

**WHEN THE
ROOSTER CROWS**

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**GOD, SUFFERING AND
BEING IN THE WORLD**

VINCENT L. PERRI



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When the Rooster Crows: God, Suffering and Being in the World

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Patient's discussed in this book are composites of multiple cases so that their actual identities are concealed. Any similarity to any actual person in this book is purely coincidental.

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In Memoriam

David Perri

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout my life I have always sought to understand the origins and meaning of suffering. As a young boy, it was often difficult to reconcile the tears and sorrows of a loved one with our belief in an all-loving God. There were so many hardships and so many tribulations that always seemed to taint the joys of daily life. Yet, there was always this *turning*, this looking beyond. Growing up in the 1950's and 60's in a small Jersey town, the church was always central in our lives. We were an Italian Catholic family living just four blocks from our church which was easily visible from our home. My grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins all lived in nearby homes on the same block. We were a middle class extended family sharing the same customs and beliefs. Life was simple and it revolved around fundamental beliefs in God, hard work and family. My grandparents owned a grocery store and my uncles shared in the business peddling fruits and vegetables to nearby towns. My mother worked as a seamstress operator and my father was a bank clerk working nine to five each day.

Life was lived on the soil of the earth and God was never far from us, but neither was the suffering. The word *suffering* always had deep echoes in me. It reverberated in the tears of loved ones, the sorrows of forgotten souls, and the longing for those we lost too soon. As a very young boy I can remember the expressions on the faces of my mother or grandmother when a child passed or a loved one suffered from terminal illness. There was always something in the look, a message in the eyes, that was beyond

anything that could be expressed in the spoken word. These echoes reverberated in me. Somehow, their sorrows became my sorrows, and I realized that we all shared a common thread that connected us beyond the tangible. This thread, I realized, was the realization that our suffering was our collective heritage.

When I look back on those early years, I can now recall the intangible connection or matrix that seemed to exist between those who shared their inner sorrows. Although there was a space between them there wasn't a space that separated them. There was an intangible quality in their encounter that generated meaning beyond the spoken word. Somehow, infinite space became finite space in the closed container of their personal encounter. It was during these encounters that I began to see the subtle nuances of *relation*. The spoken words, the silence and pauses, the expressionless stares, and the softening of the eyes and face were all meaningful aspects of *encountering the other*.¹ Those experiences *encountering the other* would become the pivotal experience of my life and studies. I developed an almost insatiable desire to understand the psychology of inner life. It was this interiority of being human that could cross the invisible chasm between self and other. There was a hidden dimension that existed in the *in-between* that could bring spirit to life.^{2,3}

Although I was just in grade school at the time, I began to read the pocket editions of Sigmund Freud and his protégée Carl Gustav Jung. My father would look at me in exasperation and would kid me about not possibly being able to understand the words I was reading. To some extent he was right, but I persevered. When I got to high school, and as serendipity would have it, I had an English teacher who took an interest in me and introduced me to the works of the French-Algerian philosopher Albert Camus. He had me first read *The Myth of Sisyphus* and then *The Rebel* and *The Stranger*.^{4,5,6} This in turn whetted my appetite and became the foundation and inspiration for studying the existentialist philosophers. During my first year of college, I decided to augment my study of psychology and philosophy and began studying the sciences eventually enrolling in pre-medicine. I must admit that my academic career was checkered by many interruptions and financial concerns always having to balance work, school, and family. At nineteen years old I was already married, raising a family, and trying to complete my academic requirements. It is now

forty-nine years later as my wife and I look forward to celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary.

It was during this first year of college that I was in our local book store purchasing my required texts. Almost by accident I happened to stumble upon a soft cover book that caught my attention. A bearded man graced the cover and the title of the book was written in German, *Ich und Du*.⁷ This book, *I and Thou*, by the eminent Jewish philosopher-theologian, Martin Buber, would occupy my thinking for the rest of my life. I must admit that my earliest reading of Buber left me wondering if I would ever truly grasp the meaningful depth of his words. Over time, however, I began to understand that there was meaning in *relation*. There was a chimerical world that existed between two people that interpenetrated space and form.⁸ I didn't know it then, but Buber gave me a glimpse of the path I would follow in my efforts to amalgamate science, psychology, and philosophy in my future work. I needed to understand God, suffering and our collective being in the world.

