, if wild places and creatures are to speak to us and instruct us, we must meet them as something other than resources; we must meet them as Thous - irreducibly other, yet intimately co-existent, non-instrumentally valuable and eminently respectworthy beings whose existence cannot be reduced to or defined merely in terms of our representational constructs and purposive intentionality. We must meet them as fellow creatures - existing on their own terms and in their own right; only then can they instruct us or, as Bugbee says, "bless us": "But nothing can bless us apart from being acknowledged in its own right" ("Wilderness" 13). Earlier in the same essay he elaborates on this theme within the specific context of wilderness when he writes,

If wilderness may yet speak to us and place us as respondents in the ambience of respect for the wild - for Nature as primordial, it must be liberated from ultimate subsumption to human enterprise. That is, its voice will be heard anew only as we come in decisive forbearance into its presence. Attentive listening, active receptivity, candor of spirit are the mood of the place. Or - as Kant might say: disinterested interest. I suggest wilderness is not to be understood
as a place appropriated to human interests or to a special human interest. Its fundamental gift lies in the qualification of disinterestedness with which human interest requires to be informed (5).

For vocative relations - dialogue - to occur between us and wild nature, and for us to receive its instruction and the consequent summons to embody those lessons in respectful response, wilderness must speak not in terms of our goals and interests but of itself and in its own right. In turn, we must remain open and attentive to that self-speaking address. As stated throughout this paper, the manifestation of dialogue involves the resonance of eloquent speech within the heart of the receptive and attentive listener; always, it is a matter of will and grace. And wilderness, it seems to me, may be a potential home of dialogue in that it offers a space - an opening - where wild nature may graciously speak of itself and where we may receive what Bugbee calls its "fundamental gift": its power to render our interest disinterested, to bracket our intentionality and instrumentality, to re-attune our hearing to the voice of things apart from our representations and categories of manipulation and use.

Despite the administrative and managerial rhetoric that reduces wildlands to wilderness resources and the consequent practices employed in the development, management, use and conservation of them, the primary impetus or sponsorship behind wilderness designation - a sponsorship engendered and deepened, I believe, through intimate contact with wild places - is preservation. We work for legislative wilderness designation because it seems to be our best hope for preserving a few remaining places most nearly the way they've been, the way they are and the way they might yet evolve to become apart from heavy-
handed human intervention. To preserve wildlands is an active attempt to let them be - or leave them be, as Bugbee understands it. In *Inward Morning* he writes, "By 'leaving things be' I do not mean inaction; I mean respecting things, being still in the presence of things, letting them speak" (155). This active and participatory "leaving be" is of twofold significance. In leaving wildlands be they are liberated from exclusive subservience as humanly defined resources; in turn, as we leave wildlands be - in respectful engagement, responsive attentiveness, stillness and silence - we take up with nature (indeed, reality) outside the claimant's stance, in what Bugbee calls a wilderness ethos and Buber calls *Hindwendum* (the movement of dialogue) - a faith posture where we stand among our fellow beings ready and open to receive the address of whomever may speak to us. Within this framework, leaving wildlands be offers something of a mutual empowerment - a harmonizing of resounding, liberated speech and attentive, respectful hearing - and instantiates a unique home of dialogue between human beings and nonhuman, wild creatures.

And according to the rhythm outlined in this essay, participation in dialogue calls forth our active response. Our intimate contact with wildlands and wild creatures places us in a position of responsibility. We are called upon to offer an answer to their evocative address from out of the depths of who we are and who we may yet become. For me, this rhythmic interplay between dialogue and responsibility is nowhere more evident than in our relations with wild places. The origins of wilderness preservation in this country seem inexplicable except as a loving and respectful response to intimate intercourse with, and sustained immersion in, wild places and a deep, personal concern that
they might be defiled, destroyed and abused. How can we explain the passion and commitment of John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshall and David Brower, to name four of the most prominent figures in the history of wilderness preservation, apart from their lifelong contact with wild places? What sponsors the continuing efforts of so many committed wilderness advocates to preserve the few undesignated wild areas that remain and to protect from abuse and degradation those areas already designated? I'd suggest that sustained and intimate intercourse with wild places begets our deepest and most abiding love and respect for them, and that we cannot help but work to embody that love and respect in responsible, non-arbitrary action on their behalf. To know wild places as such places us under obligation to preserve and protect them.

Furthermore, I'd suggest that the transformative and imperative force received in and through contact with wildlands and wild creatures radiates out to every aspect of our lives. What we learn from immersion in wild places challenges our entire way of experiencing reality within the framework of the technological paradigm and our entrenchment in the claimant's stance. Wilderness, more than anything else in the nonhuman world, offers a counterpoint to the dominant patterns and postures of our lives. As such, what it has to teach us may turn our lives upside down and re-orient us with respect to how we take up with our world. This, I am convinced, is the radical and prophetic anti-resource potential of wilderness - the subversive power of its uselessness.
In the self-speaking presence of wild places and wild creatures, met and acknowledged in their own right, our reductionist drive to turn nature - all of reality - into an aggregate of resources and commodities is exposed for what it is: a reduction - not only of the irreducible meaning and non-instrumental value of the other beings whom we meet, but also of the meaning and value of our own lives as we stand together with them as fellow creatures. That is, the staggeringly eloquent, self-speaking voice of wild nature speaks to us of the potential fullness of our relational lives with nature's creatures - a fullness we cannot know insofar as we experience the natural world exclusively according to our categories of use and purpose. To be sure, we will continue to develop and use natural resources and procure and consume their attendant commodities, but the touch of wild nature teaches us that nature's creatures are not only, or even primarily, natural resources. Although we will also have to use and develop some creatures as resources, we will, I hope, do so with all humility and respect, knowing - immediately and intimately - that they are fundamentally and definitively something far more and other than that: they are actual and potential partners in dialogue, independent others whom we nonetheless may encounter in the fullness and integrity of their being - their being-together-with-us. Perhaps most basically of all, we learn that our existence and the meaning proferred us therein, comes to us as a gift, and that the world presents itself to us not, fundamentally, as so much stuff to use, procure, acquire and consume, but as a community of others, fellows creatures whom we may meet and know in sacramental intercourse. We learn that our vocation is not that of the inquisitor who presses, probes and makes demands, who contorts and tortures his (here, as in several other selected spots in this essay, it seems more accurate to let the
gender-specific pronoun stand alone) subject - the object - until it submits and says what he wants to hear and which speaks only according to the forceful imposition of the inquisitor's intentions and agenda. Wilderness placement shows us and helps us acknowledge our true calling as that of the respondent (perhaps even responsive lover), who, in respectfully and compassionately attending to the self-speaking presence of our fellows, may be received into their gracious presence and, in turn, receive their life-affirming gifts. For although the inquisitor usually gets the response he demands, the coerced answer doesn't mean much; it bespeaks only his projections, contains nothing true or meaningful, and bestows no grace. But in attentively and actively stepping back and letting things speak without coercion, projection or manipulation (a posture or orientation toward which wild places seem to predispose us), they may speak themselves and the meaning of their being - and ours together with them. And in the resonance of the meaningful and destinate speech of these independent, fellow creatures within the attendant and responsive soul, we may receive the use-less and holy gifts of dialogue - divine gifts that transcend reduction to instrumental terms and whose meaning and value immanently inspire and inform our lives and actions. According to Erazim Kohak one such gift of dialogue is joy. In The Embers and the Stars he writes,

Joy or enjoyment is noninstrumental. The experience it describes serves no purpose beyond itself, it is not a function of the experiences which led up to it. It breaks out of the entire instrumental chain as a moment of encounter between a human and an Other, be it an entity, an act, a person, in cherishing, appreciation, enjoyment. It is precisely the experience of eternal reference (200).
For Bugbee, another of these gifts is beauty, defined as something like a deliverance of the "sense". things make that defies reduction to their function or purpose.

