CHAPTER 1

Why Are We Here? Civility and Civitas

“Man has always been his own most vexing problem.” With these words, the American theologian and political philosopher Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) began his delivery of the prestigious Gifford Lectures in 1941, later published as The Nature and Destiny of Man (1943, Volume 1: 1). I think the most frustrating aspect of this “problem” pertains to finding a satisfactory response as to the questions of why humanity has appeared on earth and what humanity’s destiny is. Verily, why are we here? I hope to offer a theory of presence within the political in this chapter and hope that seeking an answer to the question of humanity’s purpose will facilitate the endeavor.

I will begin with the most enduring answer to that question, offered by various religions. The most common formulation of it goes as follows: “We are part of God’s creation and appeared here on earth because we deprived ourselves of the heavens; now we have to strive to save our souls.” A plausible answer, but one that requires a giant leap of faith, which is easier said than done, particularly in an age of “God as
option” (Taylor 2007). Hence, most of us still crave to know what we are supposed to do while here. We know what not to do, particularly when we are faced with danger. COVID-19 (beginning in December 2019 in American continent) made almost all of us stay put, do nothing, and keep “social and physical distance.” This gave us clarity of purpose, in the short term, at least. But short of such powerful forces, we are lost for direction. We may never satisfactorily find out where we have come from or where we are going. As the seventeenth-century Persian poet Abutalib Kalim Kashani (d. 1670) puts it: “Unaware we are in this world of its end and its beginning; the first and the last pages of this old book are missing.” Yet, without some notion of what we should do with our lives while here, we may be lost, confused, and unable to act. The question of why we are here remains important and urgent. Having a sensible response to this question generates a sense of drive, fortitude, purpose, orientation, tenacity, and resolve to empower and guide every sensible soul. What is certain is that those who possess clear self-definition not only experience real, genuine, and authentic achievements but also leave behind a legacy that others consider worthy of discussion, narration, and even emulation. So, what kind of legacy generates a story worthy of narration and emulation?

Perhaps reviewing the legacies others have left behind may provide us with some clues. The sophists and the materialists of ancient Greece, the followers of Charvaka of ancient India (“school of worldliness”), Ming Chia of China (“School of Names,” claiming that only apparent things are real), and modern secularists have responded to this question by advocating an absolute indulgence in the desires of the senses and satisfaction through worldly pleasures. On the other extreme, radical and legal-minded religionists advocate absolute submission to divine commandments as they understand them. They advocate submergence of individuality to the point of annihilating any sense of the “self” through strict observation of moral certitudes they claim to be the manifestation of the Truth. Both positions hubristically assume that their understanding of the meaning of human responsibility on earth represents the final answer for civility and civitas. Both positions fail to capture the nuances of the human paradox and offer easy answers for a complicated question, because the first denies any reality beyond appearances, while the second confuses partial understanding of a given sacred message, available to mortal humans, with the divine Truth, beyond the reach of mortal beings. More tragically still, to use the distinction the German Lutheran theologian Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) makes in his book The Idea of the Holy,
the religionists reduce the amazing numinous experience of “awing in its mystery” (*mysterium fascinans*) into a sense of “fearing God” (*mysterium teremedum*) (1950). And while the absolute secularists deny any sacred or divine experience altogether, the absolute religionists reduce the divine mystery to avoidance of worldly suffering by unwittingly secularizing religion (Voegelin 1968).

The problem is that none of these extreme responses accurately apply to human beings, because the first shortchanges human potential while the second demands humanity to be more than and/or different from what its makeup demands and dictates. Ontologically, human beings have a beastly structure (sensual and emotional), human potential (intelligent and imaginative), and divine aspiration (spiritual and moral). The combination of these three impulses makes possible worldly pleasure, happiness, achievements, emphatic relationships, and immortal experiences. Human beings are endowed with the potential of encompassing all three and often they succeed in integrating them to produce a magical mixture worth discussing, narrating, and contemplating. It is human to be extremely self-interested; it is human to be reasonable and feel responsible for a collectivity one has chosen to be a member of, and finally, it is also human to be selflessly empathetic and caring, even for one’s enemy. To perform human depends on understanding that one is a woven carpet with warps, wefts, and knots corresponding to the three aspects of the emotional, the reasonable, and the spiritual. We could even call them the natural, the human, and the divine. Thus, a more complicated answer to the question of why human beings are here may be as follows: Humanity’s *raison d’être* is to materialize its complex three-dimensional potential in a balanced way.

