

ON ARCHITECTURE, DIVINITY, AND THE INTERHUMAN

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Tetsugen Doko was a Japanese Zen master who lived from 1630 to 1682. As a young devotee, he resolved to publish the Buddha's teachings (sutras) in Japanese. At the time they were available only in Chinese. The book was to be printed with wood blocks in an edition of seven thousand copies. It was a huge undertaking.

Tetsugen began by travelling and collecting donations for this purpose. Wealthy sympathizers would give him a hundred pieces of gold now and then, but most of the time he received only small coins. He thanked each donor with equal gratitude.

After ten years, Tetsugen had enough money to begin.

At just that time it happened that the Uji River overflowed. Famine followed. Tetsugen took the money he had collected for the books and spent it all to save people from starvation. He then began raising funds again.

Several years later, an epidemic spread over the country. For the second time, Tetsugen gave away the money he had collected to help his people, and again he started his work of travelling and raising funds for the book.

After twenty years he finally had enough money. His wish was fulfilled; printing began. Tetsugen died the following year. The blocks that produced the first edition of sutras in Japanese can be seen today at the Ōbaku monastery in Kyoto, Japan, where parents tell their children that Tetsugen made *three* books of sutras, not one, and that the first two, invisible books, by far surpass the third.

Thus ends the story as it is passed down.¹

Interesting to note is that the “third” and printed book of the Buddha’s sutras begins with the *Prajnaparamita*, or “Supreme Wisdom” sutras. The primary teaching of these sutras is that all things are illusory.



When architects talk about “sacred space,” they might talk about the holy sites they’ve visited, or the sanctuaries they’ve designed, or the experiences they’ve had of secular buildings that seem, somehow, to slow time, capture eternity, or partake of nature’s intricacy, vastness, perfection, and majesty.

Other religious sensibilities than these are reflected in different architectural preferences. The simplicity and silence sought by monastics of all traditions, for example, is reflected in the architecture of wood-floored cabins, quiet quadrangles, and remote locations. The liveliness of sacred space sought by religious people of a more social temperament is reflected in their preference for radiant, elaborately decorated temples, perfumed with flowers and bodies, alive with ceremony and music. Whichever kind of space one considers sacred, however, *the primary relationship being cultivated is that between the individual and the divine, or God*. Architects and clerics—sacred space makers—help this happen.

Moreover, when humans *do* experience God (or the divine, or their Buddha-nature), they do so individually, one by one, one on One. People might pray and sing together in a hall, or meditate together in a room, or stand in awe at a sacred place with others, but the relationship between people at these times is muted. Even as one sits or stands shoulder-to-shoulder, the enlightenment-experience is internal, private, its outward manifestation a smile. Or tear.

This echoes the modern view that *all* experience is private. After all, “experiencing” happens in brains; and brains, like bodies, are privately owned and operated. *The world* might be public, out there, as nature is; but it is experienced by people “in here,” locally, individually, and uniquely. And that’s what counts. Thus: to each person *a* world—a world of his or her own, and in the west we live in cultures strongly inclined to defend and celebrate the very multiplicity of those subjectivities.

I have just sketched a version of *solipsism*.²

How do buildings fit in to the picture? Buildings are certainly part of the world “out there.” They are paradigmatically real and often public. But they too are privately experienced. On this solipsistic view, if a building successfully presents itself *to me* as

cosmic, eternal, and unfathomable, if it seems to me to be intricate, vast, perfect, and majestic like the sun on a mountain or the stars in the sky—if it even to points to such things or marks itself off from “profane” space—then I am offered a minute or two in (mind of) divinity. Should *you* have a similar experience, well, all the better.

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Buddhists give us one response to solipsism: to wit, that the inner and the outer, the private and the public, the self and the other are One, that the separation between experiencer and world, created and creation, you and me, is illusory. This is *Prajnaparamita*, the supreme wisdom. Brahman (the Absolute) embraces all being and non-being. Brahman gives rise to Atman (Self or spirit) and thus to individuality. But by virtue of its priority and continuity and eternity, Brahman gives reason for human beings nonetheless to act with compassion for all things.³

Recognizing, intuiting, and ultimately identifying oneself with the Absolute is one way to challenge solipsism, for it follows that we are all in This together, or better, we are all already each other. Some might call this thought solipsism in the extreme: I am All. And so I would like to begin with a distinction more sociological than mystical (at least to start): the contrast between the architect’s interest in how *people relate to their physical environment* (which, granted, is an advance on thinking of buildings as purely technical problems), and ordinary people’s interest in how *people relate to each other*. For what ordinary people want to know upon entering a room is not why the light’s so nice, but who’s there, what they’re doing, and what they themselves should do to fit in. Indeed, it seems that non-architects are a hundred-and-fifty times more interested in other people, per unit solid angle of vision, than they are in buildings or light or natural objects or furniture and/or the abstract spatial relations among them.⁴

Architects are more interested in “space” and things than they are in people, at least professionally. By way of evidence, or perhaps by way of consequence, we might look at the treatment human figures receive in architectural illustration. Students of architecture are not taught how to draw people, not even in outline, much less in dialogue with each other or doing anything meaningful. In result, in schools as in practice, ready-made clip-art people are brought into drawings like so many extras, walking, standing, at best clumping like tourists, each one happy in him- or herself and generally admiring their surroundings.⁵ Their purpose is to “give scale,” to murmur behind the lead actor that is the building. And why not? It is possible to see *all* buildings

if not as actors drawing attention to themselves, then as museums drawing attention to their visual effects and curated contents. Buildings are only in the last place seen as *arrangers of people*—of people, moreover, who are primarily concerned with the intentions, actions, and opinions of the *people* around them.

Few architects, as a further consequence, are capable of envisioning in any detail what “activities” (the word betrays) a building’s “users” (there’s another one) will undertake, nor what experiences users will have *of each other*. They are better at envisioning what users will experience of their *buildings*. Hence the post-apocalyptic walk- and fly-throughs.

And then there’s the vagueness and generic-ness of most programs: lots of talk about the “areas” needed (as in “reception area,” “dining area,” “service area”) and little talk about what could or should go on these places in any detail, with any richness of *social* experience. Perhaps that’s why so many architect-designed buildings look so generic, and why rooms in them do too...if there are rooms at all rather than “areas.”⁶

Let us turn this discussion of people in architecture to matters theological.

There are differences in kinds of relationship among people that reveal themselves in how people dispose themselves *spatially*. Sports and games aside, one can identify three everyday archetypes: there are quasi-random, standing-about relationships; there are more organized shoulder-to-shoulder or queueing ones; and there are face-to-face, dialogical ones.⁷ There’s also a difference in the idea(l) of divinity conjured by each kind of relationship. The first, standing-about, favors architecture (and certain places in nature) acting as a demonstration of cosmic harmony and scale; the second, shoulder-to-shoulder, favors architecture (and certain places in nature) functioning as a gateway or threshold to a world above and beyond this one.⁸ The third, dialogical relationship, is the one upon which I wish to focus. It suggests that divinity enters the world in, as, and because of the quality of the relationships between people, and more specifically in, as, and because of their *regard for one another* and for other sentient beings. At the end of this line of thinking lies the proposition that divinity *is nothing other than* human action of a certain kind, namely, ethically creative (or creatively ethical) action with and towards others; and this is radically educated not by private experiences of the cosmos (or, by extension, of “cosmic” buildings), nor by experiences of communal solidarity, but by witnessing, deepening, and multiplying the occasions of positive, dialogical, interhuman regard. On this view, God is not “in” people but *between* them, in—and perhaps, as—a sort of transactional electricity. One can find the thread of this proposition in almost all religious philosophies.