Something may happen in relation with things themselves, in mutual address, that is the mode of sense they make, and it has nothing to do with explaining them. The mode of sense in question imparts to life a purposiveness without purpose. Purposes exfoliating and sustained out of that purposiveness, as they may well be, cannot explain it, nor do they explain things. A purposiveness prior to purposes, to which they remain subordinate, precludes reading the sense things make in terms of purposes. Thus it may be that in a style of life governed by mutual address with things, one may stand to attune hearing to that language which things and events speak without metaphor, "which alone is copious and standard." (Thoreau) Perhaps that, precisely, is their beauty ("Job" 7-8).

As Kohak and Bugbee explain them, neither the joy nor beauty that may come to us in and through our participation in dialogue can be explained in terms of the purposes they serve, their usefulness or instrumental worth. However, this is not because events of joy and beauty are trivial and unimportant for our lives. Rather, it is because they do not submit to service on behalf of our particular purposive agendas and instrumentalist reductions; that is, they are of ultimate importance, informing our lives with a "purposiveness prior to purpose" and offering us a glimpse of the "eternal," non-derivative, unconditioned and Holy.

Joy and beauty are but two of the many fundamentally meaningful gifts that wilderness may bestow upon us; we may count them among the use-less, non-commodious gifts of wilderness encountered not as a resource or even a non-resource, but as an anti-resource - a place that instills and/or deepens our
capacity to suspend the instrumentalist reduction of nature to natural resources that defines and impoverishes our relational lives with nature's creatures; a place that encourages us to step back, be still and listen to the eloquent voice of our nonhuman fellow creatures as they speak to us of themselves and in their own right; in sum, a place where dialogue between human and nonhuman creatures may flourish - a home of dialogue. And, as a home of dialogue, wilderness is, indeed, a "land of no use;" its ultimate gift lies in its potential to predispose us to, and foster participation in, relations of "no use:" I-Thou relations. For, as I explained in Chapter One of this essay, I-Thou dialogue serves no purpose; its meaning cannot be reduced to an explanation of the purposes it serves or what it's 'good for.' "The purpose of the relation is the relation itself - touching the You. For as we touch a You, we are touched by a breath of eternal life" (Buber, I and Thou 112). I-Thou dialogue serves no purpose; it is an event of ultimate purport. It imparts to our life with our fellow beings a fundamental meaning and non-derivative value whereby we may affirm our co-existents and ourselves as we stand together with them in co-creately kinship; it may offer, along with joy and beauty, the gifts of faith, love, compassion and respect as well as the guiding directive - the imperative - to incarnate these gifts in faithful, loving, compassionate and respectful action towards our fellow creatures.

But does wilderness really offer us all of this? As a wilderness resource - no; as a home of dialogue - absolutely; as a mix of the two - potentially and on occasion. I am convinced - I know - that through our immersion in wilderness (whether designated or not) we may, and sometimes do, find ourselves graced by the power of these places to attune our ears to the self-speaking voices of
wildlands and wild creatures and to ready our hearts to meet them in the sacrament of dialogue, through which we may receive an intimation of the meaning and value of our mutual co-existence and the capacity to incarnate the sense of that meaning and value in non-arbitrary, decisive action. In concluding my discussion of wilderness as a potential home of dialogue, a use-less place of ultimate purport and meaning for our lives, I'd like to present this rather lengthy quote from Henry Bugbee's "Wilderness in America" as a beautiful and illuminating articulation of so many of the things I'd like to suggest here.

Yet, how could it be that a place might hold such force? Only, it would seem, in some radical way; positioning us, as it were, with respect to our involvement in reality, as a matter to be resolved. No doubt our situation is always implicitly a metaphysical affair. But wilderness, to the extent that it will not permit one to take one's surroundings for granted, is a place which will not let one off the metaphysical hook. At the same time it establishes us in such decisively lived relationship with our surroundings that it precludes subsumption of the lived relationship to any depictive representation of how we are situated in relation to our surroundings, for example in ecological terms. We are not there as seen by ourselves, as parts within a whole. No, we are there as on the spot with respect to the meaning of what we behold. How does nature speak to our concern? That is the question. And the relationship is one of participation in what occurs, the presencing of heaven-and-earth and of all that abounds therein. One is brought to realize one is held within the embrace of what is proferred in its being proferred. No behind or beyond the things themselves. Therefore no understanding of their presencing in the mode of comprehension of it. From within the lived relationship in which the presencing occurs must arise the sense of the occurrent, if at all. The givens of life are laid down. The foundations of the world are laid. Things are in place and stand firm. Beings stand forth on their own. They do not ask our leave. They invite mutuality. That measure of trust. If one agrees to live with them, rather than summarily reduce them to the service of intention. In contrast with the subordination of attention to intention, to be intent in attending is to give heed, and therein the perceived may work evocatively, to cumulative effect. Together, the perceived and the perceiver enter
into the working of the world: things in their meaning as responded to, taking shape (10-11).

In wilderness we enter a place and are, consequently, placed - oriented - in such a way that things - wildlands and wild creatures - may present themselves to us and we may receive them as such - that is, receive them as presences. And in that mutual contact we come to know these things, ourselves and our co-creaturely co-existence as meaningful. Indeed, reality dawns upon us as meaningful - a world of meaning, where our participation not only affords but is also, in itself, cause for affirmation and sacramental celebration, and where our co-participants are not taken for granted but, instead, are granted the abiding respect and heartfelt concern they deserve. Wilderness, I believe, is a place where meaningful reality may, to varying degrees, be made manifest and where meaningful existence may find sponsorship. What could be of greater ultimate import?

II.

An older friend of mine recently told me that when he lived in Missoula back in the mid 70s, he didn't go up into the mountains much because most of the social justice advocates, socialists and Marxists in his circle, including himself, considered it "escapist" - time spent away from the 'real work' of social change and transformation, an idle distraction, a dodge. At first this notion struck me as, alternately, unbelievable and absurd. And yet, as I thought about it a bit, his recollection seemed to point towards a very matter-of-fact truth
regarding the place of wilderness in our lives and our society: wilderness is, by
definition and for almost all of us, a place apart, a place of withdrawal and
retreat from the patterns and activities of our everyday lives. However, to equate
withdrawal and retreat (of the two competing images this latter term conjures, I
intend the religious over the military one) with escape seems to me a
fundamental misunderstanding, perhaps one symptomatic of a society that can
no longer recognize or acknowledge anything meaningful or compelling outside
an exclusively human frame of reference - a society in which all nonhuman
otherness, be it 'natural' or divine, has been done away with or explained away,
reduced to a humanly fabricated construct. It seems to suggest that if we're not
actively engaged in the interhuman world, we're not in the world at all, at least in
any meaningful sense. Throughout the history of *homo religiousus*, on the other
hand, the periodic retreat from, or suspension of, our day-to-day lives and
practices, what Bugbee calls "sabbatical placement" in "Wilderness in America"
(6), has played a central role - an inspiring, animating, orienting and empowering
role - in human beings' struggles to live meaningful and active - ever more fully
human - lives.

Wilderness, rather than a place of escape, may offer us a place of sabbath,
where we step back from the busy-ness of our lives and, from that distance, gain
a fresh perspective on the meaning - or meaningless folly - of what we do; where
we may meet our fellow beings - wild places and wild creatures - in all their
irreducible otherness and non-instrumental value (and where this otherness and
value cannot so easily be subsumed under the rubric of human projection,
imposition, fabrication or conveyance), and where through such holy intercourse
- sacramental participation in our mutual co-existence - we re-touch the fundamental sources of faith and meaning and receive the capacity and commission to embody that faith and meaning in affirmative, meaningful action. Wilderness sabbatical offers us the possibility of a radical re-orientation with respect to our entire lives as well as renewing and sponsoring contact with the holy ground of our being. Rather than being an escape from the 'real work,' regular and engaged wilderness sabbath observance may grant us the capacity and strength to do the work at hand with knowledge, respect and compassion, humility and certainty, commitment and enduring vigilance. And finally, it seems that only through sabbath participation in wilderness can we re-hear that obligating divine imperative to "Remember the sabbath place and keep it holy;" out of the respect born of our holy and healing contact with wildlands and wild creatures we can do no less.