As time went on, I began to wonder about the neural mechanisms that occurred when two people met and encountered each other in dialogue. I began studying at the doctoral level and focused on the neural mechanisms of unconscious processing and how those processes were expressed in language.⁹ The underpinning of my interest, however, was trying to open the hearts of those under my care and to understand their suffering as they were experiencing it. Through this process I developed a therapeutic intervention that made use of spatial relations and eye movements to facilitate healing.¹⁰ As I worked with patients in both the physical and clinical psychotherapeutic relationships, I began to appreciate the almost magical quality of the space we shared. It seemed almost imperceptible to me at first, but the more I studied this invisible space the more I realized how tangible it was.

This space *in-between* is what I have termed the Healing Space.^{11,12} It is the *in-between* of the I-Thou relationship of Martin Buber.¹³ It is the space of our unconditional presence for another who is suffering. Although we may never look at another and fully penetrate to the sanctum of their interiority, our unconditional presence for the other attempts to see, feel, and experience their world as they are experiencing it in the moments we encounter them.^{14,15,16} In the invisible matrix of this space is *spirit*. It crosses

along the rooted vine of interiority to the other, and it is here that I believe, we will find the answers to our deepest questions about God and suffering; it is in the *being* of this encounter.

I know that the prospects of creating any understanding for the place of human suffering is a daunting and impossible task. However, as I studied the existentialist positions of Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, and Nietzsche, and then evaluated their positions against Buber, Levinas, Heschel, and the traditional theological positions of Catholicism as brought forth by John Paul II, I found a common ground. Human suffering must be evaluated in the context of *being*. *Being* must be understood in the context of our lived experience as it is lived in our temporal reality. Each moment of our lived experience is a connection to *infinity* in the moments of our *being*.¹⁷

As we progress through each chapter, I hope to chart a process of evolutionary transcendence that connects the dots of *infinity*, and establishes *being* in the person.¹⁸ It is a process of moving from the *infinite* to the *finite* and establishing *being* as consciousness in the world.¹⁹ In this reading there will be many echoes of the French existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, as I try to define our lived experience against *infinity* as the birth of our *being*. Our *being* as I will try to define it is our *being in God*. This *being in God* is the *infinity* that underlies our interiority and can make our presence to another the I-Thou that Buber professed.²⁰ I know that many of these concepts and terms will be alien to those who have not studied philosophy, but I am going to try to elucidate their meaning as I have come to understand them.

I am not an academic philosopher or theologian. I am a practicing doctor who has been in practice for forty-one years and who has worked clinically, psychotherapeutically and in the life coaching arena. I have treated terminally ill patients, counseled patients whose children were dying, and have four generations of patients that I still see regularly. All of these patients are part of my extended family, and they are largely the reason why I have sought to understand the origins and meaning of *God, Suffering and Being in The World*.²¹ As we embark on the first chapter, I am going to explore my idea of *infinity* as the underlying current that serves as the emergence of God in the world. I know full well that my ideas and definitions of the terms I apply in italics may differ from others using the same terms. I will try to define these terms as precisely as I can to create a

picture of them as I mean to represent them in this context. I will reference in endnotes where I have encountered these terms in their original context.

Infinity, as I will use this term, is meant to imply the vastness and infinitude or unending state of *being*.²² This *being* in the context of *infinity* is a state of actual presence before the birth of *being in the world*.²³ Put more simply, *infinity* precedes *consciousness* in the world. It *is* before we *are*. I think of *infinity* as an underlying stream that holds all the potential for a *consciousness* to emerge in the world. It is a coexistent interpenetration of *being and non-being* before it emerges in the birth of consciousness.²⁴ *Infinity* is the first existent of consciousness.

The most integral aspect of this discussion, however, is not to examine existential philosophy, but to try to see how and if it fits into our collective concepts of God, Suffering and Being in The World. I believe there is much to be garnered by looking deeply into how life is lived in concrete reality. In my experience, there is no greater immanence if one believes in a transcendent God than the experience of immanence in the I-Thou relationship.²⁵ Nietzsche believed that human suffering was a normative condition of human life thereby rejecting lofty ideals of a heavenly kingdom or God.²⁶ To Nietzsche *all the Gods are dead*.²⁷ Immanence is removed from the divine, and that which lies within human beings is only of human beings.