Remember Tetsugen's invisible sutras? Tetsugen demonstrated compassion surely, but as a Zen master by then, or as one in the making, he would not have been motivated by Buddhist doctrine or obedience. He would simply have seen people in need and responded to them directly, naturally.

I will look into this view a little further and then return to its implications for architectural design.



The philosopher most closely associated with the interhuman view I am exploring is Martin Buber. Polish by birth but Austrian by culture, a student of Ludwig Feuerbach's, Buber lived from 1878 to 1965. The book that accounts for Buber's considerable influence on Jewish and Christian socio-religious thought in the 1960s and '70s was the essay he published in 1923 called *Ich und Du*. In 1937 the book was translated as *I and Thou*.

I and Thou begins with a distinction that will seem familiar to readers of the previous few pages. Human experiencing occurs not in a vacuum, but through one of two possible *relationships* to other entities in the world. These he named I-You, and I-It.

To man the world is twofold in accordance with his twofold attitude.

The attitude of man is twofold, in accordance with the twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks.

The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words.

The one primary word is the combination *I-You*.

The other primary word is the combination *I-It*, wherein, without a change in the primary word, one of the words *He* and *She* can replace *It*.

Hence the *I* of man is also twofold.

For the *I* of the primary word *I-You* is a different *I* from that of the primary word *I-It*.⁹

Every phenomenon—physical, chemical, biological, social—derives from relationships, and in the human world it is no different; except that I-You and I-It are foundational to all the others. There can be no “I” without a “You” or “It” to relate to; no “You” or “It” without an “I” to make it so. I-you and I-It are the two “primary words” uttered by consciousness.

I-It relationships are ones in which one person relates to another, or to an animal, or to an inanimate object, as a means to an end. As “-Its,” others are objectified, assessed: they are well-formed or not, useful or not, suitable or not, edible or not, intelligent or dull, functional and amenable, or problematic and a nuisance. I-It relationships are not *ipso facto* bad; they can be good or bad. Indeed, they are essential to the functioning of any society that would provide safety, goods, and livelihoods for its citizens. We all agree to become -Its for certain others—employees and employers, partners, coworkers, servers, even spouses—and we treat many others as -Its ourselves. There is no blame to be apportioned here, except that I-It relations tend to dominate I-You ones, which are just as essential, but more fragile.

In I-It relationships, one person pushes the other person’s buttons. In I-It relationships, people expect things from each other and respond to one another by virtue of their roles and positions in society, as in a game—a game that everyone plays, ideally, by the rules, even as the rules are under construction in some higher-yet game. In I-It relationships there is no interest in what the other is really thinking, except that knowing what they’re really thinking allows one to “work with them” all the more effectively. As “-Its,” others are there to give you pleasure, and you they. Others are there to give you information, and you they. I-It relationships also allow us to take esthetic pleasure in each other’s poses and appearances without thinking of them as addressed to us specifically, and thus having to respond.

In I-You relationships one cannot see the other objectively. To look into the eyes of another is to look through the night of their pupils into a sort of infinity. It is to address others fearfully or lovingly, but in any case, fragiley. It is to say: you matter to me and I think I matter to you. It is to say: I acknowledge an immensity in you equal to the immensity that I feel in myself; I recognize your freedom as I recognize my own, your fears as I do my own, your ambitions as I do my own.

In I-You relationships, computation of debt and advantage are at a minimum. Accounting is loose, even irrational.

Esthetic appreciation does not vanish in I-You relationships, contrary to philosophers, following Kant, who argue that detachment is necessary to esthetic

enjoyment. It just occurs differently, more able to get past superficial ugliness, more able to ride swells of emotion. Think of Rembrandt's self-portraits, or van Gogh's.

I-You relationships cannot be experienced from the side, as it were. They involve the whole of our beings and they block out the world, if only for a moment. Rare? Not at all. "Hello" and "goodbye" are I-You words that briefly perform that magic. And so we might say hello to a cat as he or she turns towards us (or should I say *if...*?). We might also say hello *sotto voce* to a praying mantis, a sapling, or a building, meaning: I recognize the you-ness of you and that in some way *you experience me* in your subjectivity, such as it can maximally be. We regard each other. We are in dialogue.

In I-It, people deal with each other.

In I-You, they meet.

There's a temptation to equate Buber's "I-You" with love. No doubt this was what enthused Buber's Christian admirers, followers of the gospel of John. But I-You relationships are not necessarily agapic; they are just direct and non-depersonalizing.¹⁰ Can I-You be anthropomorphizing? Yes. But while entering an I-You relationship with an inanimate object is objectively silly, doing so is not at all uncommon¹¹ among artists and designers, who might say: "Unless I thought that non-sentient things, like this sculpture I am making or building I am designing, had the right to exist in its own way (i.e. had integrity), unless I thought it could answer to my presence or yours as you and I answer to its with the fullness of our beings and memories...I could not design it well. And nor, in the end, would it have the qualities that allow ordinary people to 'relate to it' at all."¹²

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People are not scenery. Rarely is their purpose to stand around "giving scale" to architecture or landscape. In cafés, on sidewalks, at festivals, most people do, however, enjoy being around people in larger numbers than seven or eight, people they don't know and who don't know them. In times of peace, people pretend to ignore each other very well, and I-It relationships dominate inasmuch as everyone, by going out in public, agrees to be part of an animated and comforting *tableau* for everyone else. But flickering into existence in most crowds too are moments of I-You: one person catches another's eye and they nod; a woman touches her companion's arm with surprising tenderness; a vendor and a buyer exchange a laugh and think well of each other. These moments of recognition of mutual humanity and depth take over one's whole being. The fact that

they can happen at any moment between *any* two beings can take over one's whole world-view. For some, the possibility of relating I-You-ly afresh is the best reason to go out, to promenade. For others it is simply to "see and be seen," to register.¹³

All this is normal. But pathologies of fairly recent vintage are spreading. Walk a city sidewalk or college campus today and notice how many people are chatting on their mobile phones or listening to their iPods oblivious to where they are: the first are relating to distant others, the second are relating to no one at all, not even in "tableau mode." Or go to Las Vegas and notice the behavior and dress of most of the visitors. Ambling through environments that, at great expense, at least pretend to be Rome or Venice, they look like they just rolled out of bed, wearing T-shirts and flip-flops and "exercise" clothes, unaware or uncaring of how they look. Unlike the people portrayed in *movies* of Las Vegas, who are always sharply dressed and stepping out of limousines, these shambling visitors do not believe they exist in others' worlds. So accustomed are they to watching TV and consuming media, neither of which return their gaze, that they see the world outside their living rooms as a spectacle, a 3D movie, an amusement ride, in which they are protected from visibility and in which, and for which, they have no responsibility. As defectors from the social compact that says that we make up each other's world, they say in effect: "I am here to see, not to be seen."