Of course, if I remember my Luther's Small Catechism correctly, the command reads, "Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy." Within the Christian tradition, and the Jewish tradition from which the Christian sabbath observance was immediately derived, the sabbath is understood primarily in temporal, not spatial, terms. For Jews, the sabbath is something that begins at sunset on Friday evening and ends with sunrise on Sunday morning. It is a holy time, a 'holiday,' when work is set aside and business is put away, a time for ritual, reflection, respite and prayer. It is, fundamentally, not human time, but God's time; the primary referent is other-than-human and ultimate, eternal.
Wilderness, understood as a sabbath place, seems to share many of these same general characteristics. It is a place apart from the daily pursuits of human life. And while this has not always been the case over the course of human history, it is a fact of experience in the modern United States. And in my life. I was one year old when the Wilderness Act finally passed after years of debate and amendment; the Act's very existence and passage reflects our nation's recognition of the scarcity of wildlands left on this continent and the urgent need to protect from eventual destruction a few of the wild places that yet remain. After centuries of exploration, settlement, development and transformation, the United States is a land where what few wildlands remain are a remnant, vestigial. We may eulogize our deep alienation from nature and mourn our eviction from the garden, and we may eagerly await the dawn of the messianic age when lions lie down with lambs (or some other, perhaps less extreme, apocalyptic/utopian vision), but if we want to understand the potential significance and place of wilderness in our lives, then we would do well to describe and interpret our relations to wildlands as they, in fact, present themselves to us in experience. And one fact seems fairly clear: most of us no longer reside or work in wild places. In fact, designated wilderness is defined as a place apart from human habitation; it is a place we visit, usually during our 'free time' and days off, on weekends, holidays and vacations, and then return home - not unlike visiting a church or synagogue, temple or mosque. And upon returning home, we go back to business as usual; we do our work, earn our income, carry out our commercial transactions. Aside from guides and outfitters, trail crews, researchers and various others, wilderness is a place where business and work are set aside.
Of course, for most of us in our secular society (including those fast-food style churchgoers who get their sabbath's dose of something called "religion" in 45 minutes or less), the alternative to work and business isn't ritual, reflection and prayer but recreation; that's what weekends are for! Unfortunately, while recreation may connote the possibility of re-creation, as folks who would like to rescue the word from its bankruptcy often point out, most of what we describe as recreation are usually things that, according to Webster, "provide diversions and amusements." In my mind, the word evokes images of recreation rooms - "rec rooms" - filled with pool tables and ping pong tables, pinball machines, TVs and VCRs, where adolescents while away time in idleness and the yearning for something worth doing (I admit that these images may be a bit parochial, of course; geographically, economically and spiritually, I grew up right around the corner from "Wayne's World."). Within the framework of our dominant cultural patterns, business and recreation (business and pleasure?) are two sides of the same coin of instrumentality and intentionality. If we work in order to make money, we recreate in order to be diverted, amused, entertained - have fun. Like recreational drug use, recreational wilderness use offers no exception to the rule of technology; that's why the terms wilderness resource and recreational resource (non-motorized recreational resource, to be more precise) are so often used synonymously by management agencies and wilderness visitors alike. Perceived as a recreational resource, however, wilderness offers no alternative to, or place apart from, our busy-ness at all; both are thoroughly enveloped within the same practical and theoretical framework - the rigorous subordination of means to ends (and the latter's subsequent subordination to higher, greater and bigger
ends) and the purposive and acquisitive striving for more of whatever something/anything is 'good for.'

The sabbath time or place, on the other hand, calls for a suspension of such pursuits and offers a radical departure from so many of our purpose-specific practices. Wilderness sabbatical offers us a place for engaged and regular practice (given its current bastardization, I won't say ritual), sustained reflection, prayer and, perhaps ironically, play (which, as I will describe it shortly, is the polar opposite of recreation as outlined above). It is a place in which our participation involves setting aside our purposive endeavors and claims of mastery and control and availing ourselves to meet others - nonhuman others - on their own terms, as they may speak of themselves without reduction to humanly conferred interests; and, finally, it is a place where the voices of these self-speaking others may resonate within us and sponsor recognition of our co-creaturely kinship and reflection on the meaning and ground of our mutual being-together. As a sabbath observance, the primary referent in wilderness is nonhuman, the meaning foundational, the commission non-arbitrary. As such, like the religious devotee for whom the sabbath marks, not the weekend but the week's beginning, our wilderness sabbatical is anything but peripheral or tacked on; it is a central, centering event that animates and orients us as we move through our days carrying the wilderness ethos - the sabbath spirit - with us throughout the week(s) ahead.

And if, as I'm suggesting, wilderness is a place of sabbath, then it is, above all, a place of prayer. Within the Jewish tradition, more so than in the Christian
tradition it seems, prayer has played a central role in sabbath observance. I read with awe the legends of those prayerful Hasidic rabbis spending hour after hour of sabbath and holy days wrapped in their prayer shawls, rapt in ecstasy. And even in our time, the brilliant Jewish thinker Abraham Heschel was renowned as a legendary pray-er. For the Jew, the sabbath was - and is - a time of prayer, a time when, according to Buber, we "step 'before the countenance,'" "say You and listen" (I and Thou 131). Prayer, above all, is active attentiveness (Bugbee's "intent attending") and listening. In The Eclipse of God, Buber defines prayer this way:

We call prayer in the pregnant sense of the term that speech of man to God which, whatever else is asked, ultimately asks for the manifestation of the divine Presence, for this Presence's becoming dialogically perceivable. The single presupposition of a genuine state of prayer is thus the readiness of the whole man for this Presence, simple turned-towardness, unreserved spontaneity (126).

In prayer we stand ready, in openness and presentness, for the advent of the divine Presence. And, as discussed in Chapter Two of this paper, the place of that advent and incarnation is the place where we stand, where, as we meet our fellow creatures as Thous, the Creator, eternal Thou, manifests itself and becomes present. As such, prayer describes not an act or orientation toward an exclusively divine referent so much as a basic posture in which we stand ready to go out to meet the world in which we live in the fullness of dialogue. Maurice Friedman, drawing on an 18th Century Hasidic saying, describes prayer as follows:

"Alas the world is full of enormous lights and mysteries," says the Baal Shem, "but man hides them from him with one small hand." Prayer is the removal of that hand.
Prayer has to do with discovering each time anew what we can bring and what can be brought. ... The life of prayer can only be sustained if we bring ourselves to each situation with all that we know and have been (Touchstones 340 & 341).

And if this prayerful disposition marks the way we comport ourselves - "bring ourselves" - towards our fellow beings as we encounter them in the manifold relational events of our lives, it also informs our reflective, reflexive comportment as well. Prayer, almost paradoxically, extends inward to that honest and open reflection upon the meaning of who we are and who we may yet become through our active participation and involvement in the process of creation. It is this reflexive openness - this "deepening of candour" with respect to oneself that leads Bugbee to link the idea of prayer with meditation. In Inward Morning he writes, "For years I have been impressed with the justice of connecting the ideas of meditation and prayer. In true meditation one is opening oneself, there is a deepening of candour without which nothing is revealed, but for which one's thought skims round and round on surfaces" (143). Prayer, then, describes not only that opening of ourselves to the divine Presence and to our fellow creatures as we meet them as presences, but also a reflexive opening, reflective candour, honest self-appraisal.

Obviously, prayer is much more than some formulaic recitation or even a variety of conscious activity. In fact, as Buber point out, our overly-conscious and willful intentionality may even preclude the possibility of true prayer and rob it of its spontaneity.

But in this our style of subjectivized reflection not only the concentration of the one who prays, but also his spontaneity is assailed. The assailant is consciousness, the over-consciousness of
this man that he is praying, that he is *praying*, that he is praying. The subjective knowledge of the one-turning-towards about his turning-towards, this holding back of an I which does not enter into the action with the rest of the person, an I to which the action is an object - all this depossesses the moment, takes away its spontaneity (*Eclipse of God* 126).