In the following chapter, *Infinity, God, and the Awakening of Consciousness*, I am going to attempt to define God's emergence in the world from a Judaic-Christian perspective, and show how God emerges from immanence to transcendence. God becomes a *being in the world* by being in humankind. This book is largely an explication of my search for God in the world. It is the journey of a man who has a deep belief in God and the Trinity of Catholicism. Although the philosophical ideas and terms are common to existential philosophy, I am interpreting them in the context of these beliefs, and hopefully charting a plausible rationale for the existence of a loving omnipresent God.

INFINITY, GOD, AND THE AWAKENING OF CONSCIOUSNESS

I often wonder what it would be like if we could strip everything away from ourselves as if we were peeling away our outer garments and then our inner garments, and then each and every layer of our being until we were approaching empty space. I imagine this empty space having an undercurrent that could travel at inaccessible speeds contradicting all that we think we know about time and space. Although this undercurrent could travel dimensionlessly, I imagine it traveling backward through time until it reached beginningless time. In this beginningless time, motion and stillness, matter, and insubstantiality, being and non-being would exist in a non-oppositional equilibrium. I would call this state *infinity*.²⁸ I imagine it as a sleeping stillness generating a potential energy that if awakened could erupt in an unimaginable oppositional climax. This state would of course materialize in countless energies ultimately forming matter in the way that we know it today. In its quiescence, however, before anything existed in the world as we know it, I imagine infinity existing in a potential consciousness that was as yet unconscious.

This stream of infinity is where it begins. It is the domain of light and space in the absence of anything tangible or that exists in the realm of touch or sensation.²⁹ It is the beginning. If there is light but there are no objects then there is nothing to be seen; if there is space but there is no materiality then there is nothing that can be touched.³⁰ *Infinity* moves in endless stillness that forms a beginningless light that streams in timeless space. At this point I am sure that one may wonder what makes the issue of infinity relevant? Its relevance lies in its potential to be the *ground* within which our universal existence lies.³¹ *Infinity* orchestrates an endless stream of stillness that underlies all being. It synchronizes life in all its form and it dances to an orchestrated melody of life, love, and spirit.

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*Infinity is God.*³² Levinas defines infinity, or the transcendence that we call infinity, “the *absolutely other*.”³³ It is the only way that I can conceptualize the transcendence of God in a world that is everything that God is not. *Infinity* is an endless stream of preconscious *Being* that has been born in the world as God. As the world materialized it materialized in the essence and image of God.³⁴ The origins of the world were in God’s image.³⁵ The world reflected a *transcendent function* that would ultimately be a function of human beings trying to ascend to their highest human potential.³⁶ As human beings we are a child of the *Infinite*, and our human inheritance is the acquisition of a mystical dream; this is the dream of Jacob’s ladder.³⁷ We are called upon to enter the stream of consciousness where *infinity* flows with the angels and discloses God to consciousness. In this sense, once we are conscious, we are forever destined to be free, but this freedom will always encounter a price.³⁸ Jacob’s ladder becomes the ladder of our inheritance in every moment of our lives. Do we enter the stream of *Infinity*, or do we cower and submit to the impulses of the mundane?

The stream of *Infinity* awakened in the preconscious state of God’s unconsciousness and *being* was born in the world.³⁹ The duality of being and non-being was overcome and reconciled.⁴⁰ The world was at once conscious of itself. This began the awakening of consciousness. *Being* was born of *infinity* and *consciousness* was born of *being*.⁴¹ *Infinity* streamed in endless coherence and emerged in an awakening of consciousness that overlaps and interpenetrates our *being*.⁴² Sartre tells us that our freedom is a condemnation, but this freedom is more a challenge to our *being* than it is a condemnation.⁴³ To be awakened in consciousness is to be born of the spirit and recognize *infinity* as the emergent Other that is God.⁴⁴ *Infinity* is the Thou that is the spirit in the other when I allow myself to become enamored by the face I encounter.⁴⁵