Dressing and behaving decorously, we realize, is not a vanity but a duty along the lines of Kant's Categorical Imperative.¹⁴ The expectation of meeting others "I-You-ly" notwithstanding, the duty consists in acknowledging that *our* presence and demeanor constitute a good part of other people's objective world, just as theirs constitutes ours, and that we owe to each other what we expect for ourselves. Set such minimal ethical considerations aside for a moment. "What goes around comes around:" as more people defect—as more people free-ride on the sartorial efforts of others—so does everyone's experience become the poorer. Defectors soon find themselves surrounded by people as casually attired as themselves and, scattered among them, a growing number of people even less kempt and even more oblivious to their effects, free-riding on *their* relative smartness.¹⁵

More than dress is involved. As the solipsistic attitude spreads, aided by the attention we increasingly give to digital screens, so does architecture divide itself more cleanly into two classes: the ignored-neglected, and the hyped, treated-as-show.¹⁶

Buber was not the first to discuss the difference between instrumental I-It relationships and interpersonal I-You ones. One can find it in Kant and Hegel and Feuerbach, and one sees it taken further in Sartre and Levinas. But Buber was a writer who made much of the distinction, who poeticized it, who drove home how deeply existential was the difference and what social, political, spiritual, and theological consequences flowed from it.¹⁷

Let us go directly to the last consequence, the theological, since we are trying to limn how architecture participates in divinity. Here is the question: Are human beings best in an I-It relationship to divinity, or an I-You one? Does it matter? And then our question: does it matter to architects/architecture?

Some prefatory remarks before looking at how Buber answers the first two questions. For to hear him, there must be at least one sense in which God credibly exists for you. If you are a *deist*, that sense is as Creator of the Universe—long gone it seems, but leaving us free. For others it is as Universal Love. For others yet God exists as Being, or as the Ground of Being, Brahman, the Tao, or just... “something tremendous” and infinitely wise.¹⁸ (For thoroughgoing atheists all this nonsense, of course, or at least, non-science). Here is Buber’s point: when God is conceived of in any of these ways, the relationship between ourselves and God is most naturally an I-It one. An “-It God” is not a God one listens for, listens to, argues with, begs, or thanks. It is a God one watches from the sidelines as it were, dazzled by its beauty, or a God that one dissolves into, letting go of selfhood. It is a God one learns about and obeys in as much as the laws of nature apply everywhere and always to all. It is Einstein’s God, and the solitary mystic’s.¹⁹

Buber was modernly Jewish and sympathetic to all religions that strove to bring out the best in human beings. He was also a well-known interpreter of Jewish (Hasidic) mystical literature, which is laced through with ecstatic descriptions of a God beyond description. But by 1923 Buber had become convinced that *relationship* was more important than *description*, with the latter actually dependent on the former. An I-You relationship was intrinsically more ethical than any rational or mystical I-It relationship, be it to people individually, in togetherness, or to God. Certainly I-You was the relationship Biblical prophets had to God. He saw the same pattern in the life of the great rabbis: a relationship to God—as to people—that was eye-to-eye and utterly sincere. Go along with Buber in this, even in trial, and the theological question transforms. It becomes not “Who or what is God in and of ‘Him-’ or It-self that I should

relate to?” but “How is God to human beings when mutual I-You-ness is the defining relationship?”

Now there are (at least) two options.

Option One: God could appear to us in a vision, as an entity or voice in dialogue with us, as He did legendarily to Moses and to the prophets before and after him. Here, we (or they, the prophets, anyway) speak to God and God replies, or He calls out to us first and we reply.²⁰ To say “I did x because God told me to” is to court ridicule in many quarters, of course. And yet many people would claim to have felt addressed, “out of the blue,” by an entity or argument or situation that makes one take ethically creative action with a conviction beyond that which would derive from utilitarian or even justicial considerations. To know that feeling—the feeling of being addressed and then of wanting to respond (to no one actually there) with “You mean *me*? *Now*?” and then “But I...” —is to appreciate the power of thinking of divinity as that which, or “he” who, having somehow gotten our number, calls us to do right, right here, right now, and probably at some risk.

A deist—indeed an atheist—would explain that we were simply listening to our *conscience*, which is a mental process, the product of long socialization, and not anything cosmic.²¹ That may well be...if one’s standard of “cosmicity” is set to astronomical scales. Buber would want us to note, however, that the voice in which (or with which) conscience addresses us is not simply our own (or our parents’ or priest’s). It is energized, exhilarated, by a dawning cognitive clarity that *this* action now *is* right and good, even if at our personal expense. More than a shedding of present guilt, more than an avoidance of future shame, this energy, this coalescence of intentionality, this sense of going backward in time and forward in time simultaneously, is *ethical creativity* at work, inaugurated by a variety of *heeding*. God thought of this way, i.e., as ethical creativity emergent from life taken personally, from life lived I-You-ly on this planet, might just be cosmic enough.

Option Two: The second option is the one Buber favored, perhaps because it is less prone to objectification as a mental process, perhaps because it is less malleable to unethical purposes,²² or perhaps because it keeps God a distinct singularity consistent with ancient monotheism. Buber located God behind the eyes, as it were, of every other who is addressed as You. God is the You of all You’s, the vanishing point at which all forms of direct address between people converges, or perhaps, the origin point from which it radiates. To say, on this account, that God is goodness, or love, is a simplification. God is what makes addressing other creatures in the second person both

possible and necessary: for some animals in glimmering and for others, like ourselves, in full. God has had a human form in the religious imagination, then, not out of naïve anthropomorphism, but because *people* have faces and voices, and people in relation to each other and to sentient creatures are the site of goodness's entry, or manufacture, in this world.²³ And one needs to note that God may be Love, but love is always between *different* beings ("between" was a word Buber liked to capitalize), not a melding of them into one.

By way of recap: In the first option, God is who, from the swirl of an evolving situation, entrains your intuition with a whisper that grows into a voice that wants you—you!—to intervene on behalf of all life here and now. ("If not now, then when?" asked Rabbi Hillel. "And if not me, then who?") In the second option, God is who looks at you—you!—through the eyes of an actual other who needs you. Both involve the opening of an I-You channel, as it were, between oneself and divinity; and both are preferable, in Buber's view, to the scientist's I-It God, which is a conviction chasing a chimera: the conviction that all things have a beginning or reason chasing the chimera of complete understanding and control. The scientist's vision of deity obliges us to exercise, eat right, and perfect ourselves for the chase. The scientific mystic, for his part, contemplates the "grandeur" and laughs: The universe is neither large nor small, he knows; it is neither old nor young, neither beautiful nor ugly nor good nor bad. It just *is*. It does not care for us, and it is we who, pathetically or heroically in our own judgment, insist on finding it large and old and beautiful and good.

But we are post-Enlightenment now, and can more easily imagine the universe not as a machine but as a complex, evolving system with new, emergent, complexity-dependent entities, including ourselves and what we think and do.²⁴ The process that engenders truth-seeking and esthetic and moral agency on earth might itself—"himself"—be younger yet, a tender new flower of Being with a wavering, still-forming ontological status. This is not Buber.²⁵ But entirely with Buber we might go on to think this: that whether we garb divinity in personhood, knowing full well that this is projection, or whether we prefer to leave God's ontological status uncertain, a perpetual blooming/becoming of the good in your and my hands, it is in the second person—as a you to someone who says "you"—that divinity enters the room, moving the air.²⁶



We return to architecture.

Not all buildings aspire to making sacred space. Supermarkets do not aim to put us in mind of God, much less bring divinity into being. Most architects are relieved: society has charged them with designing safe, practical, and handsome buildings for everyday life. It has not charged them with being prophets, or clerics, or mystical seers.

And yet no architect considered great has shied away from religiosity of some sort, a narrative that locates their work metaphysically and ethically in some larger context. From Vitruvius to Palladio to Wren to Wright to Kahn, the profession has had its prophets.²⁷ Even journeyman architects can recall their youthful dedication to timeless beauty or selfless service on the basis of their “prophecy.”