More than a particular volitional act, prayer is a faith posture, a basic stance of the entire person - the disposition of dialogue, sabbath and, I believe, wilderness. In prayer one stands ready and open to receive, and in that readiness and openness one may receive the touch of divinity, co-creaturely intimacy and/or reflective in-sight. In prayer we do not arrogantly call the shots but present ourselves to hear and respond in all attentiveness and humility. In prayer, as in wilderness placement, we may recognize ourselves and our fundamental vocation as respondents. And so, it seems, that wilderness may teach those of us who have lost the capacity to pray, something of the meaning and import of prayer. The power of wilderness to suspend our claims and reveal the claimant's stance for the arrogant and impoverishing pose that it is may also em-power us to meet the world in a more humble, attentive and spontaneous way, a more prayerful way, re-attune us to the evocative voice of the other-than-human, and lead us to a renewed awareness of what it may mean to live in a world that we did not make and where human beings are not the sole and absolute source and referent of meaning and value.

I find this prayerful disposition central to my experience of wilderness as a sabbath place; to speak of wilderness as a place of prayer conveys the meditative receptivity and keen - though casual - sensuality that wilderness placement engenders as well as the stillness, the cathedral quietness and amplitude, of the
places themselves, especially during those high and holy hours of matins and
vespers. And yet, while I find these prayerful images true to my experience, the
sense of solemnity they invoke only tells part of the story. Wilderness placement
also kindles the sparks of what is most vital within us - a certain exuberance,
verve or zest, an overflowing of intoxicating joy and lightness, plain old fun.
Wild places call out to us to scramble up that next ridge (and the next one after
that), to follow game trails to see where they'll lead us, to explore waterfalls, to
swim in deep pools, to laugh and howl in response to their beauty. In other
words, the voice of wild places speaks to our sense of play. If wilderness is a
place of prayer, it is, at least as much, also a place of play.

Of course, I admit that play is not exactly a dominant feature in traditional
understandings of sabbath observance. At least not for adults. And yet, it strikes
me that in growing up and giving up our "childish ways," as St. Paul admonishes
us to do (I Cor. 13:11), we most often end up losing our capacity for both play
and prayer. It seems that wonder, awe and reverence give way, if not to some
'mature' atheism, then to creed, dogma and religion at about the same time that
our playfulness gets buried under, and its energies sapped by, our all-consuming
(though, in a sense, futile) efforts to "make a living" (we are not the creators of
our being) or "earn a living" (existence comes to us as a gift of grace; we cannot
possibly earn it). Perhaps we need to re-hear the words of Jesus when he says,
"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child
shall not enter it" (Mark 10:15). Perhaps Jesus is exhorting us to regain our
childish playfulness and spontaneity, our willingness to be awestruck and
amazed. For it seems that the capacity for play in our all-too-adult world has

great sacramental import for our lives. Play, as Erazim Kohak defines it, lies at the heart of the wilderness, sabbath ethos that stands as the strict counterpart and subversive challenge to the instrumentality that informs our technologically-conditioned patterns and drives our work-world lives and agendas. According to Kohak,

> In play, the world and I stand in a relation of mutual freedom, of non-demand. There is no task to be accomplished or result to be obtained. I do not engage in play even for the purpose of amusing myself. That is an attempt which invariably fails. Play is at its purest when it is an expression of what for want of a better term we could call vitality, when amusement is not its goal but rather its by-product. Perhaps it would be more accurate to speak of playfulness as the pure expression of what Heidegger called overtness between world and the subject. ... We shall establish a provisional criterion for play and say that to the extent to which an activity is subordinated to the achievement of a particular goal, it falls into the broad category of work, while to the extent to which it is its own justification, it constitutes play ("I, Thou, and It" 53).

From this definition of play, it should be obvious that play and recreation, as I described the latter term earlier in this chapter, are two very different things. In fact, given their respective definitions, they mark opposite poles along the spectrum of intentional activities. Most basically, the goal of recreation is to "provide diversions and amusements," while play, as Kohak understands it, has no goal; it is the opposite of goal-oriented activity. The purposiveness of recreation is absent from play; play serves no purpose. Ask a young child why he/she is playing and she/he will usually say, "I dunno," and give an almost disdainful, impatient shrug of the shoulders as a fitting response to this stupid, peculiarly adult question. And what's more, I'd guarantee that only some overly-mature, brainwashed child would ever answer this question with, "To have some fun." Even as an adult equipped with a much larger vocabulary and more adept
in the arts of deception and miscommunication, my own explanations as to why I'm going out to walk in wild places are rarely more articulate than a child's: a kick at the ground and a quick study of my boots, followed by "Just 'cuz," or "It's such a nice day," "I just wanna get out of town," "I wanna get up into the mountains for awhile." Neither the child nor I are as dumb as we sound; it's just that the implied instrumentality begs the question, and the only honest response takes on the form of a tautology. We play in order to play, walk in wilderness to walk in wilderness. In this general sense, then, wilderness is a sabbatical place of playfulness and play.

Of course, there's a lot of hard work involved in this play, and at times - lots of times - we're obviously not playing at all. It's physically demanding and sometimes even exhausting to walk with a pack up steep inclines, over mountain passes or through dense brush. And when I'm fording swift-moving, deep rivers, crossing streams on slick rocks or dead-fallen trees, or balancing on wobbly talus boulders, I'm quite sure that I'm not playing at all. In these narrower contexts, I can answer your 'why' questions quickly and easily: "In order to get to the other side," or "In order to get down off this ridge or mountaintop." These particular tasks have very well-defined, specific goals. And in addition to these, there are all the less taxing tasks around the camp to attend to: setting up some form of shelter, cooking, cleaning up, securing food, maintaining an adequate supply of drinkable water and countless other highly specific, goal-oriented pursuits. Even though our wilderness walking is framed within the overarching context of a play event, work and play intermingle in the particular situations that arise in our actual wilderness travels. And, in fact, an
activity that we may have experienced as play one day may be nothing more than dreary work the next. Like prayer, play involves the disposition or posture that we bring to what we do and whom we meet. Play is that disposition of vitality and non-instrumentality - a disposition that may withhold or manifest itself in both situations of work or play, broadly defined. As Kohak explains,

To be sure, play is again a broad and often indistinct concept, one we need to define further. There are elements of play in almost all my pursuits - without them, work becomes drudgery. Similarly, there are often elements of work in my play. ... As an instance, when I would enjoy sailing to leeward of an island but lay a course to windward because letting the island mask my wind would cost me minutes in reaching my destination, sailing has, in that limited context, ceased to be play and has become (enjoyable) work. Conversely, when I decide to decorate a board inside a cabinet I am making with delicate scrollwork for the sole reason that I enjoy carving scrollwork and in spite of the fact that it will prolong the job and serve no purpose, my work has become play ("I, Thou, and It" 53).

Play describes those things we do for their own sake, irrespective of the purposes they serve. More than a description of a particular class of play events, however, play - playfulness might be better - describes a disposition characterized, above all, by purposelessness and the suspension of purposive pursuits.

As such, playfulness is the human posture or spirit that corresponds most closely with pointless activities in use-less places. It is a posture both appropriate to and engendered through sabbatical wilderness placement. With our purposes and goal-oriented pursuits suspended in engaged and intent participation in wilderness play, nature no longer receives its definition and existence solely in terms of our categories of resource development and use. According to Kohak's definition, in play our relations with things are defined in terms of "mutual
freedom" and "non-demand." In play we encounter things as independent others, as ends in themselves and not just means to be used or manipulated according to our purposes and ends. Play offers the immediacy that, along with the openness and attunement of prayer, may foster I-Thou dialogue with the beings whom we meet in moments of playfulness.

And it seems that this is the point to which all the images I've used in my shotgun approach to the import of wilderness placement keep returning and at which they all converge. Wilderness is the place where I most often encounter the beings and things of nature as Thous and not Its. In speaking of wilderness as an anti-resource, a home of dialogue and a sabbath place of prayer and play, I'm trying to point to the way these places actively predispose us to, and foster our participation in, I-Thou encounters with nonhuman beings and things - encounters through which we receive the irreducibly meaningful and life-affirming gifts of dialogue, the immediate knowledge of these nonhuman others as non-instrumentally valuable and respectworthy, and the powerful imperative to embody that knowledge in respectful, compassionate action with regards to them.