The boundlessness of *Infinity* is the unfathomable endlessness that makes God possible in the world. It is only that we, as human beings, can be conscious of what we conceptualize that makes God possible in our lives.⁴⁶ This boundlessness of infinity, however, also creates an interiority that permits reflection.⁴⁷ We can create distance within our interior consciousness while at the same time maintaining our connection to the present.⁴⁸ We trod upon the soil of God. We have the capacity to remove ourselves from the exteriority of historical time and enter the inner sanctum of *infinity*.⁴⁹

This inner departure from exteriority emerges in a consciousness of inner life. It is a retreat that at the same time is never removed from our present and our *being* in the present.⁵⁰ Our *being*, that is, what we are conscious of is never negated.⁵¹ We maintain a continuity through the stream of *infinity* which is unfolded in *being*.

Interiority is distance.⁵² It implies an inner soil that is walked between “I” and the transcendent God that remains elusive but present. Each time one retreats to the inner life and focuses on the Thou there is a negation of exteriority and the immediacy of the external world.⁵³ This negation, however, is not a rejection of the world, but a prayerful inner retreat that encompasses both self and other. This inner retreat attenuates the thickness of distance between “I” and what is before me, and allows a movement toward inner transcendence.⁵⁴ It is turning inward and facing interiority that we momentarily separate from the external world and face the domain of the soul, but persisting in maintaining reciprocity with the world.^{55,56}

Infinity, as I am defining it, illuminates the internal world. It is the transformative light that penetrates the darkness of night and allows inner revelation. When we turn inward and face interiority, we shatter the imagined boundaries that stifle freedom.⁵⁷ This turning inward is a reciprocal turning where one is reestablishing distance within oneself. It is knowing that we exist in mutual reciprocity that makes retreat necessary.⁵⁸ I turn to *Infinity* and in so doing I turn toward God. I establish the forgotten relation between God and God’s immanence and in that *presence*, I establish transcendence. I kneel in the presence of *absolute otherness*.⁵⁹ The central point here is that it is only in this reciprocity between *Otherness*, and the other who stands before me that I can be fully human in relation.^{60,61} God manifests in immanence but only as the transcendent Being of relation. It is only in our capacity to be conscious of what we conceptualize that allows our interiority to become transcendent.⁶² This evolves the trinitarian relation of *Infinity*, God, and the dawn of consciousness.

The critical exegesis is that relation between oneself and another stands in relation to oneself and God in an interconnected reciprocity.⁶³ It is only through the inner transformation of oneself standing in relation to God that one can meaningfully separate from another and establish distance in relation.⁶⁴ This establishes reciprocity in otherness.⁶⁵ When I separate from myself, I establish relation.⁶⁶ It is only in creating this separation

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that I create distance between myself and the one who stands before me.⁶⁷ The *infinity* that defines me is the *infinity* that creates my *being* in the world allowing me passage to the *one* who stands before me.⁶⁸ This is the *between* of the transcendent *One* within me, and the other who stands before me in relation.^{69,70} When I transcend to the *One* within me, I meet the *other* before me.⁷¹

It is this *meeting* between the *One* who presides within me that enables me to stand in relation to who presides before me. Consciousness is borne in *Being* so that I can stand before another and allow the other to consume me.^{72,73} The other presents to the relation disclosing only exteriority and forbidding inner disclosure of what is real.⁷⁴ By the same token, I do the same until there is a mutual opening of the relation. This opening, if you will, occurs as a loosening of constraints when the relation reveals the absolute reciprocity of the *between*.⁷⁵ We stand in relation but only to the degree that we exist in the *between* as part of the rooted vine that connects us.⁷⁶ Reciprocity by its very definition requires a mutuality of exchange that will always rest on the contingency of the individuals.⁷⁷ This reciprocity in relation is threatened when one or the other person is unwilling or incapable of separation and distance.⁷⁸ In this circumstance it is one's own interiority freely given to the other, these *naked essentials of relation*, that create the *in-between* of the rooted vine.^{79,80} The *in-between* can only condense to applicability when either of the persons encountering the other becomes unconditionally present for the other.⁸¹