Are, then, all-but-religiously-held metaphysical and ethical ideals necessary to practicing architecture at its highest levels, including creating sacred space? Most would say no. But for those who think they are, four framing possibilities remain, these resulting from the choices made among two pairs of alternative beliefs. First alternative: (i) only high-culture venues or explicitly religious building-types offer appropriate venues for sacred space (e.g. churches, libraries, art museums, memorials) *or* (ii) *all* building-types should be venues for spiritually ambitious architecture and contain sacred space (e.g. retail stores, hotels, factories, schools, houses). Second alternative: (i) achieving architectural perfection of light, material, space, proportion, construction, in cooperation with nature is how divinity is revealed, *or* (ii) having people relate to each another more compassionately, generously, truthfully, creatively, and so on, is how divinity is revealed. It’s this second pair that we have been addressing. Here is a diagram, labeling the four framing permutations A, B, C, and D:

	High-culture venues	All venues
Divinity through architecture	A	B
Divinity through people	C	D

Frame A represents the view among architects that sacred space arises when buildings of high moral and esthetic purpose are perfectly designed, constructed, and cared for, where “perfect design” entails, among other things, cosmic references and tunings.²⁸

Frame B represents the view that perfect design, construction, and care should grace *every* building type, making sacredness a matter not of altars and star-alignments, but

of sensitivity-of-layout, cleanliness, generosity, integrity, geometrical sophistication, and craftsmanship everywhere.

Frame C does not look to architecture to present divinity at all, but looks instead to the power and beauty of living people engaged in orchestrated religious, artistic, or civic rituals. In its secular manifestation, **C** would have us see divinity in the genius of great statesmen, scientists, and artists and be knowledgeable about their times. It would have us behave solemnly at ceremonies, inaugurations and concerts, and attend them well attired.

Frame D holds that divinity happens (or reveals itself/Himself) every time and in every place that people are doing something good and decent or meeting I-You-ly. It happens in shacks and chateaus—formally or casually—whenever kindness, courage, and ethical creativity meet a human (or animal) need. It happens whenever a person reaches, and by example teaches, excellence in some small or large undertaking.

Readers might find themselves identifying with one of these permutations more than the others, and then wondering why they should have to choose among them. God is not limited in any way, they might think: God is always “all of the above” when the options are good (and above “all of the above” too) and so should *we* try to be, *imitatio dei*.

Indeed, why choose? For my part, I say we should focus on **C** and **D** because of their relative neglect. Architects in search of spiritual seriousness have difficulty seeing how enhancing human (or inter-species) relationships can be the *point* of their work *and* inform architectural form.²⁹ They are *architects*, after all. They want form itself, architecture alone, to sing God or nature’s praises in an **A** or **B** frame. Their theology rests on the Argument From Design,³⁰ or perhaps Process, not on the ethics of interpersonal encounter.

Frames **C** and **D** however, show the way to a new sort of humanism in architecture. This humanism would be shaped by renewed and careful attention to human character and human social behavior in space. It would look again at the Architecture of Humanism, so named by Geoffrey Scott in 1914. It would be nourished most deeply, however, by compassion and introspection under the sign of I-You.

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It’s easy to see how greater attention to I-You relationships could help an architecture *firm* thrive: more genuine and personal client and employee relations would likely result in better buildings and more work.³¹ But it’s not easy to indicate exactly how

sensitivity to human relationships—and especially I-You ones—might inform the spatial and material choices architects must make as designers.

For this, one ought to be able to cite research in journals like *Environment & Behavior*. But, as Thomas Fisher points out, almost forty-five years of scientific investigation into how buildings influence human behavior has had little or no effect on architects in practice, and one has to wonder why.³² Is it because of the “two-cultures” divide between the sciences and the arts famously lamented by C. P. Snow? Or the similar divide between researchers and practitioners frequently lamented by engineers? Fisher leans in these directions. Or is it because the direct effect of a building’s spaces and materials on most people’s psyches is, in fact, so subtle as to be negligible?³³ And might *that* be because non-architects are intrinsically much more interested in other people than they are in buildings, as we have noted?

It may well be that the effect of buildings on people has less to do with “the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light,” as Le Corbusier proclaimed, and more to do with the choreographies buildings impose upon the comings and goings, appearances and disappearances, elevations, facings, dispositions, groupings, processions, and nearnesses of people with respect to one another.³⁴ On this view, space does not derive from the meshwork of light ricocheting between surfaces, but from the diaphanous fabric of glances between people. We have no *theory* of that, no system of representation.

So a major task falling to the academicians of architecture is the writing of a digest of the findings accumulated by the E&B (*Environment & Behavior*) and EDRA (Environmental Design Research Association) communities, edited and formatted as a ready reference for architects. Where these studies are found to be overly solipsistic (i.e., premised on one person at a time facing a physical environment), needed also is a digest from studies further afield, e.g. coming out of *social* psychology, that offer insight into what Edward T. Hall long ago called “proxemics,” i.e., how human beings move, group, isolate themselves from, and orient themselves towards each other in space depending on the *relationship* between them and *tasks* before them (a) uninfluenced by architecture (i.e., in the open field) and then (b) influenced by architecture.³⁵ Online efforts like Informed Design (<http://www.informedesign.umn.edu>) are a great start.

Needed too is a resource that confirms what one would expect about the environment’s effects on “socialization” and goes much further.³⁶ Amenity provision is a simple business, physically if not politically. But one has to wonder what would happen were this simple business to evolve into the complex stuff of art: places and spaces not

just pleasing to the eye in a general way, but cleverly wrought to multiply and enhance people's I-You experience of each other.

And needed finally, and importantly for designers, are ways to represent humans and human social life in buildings, and to do that artistically, practically, technically, poetically. Teachers of design have a special responsibility here.

What does any of this have to do with *divinity*?

Everything—if you think divinity manifests itself in how human beings set themselves in relation to other beings, rather than in how stones are set against the sky.

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Visit an architecture school during review week. Instead of looking at the work on the walls, listen to the language. Listen in particular to the language of appraisal: the compliments, the misgivings, even the descriptions. Through the jargon of the day (oh, the jargon), you will be struck by how many of the compliments and critiques offered are more appropriate to people than to buildings. *Ad hominem* criticism of a student is rare (“George, you were lazy!”). But you might very well hear “your *building* does not work hard enough” to “negotiate the landscape” or “organize services” or “articulate the program.” You will hear buildings complimented for their *integrity* and *honesty*, dissed for their *incoherence* or *pretension*. Cognates of “strong” and “weak” having little to do with engineering soundness will abound, as will cognates of “sensitive” and “insensitive,” “elegant” and “clumsy,” “ingenious” and “obvious,” “rigorous” or “sloppy,” “mature” or “undeveloped.”

We should not be surprised. We relate to many designed objects as though they had personalities and attitudes. Pixar's desk lamp, Luxo Jr., is but one popular-culture example. Buber's notion that near-to-I-You relationships can be established with inanimate objects is borne out daily in the teaching of design. The animism of ancient religious practitioners lives among designers, together with belief in magical efficacy of gestures.³⁷ Now add back that sometimes students' characters *are* being assessed by the “conversation” about their work—slyly, and often along social class lines³⁸—and one sees how deeply anthropomorphic the processes of architectural design and appreciation are, for all the functional, constructional, and “systems talk” being put forward.