Up to this point, what I have presented in this section might best be described as a fairly general and exploratory reflection upon the sabbath potential of wilderness as a place of prayer and play. To show how sabbatical placement in wildlands may actually inform and enrich our lives, I'd like to offer several of Wendell Berry's poems - in full or in part - from his collection entitled
Sabbaths. Berry wrote these poems over the course of six years of Sundays among the wooded hillsides of Kentucky. And while the importance of his regular, weekly observance of sabbath time should not be overlooked, I have chosen these few selections to highlight the equally important role of the sabbath place - the place apart, the place of sanctuary and withdrawal, the place of sacramental celebration and renewal, healing and sustenance, sponsorship and commission. The poems address all these themes and a great deal more. They speak, above all, to the ultimate importance and necessity of both sabbath places and our sabbatical placement within them. The poems require no exegesis, and I'll give none. What few comments I will offer represent my personal responses to their powerful elicitations. I simply ask my audience to read Berry's words poetically and with an eye to their import and relevance for the themes discussed above.

The bell calls in the town
Where forebears cleared the shaded land
And brought high daylight down
To shine on field and trodden road.
I hear, but understand
Contrarily, and walk into the woods.
I leave labor and load,
Take up a different story.
I keep an inventory
Of wonders and of uncommercial goods.

I climb up through the field
That my long labor has kept clear.
Projects, plans unfulfilled
Waylay and snatch at me like briars,
For there is no rest here
Where ceaseless effort seems to be required,
Yet fails, and spirit tires
With flesh, because failure
And weariness are sure
In all that mortal wishing has inspired.

I go in pilgrimage
Across an old fenced boundary
To wildness without age
Where, in their long dominion,
The trees have been left free.
They call the soil here "Eden"; slants and steeps
Hard to stand straight upon
Even without a burden.
No more a perfect garden,
There's an immortal memory that it keeps.

I leave work's daily rule
And come here to this restful place
Where music stirs the pool
And from high stations of the air
Fall notes of wordless grace,
Strewn remnants of the primal Sabbath's hymn.
And I remember here
A tale of evil twined
With good, serpent and vine,
And innocence as evil's stratagem.

I let that go a while,
For it is hopeless to correct
By generations' toil,
And I let go my hopes and plans
That no toil can perfect.
There is no vision here but what is seen:
White bloom nothing explains.
But a mute blessedness
Exceeding all distress,
The fresh light stained a hundred shades of green.

Uproar of wheel and fire
That has contained us like a cell
Opens and lets us hear
A stillness longer than all time
Where leaf and song fulfill
The passing light, pass with the light, return,
Renewed, as in a rhyme.
This is no human vision
Subject to our revision;
God's eye holds every leaf as light is worn.

Ruin is in place here:
The dead leaves rotting on the ground,
The live leaves in the air
Are gathered in a single dance
That turns them round and round.
The fox cub trots his almost pathless path
As silent as his absence.
These passings resurrect
A joy without defect,
The life that steps and sings in ways of death (10-12).

What is the way to the woods, how do you go there?
By climbing up through the six days' field,
kept in all the body's years, the body's
sorrow, weariness, and joy. By passing through
the narrow gate on the far side of that field
where the pasture grass of the body's life gives way
to the high, original standing of the trees.
By coming into the shadow, the shadow
of the grace of the strait way's ending,
the shadow of the mercy of light.

Why must the gate be narrow?
Because you cannot pass beyond it burdened.
To come into the woods you must leave behind
the six days' world, all of it, all of its plans and hopes.
You must come without weapon or tool, alone,
epecting nothing, remembering nothing,
into the ease of sight, the brotherhood of eye and leaf (88-89).

Here where the world is being made,
No human hand required,
A man may come, somewhat afraid
Always, and somewhat tired,

For he comes ignorant and alone
From work and worry of
A human place, in soul and bone
The ache of human love;

He may come and be still, not go
Toward any chosen aim
Or stay for what he thinks is so.
Setting aside his claim

On all things fallen in his plight,
His mind may move with leaves,
Wind-shaken, in and out of light,
And live as the light lives,

And live as the Creation sings
In covert, two clear notes,
And waits; then two clear answerings
Come from more distant throats -

May live a while with light, shaking
In high leaves, or delayed
In halts of song, submit to making,
The shape of what is made (39-40).

I think I love this last poem most of all; quite literally, it evokes a physical response in me. My stomach knows the fear and worry, the ache and lack of which Berry speaks; my shoulders have felt that debilitating weariness. How often have I entered my wilderness sabbath in such an empty and broke-down condition? But my body also knows the gift of that deep sigh the last four stanzas of this poem bespeak - the relinquishment (I'm at a loss to say who is the agent here; who does/grants this relinquishing?) of claims and the lightening of mind, the freedom to wander in the companionship of light and leaves and sound, the grace of things arising, presencing and falling away as I stroll or sit, miraculously enough, with no desire or attempt to control them, manipulate them or make them stay.
Perhaps it is this gift of the sigh - our graciously bestowed acceptance and affirmation of stillness and non-interventionist participation, so to speak - that leads Berry to link our wilderness sabbaticals with death in the first two poems. Certainly our sabbath rest points to our final rest, the end of labors and cares, the ultimate disburdenment. But that sounds awfully cliche; to be honest, it's been a long time since I found much comfort in any abstract notions, theories or ideas about death, whether it be eternal life *ad infinitum* (*ad nauseum*?) or some ecological re-union with the organic building blocks of life (or, in a slightly different version, a re-mixing with the animating Energy that courses through the 'veins' of the cosmos). And yet I sense Berry means something very different than all of this; on occasion, death and resurrection may 'flash' in my soul as accessible and potentially meaningful, usually when I'm dwelling in places where the human project to arrest the former and force the latter aren't so evident. There's a place - a high meadow - up near the Bitterroot Divide that I visit with some regularity, and where, almost as regularly, the inevitability of my own death - and the deaths of those whom I love - loses much of its sting. Without explanation, this place imparts an unspoken, unspeakable 'sense' to our final sigh and offers the possibility of a meaningful death.

These first three poems speak of the way we come into the sabbath place; for the most part, they describe our movement from the work place and home place into the sabbath place. And they also describe the grace of what awaits us there as we are en-couraged and en-abled in our sabbatical placement to let go of our claims and pursuits, suspend our efforts to represent and explain, exert control and establish 'order,' and to stand among our fellow creatures in the
"brotherhood (sic) of eye and leaf." As we step up - and step back - to meet these wild places and wild creatures in such a way, we find ourselves received by their welcoming presence and graced with their ultimate gifts: joy, beauty, silence, ease, and intimations of kinship, divinity, and life (and death) - affirming meaning.

The final two poems I'd like to present speak of a very different movement. Actually, this fourth poem speaks of no movement at all; instead, it offers a stark snapshot - a freeze frame - of the profane and sacred standing side by side.

Hail to the forest born again,  
that by neglect, the American benevolence,  
has returned to semi-virginity, graceful  
in the putrid air, the corrosive rain,  
the ash-fall of Heaven-invading fire -  
our time's genius to mine the light  
of the world's ancient buried days  
to make it poisonous in the air.  
Light and greed together make a smudge  
that stifles and blinds. But here  
the light of Heaven's sun descends,  
stained and mingled with its forms,  
heavy trunk and limb, light life and wing,  
that we must pray for clarity to see,  
not raw sources, symbols, worded powers,  
but fellow presences, independent, called  
out of nothing by no word of ours,  
blesse'd, here with us (57).

In a single verse, Berry counterposes the profane consequences of business as usual under the claimant's stance with the possibility of a clear vision (which, as Berry notes, comes to us through prayer, prayerful disposition) very much like the wilderness ethos and sabbath spirit described earlier. Whereas the first half
of the poem bespeaks our sinful heritage, the second half suggests the potential source of healing and renewal - re-sacralizing. Like the Hasidim and Buber and myself, Berry, in his writings, conveys that faith posture in which the profane is not understood as essentially and irrevocably so, but might instead be more meaningfully described as the not-yet-hallowed - a place of potential hallowing. And so, in this final poem Berry suggests the possibility of the complimentary and harmonious movement of return from the sabbath place, in which our sabbath renewal and commission may permeate and transform the rest of our lives - and our world.