The unconditionality of encountering the other can be transformative in many ways. Once unconditionality is established reciprocity emerges as a natural consequence of *being*.⁸² We become conscious of the other's interiority, and that nakedness of *being* establishes the transformative space *in-between*.⁸³ Spirit crosses the branches of the rooted vine.⁸⁴ We encounter the other as the Holy within the other, and we become unconditionally present; we try to see, feel, and experience the world as the *other* is living their experience in the world.⁸⁵ We allow spirit to emerge from within and allow the rooted vine to fill the space *in-between*.⁸⁶ We touch the outermost reaches of *infinity*, and in the space *in-between*, spirit emerges and connects the invisible matrix of our *being*.⁸⁷

It is in the *face* of the other that we glimpse *infinity*.⁸⁸ Levinas brings the face of the human other to a transcendence where all boundaries with the

world are suspended. We encounter Infinity when we meet face to face.⁸⁹ This is the endless stream where timelessness and beginningless time are encountered in the other. The other transcends my *being* by capturing me, and creating my separation from time and history; my inner life is suspended by the *presence* and *reciprocity* of the other.⁹⁰ I stand before the other and I enter an inner enclave; an inner cocoon of sorts that creates separation.⁹¹ I disengage from the timeline of *being* and in so doing I enter the space of meaningful silence and dialogue.⁹² I enter the flow of *infinity*.

It is in the separation that I stand unconditionally before the other.^{93,94} I allow distance to unfold between us, and the space I share with the other engages “I” and “You.” This is the ontological essence of relation.^{95,96} My vision of the other transcends the other, and allows all that the other is to capture me as they stand before me.⁹⁷ This transcendence, that is, the *beingness* that *I am*, and that I encounter in the *other* evolves only to the degree of my unconditionality.⁹⁸ When I am unconditionally present to the other, I glimpse *Infinity*; I touch the fringe of His cloak.⁹⁹ I encounter the *Thou* in the one who stands before me, and in that moment I recognize the endless stream of *Infinity* that is *God*.

Infinity streams in endless timelessness. When I am unconditionally present to you, I capture moments of *Infinity* and concretize “I” and “You” in relation.^{100,101} Spirit emerges as the spirit across the branches of the rooted vine that wells within me, and seeks its expression and reciprocity in You.¹⁰² In the encounter with the other I encounter *Infinity*.¹⁰³ My eyes receive you but it is *Being* that experiences you in relation.^{104,105} When “I” am unconditionally present to “You”, I hallow the moment. “I” and “You” are transcended, and our *being* and *presence* standing in relation hallows the Thou.¹⁰⁶ When we stand in *unconditional relation* our *presence* becomes an expression of joy that enraptures the experience of human relation and makes ordinary space the extraordinary space *in-between*.^{107,108}

In 2019 I was invited to lecture at The University of Tel Aviv Brain, Movement and Cognition Symposium where I spoke on *The Healing Space and Implicit Language*. The topic dealt with Martin Buber’s I-Thou relationship and its implications in the healing of human suffering. Israel offered me an opportunity to visit many of the religious sites that were so much a part of my childhood and life. During that time, I tried to experience the *space* that I walked the way Jesus experienced that *space* when

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He walked that path. I must admit, there were times when the *presence* of the *space* within which I stood created an otherness that was tangible. This *presence* of the *space* gave me pause to think about all the mysteries of our human experience. The mystery of human suffering, as it is depicted in the crucifixion, erupted in my mind the moment I climbed the steps to Golgotha. Somehow, each step became a moment in my consciousness that lost its temporality. In other words, my temporal experience in the present moment was jettisoned to a 2,000-year mystery that predated me. There was distance in relation.¹⁰⁹ This experience constellated an understanding of the ontological nature of human existence. I was experiencing *Infinity*. The *space* within which I stood was a *space* of relation. My *being* stood in relation to He who came before me, but yet was *present* in me. It was in the separateness of this space where I stood in *relation* to the Other that I touched the undercurrent of *Infinity*.¹¹⁰ My *being* in dimensionless space stood in relation to the Holy, and experienced transubstantiation in the spirit. I was tasting what I can only describe as the *bread and wine of relation*.¹¹¹