Returning to animism: take the phenomenon of *posture*. Buildings communicate by how they make us feel, and part of how they make us feel is through empathy—body-empathy—which uses our “mirror neurons.”³⁹ Buildings, like people, have *bodies* set on

the ground in a pose or posture: they sit or stand, heavily or lightly; they can hang from a cliff, they can hover over water; they squat, swivel, soar, lean, leap; they can seem defeated or yearning. And because of our mirror neurons they make us feel that way too, merely by looking at them. Facing towards us or facing away, they can seem proud or ashamed of themselves, informative (here's my door! look at how I'm built) or inscrutable (mirror glass and a faraway stare). As soloists or in company, buildings communicate through dance one might say, albeit frozen dance: posture.⁴⁰

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As we have touched on a few times, bringing sociality to the topic of design is troubling for many architects. It represents an invasion by ethics (or politics) of esthetics (or design). Humans are deeply and ineluctably social, they would admit, but the creation and appreciation of beauty must come out of consciousness itself, i.e., consciousness quieted of commentary and cleared of involvement.⁴¹ As Paul Valéry put it: "Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees."⁴² On this view, beauty is respite, art is respite, spirituality is respite from social intercourse and obligations, making no building's altruism an excuse for its ugliness.⁴³

The debate is ongoing, however, as to whether this respite is desirable or even possible. Elaine Scarry, in *On Beauty and Being Just*, makes the case that ethical fairness and esthetic fairness are related.⁴⁴ Our sense of justice and our sense of beauty, she argues, share a central concept, fairness, which in turn reflects the world's *symmetries* at biological, physical, and mathematical levels.

These two meanings of "fairness" might be verbal coincidence, not to be made too much of. After all, there are other meanings of fairness that do not work at all.⁴⁵ But Scarry also discusses the experience most people have had of *having been wrong in one's judgment about what is beautiful* and then correcting oneself. The experience is telling not only because it indicates that there is *some* objectivity to beauty—that there something *there* one can be wrong *about*—but because correcting an earlier judgment is more than an abstract, balancing-out, or symmetry-seeking exercise. Emotions are involved. For example, as a young person, you might have hated Italian opera or Renaissance painting. In later life, and/or after some education, you might develop a love of both and feel embarrassed at your earlier ignorance. Indeed, for producers of beauty—be it in film, music, painting, literature, or architecture—this is the holy grail: to create works that are rejected at first as ugly or meaningless, but that come to be seen in time (and hopefully in

one's own lifetime) as beautiful and meaningful.⁴⁶ What is this "mechanism" but a way of injecting a touch of guilt—which is a social, ethical emotion—into the viewer's otherwise-distant relationship to inanimate esthetic objects? Towards that which one eventually finds beautiful (or innocent) one owes an apology for past ignorance or condemnation, and this multiplies the emotion with which one regards it now. One has not just changed one's mind or "grown." One has redeemed oneself from error; one has *converted* from one whole frame of reference to another. I do not think it far-fetched to claim that great beauty cannot be experienced without this conversion experience admixed.⁴⁷ Whatever you find profoundly beautiful you probably overlooked or disliked first. This may be why things long agreed to be beautiful—eggs, sunsets, flowers—fall so easily to kitsch and banal uses. It may also be why presently ugly artifacts, made with care and intelligence nonetheless, seem to live in hope.⁴⁸

In sum, if a building's virtues often sound like human ones, it's because of our empathetic reading of inanimate objects, and especially of artifacts, which are known to be made for us by, and presented to us by, other human beings.⁴⁹ This is not a bad thing if you think that relationships among sentient beings, not inanimate objects, are the site of divinity's possible appearance.



The attraction that many spiritually-inclined architects feel towards the person and work of Louis Kahn was well captured by John Lobell's 1979 book, *Between Silence and Light*, probably the most popular book written about Kahn.⁵⁰ There, many of Kahn's more mystical pronouncements about architecture are set alongside museum-quality photographs of his best-known buildings: monumental, abstract, bathed in quietude and facticity.

Lobell's book does not, however, give us much appreciation of Kahn's humanism, of his ideological fraternity with contemporaries such as Lewis Mumford, who saw orderly, free human association as the precondition, purpose, and best outcome of architecture. Kahn became the Kahn we know rather late in his professional life, and we tend to forget the importance of his early career designing public housing with Oscar Stonorov.

Kahn quite possibly had read Buber at around the time he (Kahn) famously asked brick "what it wanted to be."⁵¹ "An arch!" brick replied very I-You-ly. And not "a pile!" we should note, because bricks are (a) ambitious, (b) know their limitations, and

(c) want to please us. Bricks, it seems, want to make an arch *together*, each one relying on its neighbor's cooperation.

“A plan is a society of rooms,” Kahn also said, thus giving every room personhood: its own structure, its own light, its own front and back, its own cooperative relation to the other rooms, happy to be in its proper place. Although he often classified spaces in a building as either *servant* or *served*, no room—not even a service room or duct—would be treated as a cast-off, borrowed, or remaindered thing.

Although geometry really mattered to Kahn, it is possible, I think, to read Kahn's oeuvre in “Buberian” terms as well as formal ones.⁵² His buildings photograph well with people in them, and his drawings rarely omitted people. Moreover, for Kahn, buildings were not just “devices” devoted to harmonizing or giving expression to human association. They possessed a physicality that is human. His buildings have bodies; they have postures, composure, dignity. They address us. Materials have aspirations that we should respect. And every building tells a human story recalling a first time—the school under a tree (First Unitarian Church)—or a decisive moment—a book being taken to a window and opened (Exeter Library).⁵³

Kahn's proclivity for pushing the boundaries of engineering was not just the result of a search for image-ability. Nor was it only the desire to solve practical problems ingeniously. He “pushed the envelope” technically in order to give architects and builders and ordinary people pride in what they were *able* to do. And in his practice, though he could not pay well, he treated his employees with high and nurturant regard.⁵⁴

A parable Kahn told in many lectures (and certainly in his Lawrence Memorial Lecture at Tulane in 1972) illustrates a great deal. It goes like this: “Every stair should have a landing, and at the landing there should be a window and a bookshelf and a chair, so that an old person can climb the stair with the child and can pause at the landing and say, ‘I've always wanted to look at this book,’ and not have to admit that he can't make it up the stairs in one go.”⁵⁵ Not only an action and a place for it, but a thought about the I-You experience of two un-ideal people, accepted and made ideal by the architecture at hand.

The prophet in Kahn makes some architects uncomfortable; as does the monumentality of his form-making. Then again, comfort is not what prophets are after. Kahn claimed access to the “Immeasurable,” and he felt called to express its desire to become “measurable” in architecture, known, spent, made definite, in the realization of noble human relationships. What to call this? Spiritual humanism? May it manifest itself in architecture again soon. •

NOTES:

¹ This is a close transcript of its reading by Alec Sand in the audiobook *Zen Buddhism Stories* (Trout Lake Media, 2010).

² Solipsism: the philosophy that “the self can know nothing but its own modifications, and that the self is the only existent thing.” F. H Bradley, in *Appearance and Reality* (1879) put it this way: “I cannot transcend experience, and experience is *my* experience. From this it follows that nothing beyond myself exists; for what is experience is its [the self’s] states.” Out-and-out solipsism is rare in philosophy, where it is mentioned most frequently as a dead-end to be wary of. Solipsism retains its power in popular *psychology*, however. Read the magazine *Psychology Today*. Read “self-help” and popular spiritual-growth literature. They are all about *you*, and they are premised on the perspective of a single person—you—facing The World, which includes other people as features. EST and Scientology are extreme cases. And notice how naturally TV, radio, and other American media give you *your* news (especially news *you* can use). Ditto “*your* weekend weather,” “*your* day,” “*your* world.”