What if, in the high, restful sanctuary
That keeps the memory of Paradise,
We're followed by the drone of history
And greed's poisonous fumes still burn our eyes?

Disharmony recalls us to our work.
From Heavenly work of light and wind and leaf
We must turn back into the peopled dark
Of our unraveling century, the grief

Of waste, the agony of haste and noise.
It is a hard return from Sabbath rest
To lifework of the fields, yet we rejoice,
Returning, less condemned in being blessed

By vision of what human work can make:
A harmony between wood-land and field,
The world as it was given for love's sake,
The world by love and loving work revealed

As given to our children and our Maker.
In that healed harmony the world is used
But not destroyed, the Giver and the taker
Joined, the taker blessed, in the unabused

Gift that nurtures and protects. Then workday
And Sabbath live together in one place.
Though mortal, incomplete, that harmony
Is our one possibility of peace.

When fields and woods agree, they make a rhyme
That stirs in distant memory the whole
First Sabbath's song that no largess of time
Or hope or sorrow wholly can recall.

But harmony of earth is Heaven-made,
Heaven-making, is promise and is prayer,
A little song to keep us unafraid,
An earthly music magnified in air (15-16).

Reading this poem makes me a little uneasy - something to do with the messiness of juggling the two worlds and trying to affirm both. I admire Berry's courage here. He speaks of a balanced syncopation between address and response, dialogue and responsibility, withdrawal and return, sacrament and commission through which we are afforded the possibility of a world - neither an idyll nor a heaven - where the sponsorship of our wilderness sabbaths finds its incarnation in a more just and compassionate society. Wilderness, attended to, offers no escape, as my friend and his peers once thought; rather, it offers the blessings of renewal and re-orientation that potentiate active, transformative return and the obligating imperative that demands it.

Berry's poems, Kohak's understanding of play, Buber's, Friedman's and Bugbee's reading of prayer, and Bugbee's thoughts on wilderness [both in "Wilderness in America" and writ large in Inward Morning, where wilderness takes on ontological significance as "reality experienced as call and explained in responding to it absolutely" (128), and "the home in which things other than ourselves may be welcomed as guests, where innocence is sacred, and helplessness moves us not to abandon the helpless, in spite of our not knowing
how to help" (224).] - how many times have I re-read their words, and how many miles have I walked with their ideas swirling through my head? And it all still seems so true, so apt and resonant with my personal experiences of wilderness as a place of sabbath. During the years reading, re-reading and thinking about these things, wilderness has, as a fact of my experience, been a sabbath place for me. It has stood as a place apart from the corrosive and erosive stupidity of most of my employment, the suffocation, isolation and loss of so much human society. It has offered me a sanctuary and retreat, a place of withdrawal and, no doubt, at times, a place of escape. But despite the baggage and pre-occupations I bring with me, and no matter the misguided and self-centered nature of my motives, wild lands and wild creatures have continued to bestow their blessings upon me. With their eloquent voices they have, at times, startled me out of my self-absorption and re-attuned my hearing to the call and plaint of my fellow creatures. Wrapped in the embrace of wild places, I've known - though always partially and ephemerally, that is, humanly - something of healing and renewal, joy, faith and meaning. And, finally, I've heard and known the powerful claim of these places upon me. Cut off from regular and intimate contact with them, I can't quite seem to make sense of my life; I lack some basic sustenance and I wilt. This, too, is a fact of my experience; I've tried to leave before - twice now. And each time, I've found myself called back - beckoned - to return for another summer, another year, to walk among these mountains. And I believe that if my life will ever take on the character of a vocation, it will be to the degree that I can act with integrity and meaning in consonance with the instruction received, and the respect and love engendered, in walking in the gracious presence of wildlands. But to "put to the proof in action," to incarnate that respect and love
in respectful and loving action, to keep these places holy in a world so antithetically opposed to holiness, how does one venture to respond? What answer can I - can we - make?

III.

Responsibility means responding. If we have found ourselves called upon and claimed by the presence of wild places and wild creatures, encountered in the reciprocal co-presence of dialogue, we cannot but respond. We are, inescapably, responsible. The rhythmic alternation between call and answer, claim and response, dialogue and responsibility - the rhythm this entire paper is an attempt to articulate - attains completion and fulfillment only insofar as we actively work to incarnate the meaning and knowledge received in dialogue in respectful and committed response.

At the most basic level, then, wilderness preservation is a matter of ethical responsibility. It is grounded upon and rooted in our reception and acknowledgment of the address of wild places and wild creatures heard, not as resources defined according to our objectifying representations and categories of manipulation, use and control, but as eloquent, self-speaking others - Thous. And in meeting these places and creatures as such, we come to know them as eminently respectworthy beings with an integrity, independence and value that defy reduction to terms of function, purpose or instrumentality. That is, the evocative voice of self-speaking, wild nature, heard in the moment of dialogue, elicits our respect and concern, and we find ourselves placed in a position of
irrevocable responsibility, called forth - both by these fellow creatures and from out of the depths of our creaturely being and vocation - to embody our respect and concern for them in respectful and concerned response. In sacramental intercourse with the beings of wild nature we come into their holy presence, intimate the potential holiness of our lives, and receive nothing short of a non-arbitrary - fully binding, ultimately liberating - divine imperative to remember these places and creatures for what and who they are in their own right and keep them holy.

But, after talking at length about wilderness as a sabbath place, I think it's important to note that that's not why we ought to preserve wilderness. In other words, we don't preserve wildlands because they are sabbath places that offer grace and meaning for our lives (although they are, indeed, that); the primary sponsorship of wilderness preservation cannot and should not be reduced to a causal, functional explanation carried out in terms of human self-interest - even religio-philosophical or onto-theological ones. Again, wilderness preservation is a matter of ethical responsibility. We preserve wilderness because in and through our sabbatical placement in wildlands and among wild creatures we have heard their self-speaking address, met them in dialogue, and come to know them as fellow creatures worthy of respect and concern. We are enjoined to remember and keep these sabbath places holy not out of self-interest but out of respect and reverence - even love.

The words of John Muir and David Brower, when they equate the flooding of Hetch Hetchy or Glen Canyon with the flooding of a great cathedral,
seem relevant and illuminating here. They're not suggesting that we shouldn't flood a cathedral because we need beautiful places to worship (although it's also true that we do need them and that our worship may be especially meaningful and noumenal in such places). Rather, we preserve the cathedral because we know it as something warranting preservation, something beautiful (that is, something whose "sense," according to Bugbee, cannot be explained strictly in terms of its purpose) and holy, the "house of God" - irreducibly meaningful, unqualifiably valuable, sacred. And while this latter implication of the analogy between flooding these valleys and canyons and flooding cathedrals is rarely discussed explicitly, as deeply religious a man as Ed Abbey knew the sacrilege of such desecration when he eulogized the lost red rock country of Glen Canyon as a place where "God lived" (movie soundtrack to "Abbey's World"). To speak of wildlands as cathedrals or sabbath places is an attempt to invoke the power of these rich religious images and call upon their attendant meanings. When we try to testify to the irreducible and indescribable value of the things we love and try to speak of the love and respect we hold for them, our ordinary, daily speech sounds so prosaic - says so little. We strain against and stretch the limits of our language and find ourselves drawn to the more evocative images of poetry and religion, where we can at least point toward and bear witness to the fundamental and fundamentally ineffable meaning these things may hold. And this seems fitting. For respect, concern, love and compassion are born of our experience of things encountered apart from our representations and objectifying constructs, and so, consequently, the meaning, knowledge and value imparted in those meetings elude representational thought and speech. And yet, while the conceptualization and articulation so often escape us, one thing remains sure: we
know these things as claiming our respect and concern, and we know we are obliged to incarnate that respect and concern in respectful, compassionate response.