It was at that moment that I realized that the crucifix was transcendence itself. It was the *flesh* that streamed through *Infinity*, and once *Being* emerged in humankind the consciousness of suffering was born. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God ...”¹¹² The beginning, however, is timeless as is the timelessness and infinitude of God. God’s consciousness was born out of a preconscious infinitude that awakened as *Being*, conscious awareness that “I am,” and the world was born.¹¹³ If we are to believe in the trinitarian God of Christianity then we have to at least consider that *anguish* within the germinal birth of the world coexisted with creation.¹¹⁴ “All things came into *being* through Him ...”¹¹⁵ Is it even possible that the *body and blood of Christ* was a necessary contingency for *Being* in the world? Anguish would be born as an existential prerequisite of *Being*. *Anguish* coexists with *being born in the world*.¹¹⁶ I like to think of Sartre’s discussion of anguish as an interwoven reality coexistent with our freedom in our mode of *Being*.¹¹⁷ We are born in the world.¹¹⁸ It is in the consciousness of *Being* that we always face a diametric oppositionalism; we choose. Sartre writes on Kierkegaard and his explication of anguish as an experience that occurs before sin, but in actuality is anguish knowing that we are free to choose in relation to sin.¹¹⁹ Anguish is born out of freedom, and

“as all things came into being through Him,” I think we already lay witness to the transcendence of the cross.¹²⁰

The bread and wine of relation embodies an alchemical significance that I believe lives in *being* itself. To say, “I am,” implies that I embody consciousness in the consciousness of my being.¹²¹ This existential reality streams out of the infinitude that precedes consciousness being born in the world. *Relation* is already fraternally linked to *being*.¹²² “I am” means that my *being* is always a being that must choose. To have anguish means that I must choose not knowing the oppositional consequences of my freedom, and my freedom will always present a threat to my *being*, which will always manifest as anguish. The bread and wine of relation streams with Infinity because relation is the birth of existential freedom. If we define *Infinity* as God, and acknowledge the preconscious God erupting in consciousness, and from that *being* was born in the world, we have already established *relation*. *Transubstantiation appears scripted in the eternal drama of human life*.

In the same way that light illuminates an object to be envisaged so that the object can be seen, it is the light that partakes in the *relation* between itself and the object.¹²³ The *bread and wine of relation* is such a phenomenon. *Infinity*, if it was to exist at all in the preconscious state, must have inherently existed in relation to *being* as all *being* of necessity seeks consciousness of itself. *The bread and wine of relation* is a *transubstantiation* existent in the bedrock of *infinity* that I believe emerged in the transubstantiation of bread and wine in the world. Isaiah prophesied, “*Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.*”¹²⁴ Within the preconscious state of *infinity* the freedom that would be bestowed on humankind would require a reconciliation. *Infinity* becoming *being* in the world would necessitate nothing less than transubstantiation to offer salvation to those who freely chose. As Isaiah further prophesied, “*But he was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our inequities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.*”¹²⁵

There is distance in all relation.¹²⁶ It is distance that creates the separateness that allows one to define relation in meaningful terms. It is only when I can separate and create distance that I can define my reality and define it as mine.¹²⁷ In the beginning there was *Infinity* and in this beginningless stream of preconsciousness a consciousness was born as *being*;

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the world was created. In the separateness of *Infinity* from the *being* born into the world, an existential distance was created that both separated but connected *Infinity* and *being*. God and His creation were forever unfolded.

Is it possible to now define transubstantiation in a way that tries to address our human suffering? Perhaps this is too much to ask, as no one can possibly define or understand the immensity of consciousness existent in the Creator. Somehow, however, it at least appears possible that a prereflective consciousness was present.¹²⁸ We must inquire how *being*, that is, the realization that “I am,” being born into consciousness, and that consciousness being cast into relation with some other and the world, establishes freedom as an equivalent to anguish or human suffering.¹²⁹ Freedom itself is a paradoxical state. To be free denotes that one has the freedom to choose, but as Sartre shows, we are not free to change certain things that are beyond our control such as our heredity, childhood, physical infirmities or the like.¹³⁰ It would seem that our freedom is immersed in the probability of anguish, and this anguish is in itself an aspect of human suffering. To be free is to choose, but the freedom of choice rests firmly on the seat of anguish.¹³¹ Anguish wrings the hands of the suffering and breaks the heart of the mourner. It emanates as an existential reality that lurks over every choice, every freedom, and every opportunity life presents. The choice to conceive a baby and the joy of holding a newborn will always rest against the anguish of a lost conception. The choice to marry another will always teeter on the anguish of broken trust. *Freedom requires a redemptive path.* It is our greatest gift but it holds our greatest risk of suffering. The bread and wine is the moment before the body and blood, but between the two is the stream of *infinity*. With freedom there is ecstasy and sorrow. We commit to life as life is lived, and at some point, the realization of my being, the “I am” of my consciousness recognizes the “I am” that came before me. *This is the bread and wine of relation.*