³ Put in more western terms, it is coming to know in one’s heart that the Holy Spirit moves in all and through all, uniting us in community. Rarely, in the western rendition, is the union in the Holy Spirit extended to *all* sentient beings, however, as it is in Hinduism and Buddhism.

⁴ This strangely empirical claim is based on my unpublished Masters of Environmental Design (M.E.D.) Thesis at Yale University (“The Information Field: A Theoretical and Empirical Approach to the Distribution and Transfer of Information in the Physical Environment,” 1975). In an experiment performed under supervision of Dr. Michael Kubovy of the Psychology Department, I examined the temporal order-of-recall and completeness-of-recall of the elements of two, complex, urban scenes. The result pertaining to relative interestingness comes from the completeness-of-recall measure: people remembered far, far more about the people in the scene (who occupied a tiny fraction of it spatially) than anything else. In the temporal-order-of-free-recall measure, however overall setting (geometry and weather etc.), summarily described, came first. The “solid angle” measure was computed from the relative area of the image (as a percentage of the whole) devoted to people, buildings, planting, signs, etc. The area of an image on the retina is a direct linear function of the solid (i.e. 3-D) angle subtended at the eye by an object of given size and distance in the world (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solid_angle).

⁵ It is often remarked upon that architectural photographs of finished buildings are typically empty of people and their paraphernalia. Never are people photographed from above or drawn in *plan*, which is the primary representation of a building used in the process of design. Drawing people into plans—and people generally, caught in the moment, doing things—catapults the viewer into story-telling.

⁶ Buildings that are investment properties tend to be “vague and generic” too. Designed for no particular client, they are designed to sell and re-sell or lease. Here the realtor’s wisdom holds that flexibility—meaning non-committal-ness, neutrality, conventionality—is smart marketing. There’s reason to believe, though, that this wisdom is faulty: that spaces with character and specificity, even if a bit *wrong* for their inhabitants, command higher rent and sell at higher prices.

It’s understandable that architects lag behind novelists, screenwriters, and movie directors in their ability to narrativize, “flesh out,” and understand, human activities and relationships: a rich social imagination is not part of what architects cultivate. But architects lag almost as far behind production designers (and good realtors and detectives) in understanding how richly spaces and rooms—assembled over time and actually lived in— speak to (and of) those who live in them.

⁷ There are many more that these three, of course, and there are combinations and transitions, which are beyond the scope of this paper to examine.

⁸ For an eloquent modern account of this view, see Thomas Barrie, *The Sacred In-Between: The Mediating Roles of Architecture* (Routledge, 2010). Martin Heidegger had done much to revive the rather Nordic and ancient trinary image of man-on-earth, gods-in-heaven, and temple between-earth-and-sky. This image had a strong influence on architectural theory through Christian Norberg-Schulz’s 1971 book *Existence, Space, and Architecture* (London, Studio Vista). Also influential on architects was the book *Sacred and Profane* by Mircea Eliade (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987 [1959]) in describing how spaces are traditionally demarcated as one or the other.

⁹ Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York, Scribner 2000 [1958]). The reader may be wondering: what happened to “Thou”? As Walter Kaufman, the book’s second translator, noted, the English title of Buber’s book should have been *I and You* which is closer to *Ich und Du*. It would seem that the book’s first translator, Ronald Gregor Smith, wanted the book’s religious ambition to be signaled.

¹⁰ Buber addresses this in many places, but see *Between Man and Man* (New York, Macmillan, 1965) pp. 20-21, where he contrasts dialogic I-You-ness with love.

¹¹ It may even be necessary. Certainly it has a long history as Stuart Guthrie in *Faces in the Clouds: a New Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) shows. One might also remember Theodor Lipps’ theory of *empathy*, or *empathy*, as essential to art creation and appreciation. (See also Notes 39 and 40 below.)

¹² Buber struggled with the obvious problem that while the higher animals can be in I-You dialogue with us, the lower life forms—bacteria, for example—like inanimate objects, cannot *really* be. But the conclusion that they cannot really be in dialogue with us cannot so easily be dismissed in the case of *artifacts*, which by their very design and history speak to us in the voices of their makers, as it were, specifying and intending their use, waiting on us. Doors and drawers *want* to be opened and closed. Forks *want* to impale. To the crude wisdom “Guns don’t kill people; people do” one can reasonably reply, “on the contrary: people don’t kill people; guns do. People can hurt people. People can do grievous bodily harm to each other, including killing them, but not so swiftly, remotely, and cleanly as with guns, which *by design* whisper: ‘I am so fine. Feel my heft, how I fit your hand in every way. Use me, use me, I am yours. I am power. Here, hold me just so. Why do you *have* me if you do not *use* me? Use me...I am quick and you are safe, far from the blood you will (so justly!) spill.’”

¹³ Then too, there are artists who simulate I-You moments repeatedly in public, perhaps in hope of stimulating their genuine occurrence. I mean actors, club singers, stand-up comedians. Also beggars who look you in the eye.

¹⁴ “Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law.” In *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). Some see this as a variation of the Golden Rule “Do unto others...”

¹⁵ The truly smart dressers have moved on to other venues. In cases of extreme poverty it is understood that people simply do not have better to wear on a daily basis. The same attire is worn by the middle-class it is an insult: I don’t care to dress up for YOU. Some clothing lines are designed to convey precisely this FU message while signaling in-groupness. And, of course, some institutions find they have to enforce dress codes.

Much has been written on the influence of “social media” like Twitter and Facebook on face-to-face social relations. To what extent, architects might wonder, have digital forms of remote, asynchronous, association replaced spatial, face-to-face, real-time ones? By way of introduction see Stephen Marche, “Is Facebook Making Us Lonely,” *Atlantic Monthly*, May 2012, available online; also Malcolm McCullough, *Ambient Commons* (MIT Press, 2013, in press) and Note 16 below.

¹⁶ This classification of architecture into two kinds is something of a “stub,” to use Wikipedia language. It’s worth noting that telephone/cellphone calls, text messages, and to a lesser extent, emails, are quite good at igniting and maintaining I-You relationships. Importantly, though, these out of sight to others. A sidewalk full of people texting or talking on their mobile phones is like a sidewalk full of spies, or special agents, each connected to a circle of invisible confidants and instruction-givers who are realer to them than the natives they are moving through. To “special agents,” every object is classified as a target, an aid, an obstacle, or as irrelevant. Twitter and Facebook specialize in one-to-many, many-to-one, a-spatial and asynchronous communication, with a strong component of self-objectification.

It’s also worth noting that the reason palm size screens so dominate our consciousness while wall-size, multi-screen displays at university “visualization labs” go unused, is because the former give us access to real people while the latter insist on trying to create virtual worlds interesting in their own right.

Google’s “Glass” Project involves people wearing glasses frames that not only overlay GPS-sensitive information on the real world from a small screen an inch from one’s left or right eye, but continuously streaming (and recording) what one is seeing and hearing in real time for (certain?) others to “co-experience”: full time action-cam! If Glass succeeds, it will be interesting to learn out on what basis: information-provision, world-making, or people-connection?