Wilderness preservation, then, is not an act of self-interest but one of respect and concern - an act of ethical responsibility. Unfortunately, most wilderness advocates rarely offer ethical grounds for their position; that’s why we’ve become just another competing user group (and an "elitist" and "selfish" one at that) haggling with timber interests, petrochemical executives and snowmobilers over who gets how much of the remaining roadless resource to use according to our respective needs and desires. Wilderness preservation may make good scientific, economic, social, recreational, aesthetic and religious sense, but to sell wilderness strictly in terms of its usefulness and instrumentality - its benefits and gifts - mis-speaks the ethical foundations of our concern and ignores the fundamental meaning of preservation. As I suggested earlier, wilderness preservation is our (last chance) attempt at "leaving (wild) things be" - that active response to things that involves, according to Bugbee, "respecting things, being still in the presence of things, letting them speak" (Inward Morning 155). In preserving wilderness we acknowledge the respectworthiness of these wild places and wild creatures; we curb our hyperactive instrumentality and lust for overrunning (and transforming) our nonhuman fellow creatures and summarily reducing them to non-presences (Its); we recognize the self-speaking eloquence of these beings and things and allow them to speak in their own terms and in their own right. In sum, leaving wild things be is our response to their eloquent address as they speak not to our interests but to our capacity for respect and
concern and, in doing so, elicit both. In the case of wild places, leaving them be
means preserving what integrity and independence from human artifice they still
possess; for wild creatures, it means preserving sufficient and appropriate space
for healthy populations of the most far-ranging and habitat-specific species to
evolve and reproduce, live and die in their own ways, independently of heavy-
handed human interference. These are the things we find ourselves obliged to
do out of the respect and concern engendered in and elicited through our
intimate, knowing contact with wild places and wild creatures.

So, how much wilderness are we obligated to preserve? Given the time
and place, this becomes the basic ethical question that we must answer in
deciding the fate of the remaining roadless lands - de facto wilderness - in
Montana and the northern Rockies. This is the ethical question to which any
political solution to the wilderness issue in our region - be it a wilderness bill or a
timber release bill - must be held accountable, answerable, responsible. And,
generally speaking, the answer to this question is, I believe, fairly
straightforward: all that's respectworthy, all that speaks to our concern. And for
me, that means all of it - all that remains relatively intact and undefiled. As a
nation, we face our final opportunity to leave a few small pieces of what's left of
wild nature be. In recognition of, and out of respect for, the independence and
otherness, the irreducible meaning and non-instrumental value of the other-than-
human and that which we did not alter, fabricate or make over in our own
image, we need to - we must - set aside and protect the few tracts of wild land
that remain on this continent.
Of course, if I'm going to advocate wilderness preservation within the framework of ethical responsibility, such general, abstract and prescriptive statements cannot furnish the proper experiential starting point for my arguments; instead, they are conclusions based upon our immediate and participatory knowledge of these wild places and wild creatures as non-instrumentally valuable and respectworthy and our reflective recognition of the meaning and purport of our being-together-with them as co-participants in the process of creation. And so, if I want to talk about wilderness preservation in terms of ethical responsibility, I must begin at the beginning; I must begin with the actual, concrete encounters with wild places and wild creatures that have engendered and nurtured my respect and concern for them and through which I have found myself claimed by the non-arbitrary, obligating imperative to embody my respect for these beings and things by leaving them be. In other words, I must begin by looking to my own experience of the remaining de facto wilderness in Montana and the northern Rockies and bearing witness to those events through which I have come to know these places and their inhabitants as respectworthy and through which I have received the command to enact my respect for them and keep them holy. And while my experiences here may be fairly limited, they furnish the necessary experiential starting point from which to begin my reflective exploration of what it may mean to act responsibly - ethically - with respect to wildlands in general.

Usually, I don't venture too far from the mountains around Missoula, so, of all the undesignated, unprotected wildlands in question, I only visit two of these areas with any regularity: the Great Burn and the Quigg Peak-Rock Creek
roadless area. In addition to my visits to these places, however, I've also had the
time to go to several other de facto wilderness areas in the region, and of
those infrequent visits, my trips to the Rocky Mountain Front, Humbug Spires
and Lost River Range stand out as especially memorable and meaningful. In an
infinite multitude of voices, each of these places has, in very unique and different
ways, called to me and claimed me. In the smell of wet sage at dawn, in the
enveloping coolness of a grove of ancient cedars, in the sights and sounds
-especially the sounds!- of a moose cow and calf casually foraging along the
banks of a lazy creek (the alternate sucking of hooves in the mud or clacking
against rocks, the slosh of water, the tear of plants from the ground - all so clearly
audible in that evening's stillness), in the full moon's glare on chalky rock
pinnacles with a chorus of coyotes howling nearby, in the calm of a July
snowshower, the blast of autumn's first winds, in the matter-of-fact dynamism of
a devastating forest fire and the more subtle processes of renewal, in the eruption
of massive mountains out of a flat, grassy sea, in rushing streams and hellish
aridity - in all these events, along with a hundred thousand others, these places
have addressed me. They've spoken to me as so much more than cheap sources
of fossil fuels or so many million board feet of timber or potential mining sites,
more than a breeding ground for productive fisheries and abundant "game"
populations, more than recreational backpacking or horsepacking resources.
With unsurpassable eloquence, they've spoken to me of themselves - of their
irreplaceable uniqueness and wondrous beauty, their sense and worth and
goodness, their integrity and independence apart from any human purpose, goal
or intention. And in that graciously bestowed reception and acknowledgment of
this self-speaking address, I've come to know these wild places and their
inhabitants as irreducibly and indescribably meaningful and valuable, obviously and overwhelmingly respectworthy. And I know they cry out - alternately pleading and demanding, it seems - to be protected and preserved, let be, allowed to enact and articulate their existence on their own terms and in their own way. Out of the respect and concern born of such dialogue, I feel we are called upon and obligated to do nothing less.

But, as I mentioned before, my experience here is fairly limited. What about all the roadless areas I've never visited? How do I know that each one is respectworthy and warrants preservation? Upon what do I base my ethical responsibility for them? As I've mentioned throughout this paper, ethical responsibility is born in and sponsored by our encounters with others as we meet them as fellow beings, presences, Thous, partners in dialogue. Ethical responsibility "springs" from our concrete, actual participation in the reciprocity of dialogue, where we come to know our fellow creatures as respectworthy and irreducibly valuable, where our lives and actions may be informed by direction and meaning, and where we recognize the potential holiness of our being-together-with-them in what Bugbee calls the "sacrament of co-existence." And yet, while our participation in dialogue begets and/or nurtures our respect and calls forth our respectful response, ethical responsibility only comes to full fruition through our serious reflection upon the sense and meaning of these encounters and our ability to incarnate that sense and meaning in thoughtful, committed action. And it seems, upon reflection, that the respect engendered and the meaning imparted in my experiences of the Great Burn or Quigg Peak inform my responsibility to like things - say the Blue Joint area, the Tobacco
Roots, Lemhis or Crazy Mountains. by way of analogy and association, my encounters with both designated wilderness and de facto wildlands suggest that these roadless areas and their inhabitants are similarly evocative and respectworthy and warrant preservation and protection. By way of generalization, I might say that I've never walked in a wilderness area - designated or not - that didn't speak to my capacity for respect and elicit my respectful response, and, furthermore, I have trouble imagining any such place not evoking such a response. And although we can never lose sight of the experiential ground of our thoughts and actions or try to substitute abstractions and generalizations for the compelling and empowering immediacy of our encounters, neither can we limit our ethical responsibility to those relatively few beings and things we may come to know as intimate partners in dialogue. Therefore, as an extension of my respect and concern for the wild places and creatures I've known, I'm lead to conclude that not only the Great Burn and Rocky Mountain Front warrant protection and preservation as wilderness, but that each one of the remaining de facto wilderness areas in the northern Rockies calls forth and compels the same ethical response.