What happens when the emotional, the reasonable, and the spiritual manifest themselves simultaneously? They produce an organic combination of subsistence, quantity, and quality that I call civilization or civitas. To explain this, I propose that one should make a distinction between two forms of activities: One aims at “making a living” and the other, going beyond this, entails “making a life.” The distinction provides an important clue. To make a living, one has a job, a task, a career, a chore, a grind, and a routine to perform for satisfying necessities and/or facilitating easier survival; making a living is a reaction to the necessities of survival and a response to the desire for a more comfortable existence. It leads to the production and maintenance of materials that we need to subsist and to survive and can lead to production of material in quantities that make this subsistence more tolerable and more comfortable. “Making a life,”
however, refers to a condition where quality has a presence and elevates life beyond the dry production of materials and quantities. If one dedicates one’s energy to making a living only, then there will be no energy left to spend on charms or values. No doubt, those who aim to make a living walk and talk purposefully with enormous drive, but the product of their work cannot sustain the soul and does not go beyond the satisfaction of bodily desires, material needs, or inquisitive mind. From the perspective of performing human and civilization creation, they are still engaged in mere survival. The Qur’an describes a person who is not concerned with elevation of the human spirit as someone who “will neither die nor remain alive” (87: 13), an interesting way of phrasing “mere survival.” Concern with elevation means being mindful of quality, which in turn softens rude, dry, mechanical, rough, and irritating aspects of pure material and even rational order of things.

“Making a life” amounts to “making a living” with reverence. It is not just about making it but making it with finesse; one does not just drink the coffee, but mentally wakes up by smelling and tasting it. It is about appreciating everything, every step, and every occasion. It is doing the most mundane things with balance, effectiveness, and grace. “Making a life” conveys a sense of choice and deliberate action; it is an art, and the execution of any art requires meditation, thinking, imagination, practice, care, manufacturing, construction, re-construction, and refinement, but most importantly finesse, gentleness, and care. It also means thinking, saying, and doing everything as though it is the second time: As I heard once from a wise soul, “to do things right, one should do them twice, the first teaches the second.” The latter moves mountains and its echo remains alive forever. “To make a life” makes life worth “making a living” for. Most people have made and continue to make a living, but stories worth telling and re-telling are the account of “a life,” whether by an individual or by a given collective.

Take the example of the ancient Hellenic world, one of the most continually discussed and debated human experiences. We know that there were more than a hundred city-states in Ancient Greece, the most famous being Argos, Athens, Corinth, Megara, and Sparta. Ostensibly, all the cities “made a living,” in some cases impressively so: Corinth became the wealthiest and Sparta was known for having an impressive army. And yet only the Athenians rose above merely “making a living” and “made a life” worth debating and discussing by all cultures and in all epochs. The main reason is that when one “makes a life,” the three dimensions
of human potential—the natural (emotional), the human (reasonable), and the divine (spiritual)—find expression and they engage in an amazing conversation in concert, albeit naturally with constructive tension. The first is with the passion of the heart, assessing pain and pleasure or cost and benefit measures; the second is with the vernacular of the mind, measuring philosophical or scientific, verifiable or experimental true and false statements; and the third is with the vision of the soul, imagining and judging categories of moral right and wrong. Today’s science of the brain attributes the first activity to the right hemisphere of the brain, the second to the left side, and the third to the prefrontal cortex. I prefer the above-mentioned and more poetic notions of the eyes of the heart, the mind, and the soul. I will have more to say about this later but suffice it to say here that the three conversations in concert will begin and sustain “a life” worth narration.