¹⁷ This essay is too brief to discuss Buber’s relationship to Martin Heidegger, who treated many of the same topics. Buber thought Heidegger’s *Dasein* (“being here humanly”) and *mitsein* (“being-with”) inadequate to describing human relationships, and solipsistic still. Even admitting and encouraging *fürsorge* (“solicitude”) as Heidegger did, Heidegger’s worldview rotated still around the self—around the Cartesian *cogito* or “I-I” relationship—leaving divinity in “heaven,” indifferent, unimaginably superior, and identified with *Sein* (Being) rather than *Dasein*. See Haim Gordon, *The Heidegger Buber Controversy: The Status of the I-Thou* (Connecticut, Praeger/Greenwood Press, 2001). Heidegger was a writer of such monumental obscurity, that almost any practiced reader of Heidegger in German could point to what Heidegger really meant and show me wrong.

¹⁸ This rather casual catalog of modern theologies omits the way in which God exists for traditionally devout Jews, Christians, and Muslims, which is to say as a personally-addressable Creator, Lord, and Sustainer of the universe, as Father and protector of the faithful, as guarantor of final justice, the reason for all beauty and standard of all truth “greater than which nothing can be conceived.”

¹⁹ In reciprocation (should that make any sense), God’s relationship to us is I-It too, with humans as Its to “his” I. Take as evidence God’s historic indifference to human life and happiness.

²⁰ Exodus 33:11 is especially striking: “And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” The theme is expanded in Abraham Joshua Heschel’s *God in Search of Man* (New York, Aronson, 1955) and *The Prophets* (New York, Harper Colophon, 1969). Heschel knew Buber and they agreed in what Hasidic tradition taught (both were raised in it): to wit, that, for all His glory and ineffability, *God needs human beings in order (fully) to be God*, just as human beings need God in order (fully) to be human. In the context of deism as well as orthodox Judaic, Christian, and Islamic theism, Heschel’s and Buber’s views, though different, are radical in that they both challenge belief in God’s perfection, omnipotence, and self-sufficiency. In liberal Christian theology, this line of thinking goes by the name “the open view of God.”

²¹ For an eloquent recent account of the evolution of morality, see Christopher Boehm, *Moral Origins: The Evolution of Virtue, Altruism, and Shame* (New York, Basic Books, 2012).

²² Many a fanatic has heard voices.

²³ Confucianism has no God in the western sense, but the Way of Heaven, which is manifest in and *created by* how human beings relate “properly” to one another. For this reason, Confucianism is often understood as a variety of humanism, rather than a religion.

²⁴ Buber had studied C. Lloyd Morgan's *Emergent Evolution* (Williams and Norgate, 1923), which was an early expression of a basically Hegelian view, and would himself alternate between the idea of God as the eternal all-knowing Source somehow incomplete without us (see Note 20 above), and God as a being "himself" emergent from the complexities of human social consciousness. The influences of Alfred North Whitehead's process theology (Part V of *Process and Reality*, 1928), and of Henri Bergson's 1911 *Creative Evolution* are evident. In Buber's lifetime too, the cosmic theology of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin became popular (e.g. *The Phenomenon of Man*, 1959). Today it is common for scientists to see evolutionary processes at work down to the atomic level, with almost every higher-order phenomenon emergent from the complexity of lower and earlier ones in mass, repeated, relationships, and to think that human evolution is now more dependent on the circulation of ideas (memes), patterns of behavior, and knowledge, than of genes: not just cultural evolution but biological evolution too.

²⁵ For explorations of this view, see Michael Benedikt, *God Is the Good We Do: Theology of Theopraxy* (New York: Bottino Books, 2007) and "Another Word On 'God in the 21st Century'," *Tikkun*, Volume 26:2, 14, 2011. The first, especially, traces the origins of the idea.

²⁶ Compare Exodus 33:18–23. Interesting also is that "you" in most languages is a non-gender-specific pronoun. Ditto "I" and "me;" a property shared with the collective pronouns "we," "they," "us," and "them." (See Anna Siewierska, "Gender Distinctions in Independent Personal Pronouns," *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online* at <http://wals.info/chapter/44>.)

²⁷ See Michael Benedikt, *God, Creativity, and Evolution: The Argument from Design(ers)* (Center for American Architecture and Design, 2010) and "Shiva, Luria, Kahn," in R. Hejduk and J. Williamson, eds., *Religious Imagination in Modern and Contemporary Architecture* (Routledge, 2011). One hesitates to call architects like Rem Koolhaas prophets, but in a Nietzschean way, he is.

²⁸ The models here are often structures like the Egyptian pyramids, Stonehenge, or Meso-American stepped pyramids, designed by astrologer-priests to align with certain stars and seasonal solar-lunar events. This line of thinking is often allied to the arts of geometry (sacred geometry) and geomancy, among the latter feng shui (Chinese), tajul muluk (Malaysian) and vastu shastra (Indian).

²⁹ My fellow architects would be unlikely to admit any deficiency in the matter of "caring about people."

³⁰ See my *God, Creativity, and Evolution: The Argument from Designers*, op. cit.

³¹ Successful architecture firms will always contain outgoing people ("people people," usually as one or more of the partners and project managers) as well as shy ones (usually the designers and engineers). And by rights, *builders* belong to the same discussion. Contractors, subcontractors, craftsmen, and laborers working on a job constitute a system of relationships worthy of ethical consideration, i.e. regardless of the merit of finished building.

All this is not to characterize all extroverts as "I-You-ers" and all introverts as "I-It-ers." Many socially awkward people have deep empathy for other creatures and strong personal connections, while some people who are "great with people" are sociopaths, incapable of I-You, but skilled at simulating it. See Robert Hare, *Without Conscience: the Disturbing World of Psychopaths* (New York, Guilford Press, 1993).

³² Thomas Fisher, "Architects Behaving Badly: Ignoring Environmental Behavior Research," *Harvard Design Magazine*, Fall 2004/Winter 2005, pp. 1-3.

³³ Buildings do fulfill such basic shelter needs as protecting us from sun, rain, wind, heat, cold, wild animals, insects, and projectiles. They need not be subtle in how they do so. Spiritual, ontological, esthetic and ethical needs tend to arise *after* basic shelter needs have been met, in refinements that are optional, and that take some educated receptivity to notice.

³⁴ Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* [Towards a New Architecture] (1923). It's instructive to try replacing "masses" with "people" in Le Corbusier's definition of architecture. But Corb goes on: "Our eyes are made to see forms in light; light and shade reveal these forms; cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders or pyramids are the great primary forms which light reveals to advantage; the image of these is distinct and tangible within us without

ambiguity. It is for this reason that these are *beautiful forms, the most beautiful forms*. Everybody is agreed to that, the child, the savage and the metaphysician.”

³⁵ A short example of (a). Observe how people stand around on campuses and on plazas—i.e., in the open—and talk to each other face to face: first as a pair, then a triplet, then four...up to a small crowd. This is what you will find: that their bodies create an architecture-free architecture, after six people, crescent shaped, with one person typically commanding slightly more space around them than the others. Like magnets in each other's magnetic fields, people in the free field form spatial patterns that reflect the social relationship between them. For more about this, see “.....” at <http://www.mbenedikt.com>.

³⁶ See for example, Jan C. Semenza and Tanya L. March, “An Urban, Community-Based Intervention to Advance Social Interactions,” *Environment & Behavior*, January 2009, vol. 41, no. 1, 22-42, where we learn that public amenities like benches, safe places to walk, kiosks, and greenery encourage positive social interaction among people who would otherwise live isolated and afraid of each other.

³⁷ Stuart Guthrie, 1993, op. cit., argues that even modern religious thought is built on the ancient human habits of animism and personification. Geoffrey Scott (Note 39 below) is still without peer in probing this thought philosophically in the context of architecture.

³⁸ See Michael Benedikt, “Class Notes,” *Harvard Design Magazine*, No. 11, Summer 2000.