Furthermore, in attempting to bear witness to the reality and import of those immediate and engaging encounters with wild places and wild creatures that sponsor our ethical concern for them, and in attempting to reflect upon and interpret the sense and meaning of these meetings as they inform our ethical responsibility toward wildlands in general, we are, in addition, aided and instructed in our ethical decision-making and action by our fellow human beings as they testify to and enact their concern on behalf of those wildlands they care
about most. And so, as we seek to come to some general position of ethical responsibility with respect to wilderness preservation in the northern Rockies it seems especially relevant that, according to Regional Forester Dave Jolly, "[T]here is a constituency for every one of these roadless areas. ... When we start analyzing the effects of entering any one of them, we hear from people" (Missoulian, Oct. 10, 1992). And he's right. Consider this very brief and partial list of local environmental groups working to preserve and protect the remaining roadless lands of their locale: Great Burn Study Group, Rock Creek Protective Association, Badger-Two Medicine Alliance, Save the Yaak Committee, Friends of the Bitterroot, Wild Allan Mountain, Friends of the Wild Swan, Swan View Coalition, Deer Lodge Forest Defense Fund, Beaverhead Forest Concerned Citizens, Friends of the Clearwater, Hells Canyon Preservation Council, and the list goes on and on. Through word and action these groups and their members tell their stories of ethical concern and invite and encourage us to support and/or join their efforts to act with respect toward the particular places they seek to protect and preserve. For the most part, the members of these groups are people who live near the areas in question; they visit these places regularly and, through years of intimate contact, have come to know them as irreducibly and irreplaceably valuable. And out of respect and love, they want to see these places allowed to maintain their integrity and independence; they want to see them protected from desecration, disrespectful use and abuse, and unnecessary and care-less sacrifice for the sake of short term human gain. I believe the efforts of these local groups testify, above all else, to the self-speaking eloquence, deep respectworthiness and non-instrumental value of the places they seek to preserve. So, while I've never been to the Yaak or hiked in the Tobacco Roots, I
have witnessed the respect and compassionate commitment these places and
others call forth in my fellow humans, and their testimony resonates with my
own experience of wildlands and confirms my general conviction that, out of
respect, we must leave these wild places - each of them - be.

But why should I trust the Badger-Two Medicine Alliance? It appears that
the oil and gas industry hears something very different along the Rocky
Mountain Front. And how can I know that the Rock Creek Protective
Association is any more attuned to the self-speaking voice of the mountains in
that drainage than the timber interests who want to log their slopes? Finally,
how do I know that all I've heard in my own encounters with wild places and
creatures isn't simply a projection? These are the kinds of questions that will
always hound any attempt to advocate wilderness preservation in terms of
ethical responsibility. In his article "Saving You for Real People," John Kultgen
sums up this critical position when he writes,

You-saying is a very dangerous foundation for an environmental
ethic. It and the ethic built on it will simply reflect the pre-
philosophical prejudices which the You-sayer brings to the
encounter with natural things. If he should happen to be a sadist,
pillager or chauvinist pig, they will say to him "rape us, despoil us,
enslave us - we are yours" (66).

Here Kultgen intends to discount an environmental ethic of
responsibility, such as the one I've suggested, by reducing it to a your-word-
against-mine relativism. He seems to say, "You hear one thing; I hear something
else. How do you hope to adjudicate between competing claims and discern
who's right without some 'objective' referent?"
However, through the extreme overstatement of his critique, Kultgen inadvertently suggests a way of establishing a general criterion to evaluate what we say we hear nonhuman nature say to us. In meeting another being or thing as a Thou, we receive the address of that other as it speaks, not of its function, purpose, instrumentality or usefulness, but of itself - as a unique and independent partner in an immediate, present and reciprocal relation. As such, our consequent ethical response to our fellow creatures is not dictated by our needs and desires but by the respect and compassion born of those meetings, through which we come to know our fellows as eminently respectworthy and irreducibly valuable regardless of the human purposes or intentions they serve. And, as I've already suggested, wilderness preservation - our efforts to leave wildlands be - is, at root, not a matter of self-interest or expediency but one of enacting our immediate and intimate knowledge of these places and creatures as respectworthy and honoring their claims to be granted the 'space' to articulate their existence in their own unique way.

On the other hand, hearing things ask to be raped, despoiled or enslaved seems rooted in a very different kind of relation: the I-It relation of experience and use. In this case, things speak, not of themselves, but according to the hearer's understanding (or misunderstanding) of what they're 'good for,' the function he assigns to them, the purposes they may serve; they 'speak' as mute and plastic resources, silent objects. And in actuality, they don't speak at all; what 'voice' they have is projected upon them by the subject according to his goals and agenda, his needs and desires, and their value - entirely instrumental - is determined accordingly. What Kultgen describes, in fact, is that all-too-
common (il)logic of "blaming the victim" and can easily be identified for the obvious and distorted projection that it is. In the case of rape, for example, does any woman ask to be assaulted, brutally violated, objectified, dehumanized, tortured, beaten, even murdered? No. And to say that a woman "asks for it" is nothing but a projection of the perpetrator's desires and intentions onto the victim in order to justify his own unjustifiable actions. It reflects the assailant's attempts to absolve himself of responsibility and bears absolutely no resemblance to any act of ethical responsibility. Similarly, forests don't ask to be clearcut; species don't ask to go extinct; intact ecosystems don't ask to be fragmented or altogether destroyed. Anyone who says they hear a forest, species or ecosystem say such things is simply attempting to justify his use and exploitation of them by projecting upon them his own representations and categories in which these beings and things have no standing except as natural resources to be manipulated, developed and used according to the hearer-projector's purposive agenda and intentionality. So, to anyone who would argue that the remaining wildlands in the northern Rockies are begging to be roaded, drilled, logged and mined, I'd ask you to step back and reflect upon what you are hearing. Is it the voice of these places and creatures as they speak of themselves and their integrity, independence, otherness and non-instrumental value? Or does the voice you hear speak of these same places and creatures as objects to manipulate, order and control, resources to exploit, develop and use, dead and speechless things without any meaning apart from the purposes they may serve? Is it the self-speaking voice of a Thou or the projected utterance of an It that you are responding to? Are your actions sponsored in respect and concern or self-interest? Insofar as we honestly ask ourselves such questions, I believe we can
evaluate what we hear and how we respond, and, contra Kultgen, we can discern between the address of self-speaking fellow creatures and the purposive prejudices of our instrumentalist projections. It seems to me that ethical responsibility does not require some mythic objectivity as much as it requires reflective candour and philosophical honesty.

Ethical responsibility with respect to wildlands means responding to their address. As resources these places do not - cannot - address us; resources have no voice apart from that projected upon them according to our intentions and purposes. As such, we cannot practice responsibility toward a resource.

Our ethical responsibility to wild places and wild creatures must be born in and funded by our relations with them, not as resources, but as independent others, fellow beings, partners in dialogue, Thous. Through the suspension or bracketing of our objectifying constructs and instrumental categories, we may hear the self-speaking address of these beings and things and find ourselves called upon to respond. In the immediacy of dialogue (where our projections do not intervene), these eloquent places and creatures speak to us of their otherness, independence and integrity, their non-instrumental goodness and value, and, in doing so, they elicit our respect and concern. Consequently, our response to their self-speaking address, if it is to be ethical, will not fail to embody that respect and concern. And our respectful and caring response to wildlands involves, most fundamentally, leaving them be (understood in the way Bugbee defines that posture/movement/action). Preserving the remaining wildlands of this region is not just good science, smart economics or sound recreation management; it is
our ethical responsibility. The rhythm of dialogue and responsibility with respect to the wildlands of the northern Rockies culminates in our preservation of each - and consequently, all - of the remaining roadless lands in the region. Out of our respect and concern for these places and their inhabitants, we are obligated to protect, preserve and keep them holy.

And so, I'd like to conclude this chapter, and this entire essay, by advocating and endorsing what I believe is the appropriate political enactment of our ethical responsibility to the wildlands of this region: the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act (NREPA). Written by grassroots environmentalists from around the region, this bill would preserve about 20 million acres of public wildlands in eastern Washington and Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming through a variety of management designations, including wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, national park study areas, biological corridors and wildland recovery areas. In short, it would protect and preserve what remains of the wildlands of the northern Rockies as well as begin the process of rehabilitation and healing on certain public lands that have been degraded through prior development and use. And while NREPA is almost always argued for on the basis of its biological and economic merits, to me, it stands as a testament to the dynamic and compelling rhythm of dialogue and responsibility. It is an enactment of the respect and concern these wildlands and their inhabitants call forth from us and instill within us; it is, at root, a respectful and compassionate - ethical - response to the eloquent address of these places and creatures and an honoring of their claims to be allowed to exist and evolve in their own way and in their own right.
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