The *bread and wine* streams with *infinity*. It will later become the fabric of reconciliation offered to *being born in the world*.¹³² It is in this universal undercurrent that our emancipation as *being* borne to consciousness derives. Our ability to be the “I am” of consciousness is born out of the “I am who I am” of *Infinity*; it is the stream of *Infinity* within our soul.^{133,134} We must note that our ability to be conscious of what we conceptualize derives from that which preceded our being born in the world.¹³⁵ We tend

to think that all of our faculties of thought and contemplation are our biological inheritance; however, this falls short of the pleroma that is *Infinity*. “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you ...”¹³⁶ Jeremiah streamed the Infinity of the pleroma, the otherness that predates and precedes the birth of consciousness, and pointed to the Holy who preceded our life in the world. This *Holy* is the one we meet when we meet the *other* who stands before us.¹³⁷ The *bread and wine of relation* clandestinely emerges and embodies the in-between.¹³⁸

When we encounter the other, we partake in the divine drama of the human experience. “I” meet “You” and “I” encounter “You”, but “I” also encounter who embodies “You”.¹³⁹ When “I” encounter “You” and “I” am unconditionally present for “You”, we are partaking in the *bread and wine*. We taste the *in-between* in the way it was received in the 2000 years that preceded us.¹⁴⁰ The *bread and wine* transcends symbolism and immanently embodies *being*. Each moment that we encounter *relation* we confront our freedom to choose. It is in our moment-to-moment encounters with those who stand before us that put us on the precipice of choice. How I encounter you in relation either elevates you or diminishes you, and this interaction often determines one’s ecstasy or anguish.

All encounters in *relation* occur on the spectrum of *infinity*, and as such they stream within the soul of *Infinity’s body and blood*. The *bread and wine of relation* can only reach the height of its holiness when the exteriority of the other is pierced by the investment of one’s whole being in the encounter.^{141,142} Buber elaborates on this idea by noting that the “whole being” of the person does not exclude his attributes as a person such as his *instincts or emotions*.¹⁴³ Our investment in the other is an investment of our total being as such, and not only an effort of exteriority in the absence of what is real.^{144,145}

BETWEEN ECSTASY AND SORROW

It is not uncommon to hear the question, “Where was God,” when something hurtful has affected us. If God is an all loving and all caring God, how could He permit this to happen? Life always seems to oscillate between peaks and valleys that can be exhilarating at their pinnacle and devastating at their nadir. We all have asked this question countless times, and this has often led to the conclusion for many that an all-loving, all-caring God could not exist in a world that suffers. However, if we examine life from its metaphysical perspective, we may find latitude for our interpretation. Before the dawn of *being*, there was no consciousness that could be conscious of the world as we know it. Sartre tells us that “*all consciousness is consciousness of something*.”¹⁴⁶ In the preconsciousness of *Infinity*, the infinitude of eternity had to exist in a manifest reconciliation of opposites.¹⁴⁷ To be endless, infinite, and beyond the horizon of time and space life would exist in equitability. There would be no oppositional charges to stir the current of infinitude, and quiescence would prevail.

At some point, however, the stream of *Infinity* erupted in consciousness. Consciousness was born into the equation of beginningless time, and the boundaries of time and space became objects of consciousness. All that was reconciled before, and invisible to conscious awareness, was now consciousness of *being*. Consciousness, to be conscious, must coexist with its unconscious forerunner, and would be representative of the polarity of opposites that we encounter in human life.¹⁴⁸ Love and malice, honesty and deception, loyalty and unfaithfulness, joy and sorrow, health and sickness, and life and death would become necessary existents in a world that was conscious.