³⁹ See Vittorio Gallese, “The Shared Manifold Hypothesis: From Mirror Neurons to Empathy,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 8, No. 5-7, 2001, pp. 33-50, available at http://didattica.uniroma2.it/assets/uploads/corsi/33846/Gallese_2001.pdf. On Theodor Lipps' prefiguring of mirror neurons with in his theory of *Einfühlung* (“feeling into”) in the 1890s, see C. Montag, J. Gallinat, and A. Heinz “Theodor Lipps and the Concept of Empathy: 1851-1914,” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 2008; 165:1261-1261, available at <http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/article.aspx?articleID=100211>. Lipps was to have great (and I think salutary) influence on the theory of modern art and architecture. For an example of the latter, see Sir Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism* (London, Constable, 1914), still in print.

⁴⁰ For a short essay devoted to this, Michael Benedikt, “Posture,” *The Issue: Collective*, http://mbenedikt.com/posture_rev4.pdf. And then there's transparency. How often architects justify using vast amounts of glass in their buildings on the proposition that doing so will encourage political transparency. Window-walls “capture views” rather like whales capture krill, while windows *in* walls, which “look a certain way” in both senses of the phrase, are far harder to design. Where to stop?

⁴¹ As I wrote in *For an Architecture of Reality* (New York: Lumen Books, 1992), the “direct, esthetic experience of the real” requires that four characteristics coexist in the object contemplated: presence, significance, materiality, and emptiness. Of the four, significance causes the most trouble, since seeing or creating significance *at the same time* as emptiness is difficult. Seeing “emptiness,” which is a Buddhist notion, is not the same as regarding beauty with “disinterestedness,” as Kant explained it. See also my essay “Love and Beauty” in *2A Magazine: Art and Architecture*, Issue 17, 2011, guest edited by Nader Adalan and Phillip Tabb (http://mbenedikt.com/love_and_beauty_1s.pdf).

⁴² Used by Lawrence Wechsler in his book (largely) about the artist Robert Irwin, *Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees* (University of California Press, 1982).

⁴³ In architectural academia, the polar opposite of the art-as-respite approach to architecture's sociality can also be found. Adopting the methods and language of social science, the approach entails seeing people fundamentally as the components of “social systems” like “actor networks,” which (who?) have inputs and outputs, and process flows of information. People are -Its (individuals) making up bigger -Its (social units). They use resources. They communicate. Buber shows us how much is missed, necessarily, by this exclusively I-It approach.

⁴⁴ Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁴⁵ For example, “fairness” also means lightness of complexion.

⁴⁶ Scientists have a similar motivation: to state or observe something that seems wrong or impossible in the context of current theories, but in time turns out to be right and lead to new theory. Artists, art critics and collectors thrive on the same transition of opinion.

⁴⁷ Critic Peter Schjeldahl is eloquent on this score. See his essay “Notes on Beauty” in Bill Beckly, Ed. *Uncontrollable Beauty* (New York, Allworth Press, 1998) pp. 53-55.

⁴⁸ It may also explain why many Modern art enthusiasts to this day reject pre-Modern, representational, romantic or decorative art and seek out instead work at the extremes of abstraction (e.g. Donald Judd’s) or repulsiveness (e.g. Damien Hirst’s). In rejecting the joy-of-conversion that could them from reassessing their view, they continue to enjoy, in “eternal recurrence,” their youthful conversion from the tastes of their parents.

On the relationship between the experience of sacred places or sacred buildings and the experience of religious conversion generally, one should read Julio Bermudez’s groundbreaking empirical study “Profound Experiences of Architecture—the Role of ‘Distancing’ in the Ineffable” (*2A: Architecture and Art Magazine*, 17, 2011, 20-25). Just as many travel great distances to meet a guru, so many make long pilgrimages to visit “ineffable” buildings. This means (1) that they have expectations of their transformative power beforehand, and (2) they have invested a great deal of time and effort that needs to be “recouped.” Nevertheless, Bermudez reports, extraordinary architectural experiences (or “EAE”s as he calls them) nearly always *revise* one’s expectations, *re-frame* one’s beliefs, and turn out to be completely different from what one had read about or seen photographed. Slammed by reality, as it were, many of his several hundred respondents report weeping with gratitude and with guilt at having misunderstood and underappreciated the multisensory fullness of the place they had come to see. In the context of the present essay, we should note, however, that all the EAE experiences reported by Bermudez were effectively solitary, not to say solipsistic, ones—Me and The Place—very much in the contemporary model of how spirituality “works” in architecture, at least for architects and aspiring architects. (Bermudez article is available at http://faculty.cua.edu/bermudez/papers/2a_2011.pdf).

⁴⁹ Cf. Note 9 above. If all tastes are acquired, then one might say: the more acquired the better.

⁵⁰ Boston, Shambhala Inc. Publications, 1979.

⁵¹ *I and Thou* does not appear in the catalog of Kahn’s library held by the Kahn Archive at the University of Pennsylvania. The catalog is far from complete, however. It lists only the books kept by Kahn’s family after his death. The rest—probably the majority—were sold or discarded.

⁵² For a reading of Kahn in social and ethical, rather than empathetic, relational terms (which are not quite the same), see Sarah Williams Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn’s Situated Modernism* (Yale University Press, 2001). For a more literary, formal treatment, see Michael Benedikt, *Deconstructing the Kimbell: An Essay on Meaning in Architecture* (Lumen Books, 1991)

More abstractly, but no less religiously, Christopher Alexander in *The Nature of Order* credits the natural, as well as ideal architectural order to the fact that every point in space, at least potentially, is a center of *being*—an issuing-forth of energy and presence patterning its environment through local interactions. Human being is the most massive concentration of *being* that we know. One reads more of this in his earlier book *A Timeless Way of Building*. Stephen Wolfram’s *A New Kind of Science* is the mathematician’s development of essentially the same insight, *sans* the attention to *human* being. “Self-organization” may be a scientific phenomenon (and it would be mistaken not to see it as indicative of our times), but neither Alexander nor Wolfram distinguishes between I-It and I-You relationships. The field of agent-based economic modeling (<http://www2.econ.iastate.edu/tesfatsi/ace.htm>) is similarly silent, committed as it is, by default, to the I-It assumptions of most social science.

⁵³ Interest in designing around an intuited, poetic, *decisive moment* in the life of (the people in) a building might have come to Kahn from literary or cinematic practice, from music, or the contemporary photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, who rested his art on the concept. His interest in archaic, just-so stories might have come from Rudyard Kipling, popular in Kahn’s youth; but of course, myths about beginnings have been a feature of all cultures since story-telling and justification themselves first arose.

For more showing the “Buberian” overtones in Kahn, see “Louis I. Kahn: The Making of a Room,” a 2009 exhibit at the Arthur Ross Gallery at the University of Pennsylvania, at <http://www.arthistory.upenn.edu/themakingofaroom/catalogue.htm>.

⁵⁴ To my knowledge, there is no collection of written recollections of working for Louis Kahn, just remarks by many embedded in other texts and interviews. Jack MacAllister, for example, was the project architect on the Salk as well as several other of Kahn's buildings. Here is an excerpt from the interview with him: http://www.aecknowledge.com/videos/%20Elder_Wisdom_MacAllister_Excerpt. Of course, there is Nathaniel Kahn's feature-length 2003 movie about his father, *My Architect*.

⁵⁵ The quoted words are those of Tim Culvahouse, editor of *arcCA* (*architecture California*), who recollected them from the lecture and relayed them in private correspondence with this author.