“Making a life” occurs when a majority (usually more than fifty percent of the people, more than fifty percent of the time) deliberately engage in the big conversation on the human condition, first in themselves individually and then collectively in the polity. This in turn allows humans as a species to perform human as cultural beings and perform acts particular to humans. These acts include the three processes of production/satisfaction, occurrences/achievement, and experiences/actualization. These terms can be used when a moment of equipoise in concurrent, comprehensive, and convivial production occurs. A concurrent occurrence refers to the happening of these productions all at the same time. It does not suffice to produce only one of them. A comprehensive production means humanity produces everything, i.e., the material (sustenance and welfare economy, order, and administration), the epistemological (data, education, science, and knowledge), and the non-material (art, music, social relations, value system, sense of worth, hope, holiness, and quality of life). And a convivial experience refers to these concurrent productions with a spirit of festivity, energy, and liveliness. Convivial comes from the Latin convivialis, conveying a feast, which in turn derived from the Latin convivium, meaning living together, which again comes from the Latin verb vivere, meaning to live. Civitas or civilization is, in the words of the physician and philosopher Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), “the sum total of all progress made by men and the individual man in every sphere of action and from every point of view, insofar as this progress helps towards the spiritual perfecting of individuals as the progress of all progress” (1987: 91).
This achievement and progress do not occur one hundred percent of the time and are not achieved by or for everyone. The magical number in the modern world has been set at fifty-one percent and serves as a relatively good measure. In other words, when at least fifty-one percent of the people are active in the production and enhancement of life in a serious way for more than fifty-one percent of the time, the result will be a civilized context. One may say the difference of two percent, separating fifty-one from forty-nine, should be negligible, but quite the contrary, it is huge and makes a world of difference. The main reason lies in the fact that the fifty-one percent defines the term, sets the agenda, decides the criteria, and formulates the rules administrating the process. In my mother tongue of Persian, there is an idiom people use to depict current conditions in Iran that may help explain what I try to convey here. It is as follows: “Individually, we are fine; it is our collective that is intolerable.” The fifty-one percent conveys the condition of the collective where the reverse of the inner logic of that idiom may be at work. In other words, in a given civilized context “the collective is doing fine even though the behavior of some individuals may be intolerable.”¹ When the collective is doing fine, the fifty-one percent defines the way of life in such a way that, in the words of English political philosopher John Gray (b. 1948), “practiced by a number of people, not only one, span the generations, have a sense of themselves… have some distinctive practices, beliefs and values, and so forth” (2000: 11). The will of the fifty-one percent rule, whether in the conduct of a person or in the behavior of a given society, necessitates that everyone or everything is assigned a potential value, regardless

¹This idiom also provides a clue as to how to characterize those societies where the “collective” is not doing well. I contend that such societies are in a state of liminality, in that they have enormous potential to get to the tipping point. The main reason is that human will to civilization never ceases to exist, even though it is often dampened and even blocked by the blinding forces of prudery, philistinism, fundamentalism, ideology, or utilitarianism. I feel it is even valid to claim that civilized contexts are in a state of limen as well because they may lose their sense of civility in response to any threatening event. For example, the United States lost its balance of civility in the aftermath of the tragedy of September 11, 2001. Only the robustness of its polity helped its restoration after a few months. No doubt, there are societies where the balance is not in favor of fifty-one versus forty-nine. It is fair to suggest that at any given epoch, one could observe the conditions of “Civitas,” “Liminality,” and “Decadent.” I have called the first a “developing society,” while the other two are societies that are either “busy conquering” where everyone and even the society are in a panic state against everyone, and/or altogether “on holiday from history” (Rajaee 1398/2019: 28–34).
of size, volume, form, and shape. The ethos adopted by a person or a society is a paradox in that it has a broad definition of its parameters in order to include anyone who contributes, while it also has clearly defined demarcations so as to exclude any potential subversive element.

This observation leads to two conclusions. One is that by civitas, I do not mean heaven, which is an impossibility on earth. The most advanced civilizations in any given epoch face problems and many injustices occur. Second, civility is very fragile and precarious, in need of constant care and vigilance. Any crisis, even a small one, may endanger balance, moderation, and civility. The key is the word majority, in that civitas means that moderation and civility occur most of the time and for most people, when there are enough citizens with vibrant and vigorous presence who are busy “making a life,” the working of a robust mechanism that facilitates that making of lives, and finally a solid space or theater in order to facilitate the interaction between individuals and mechanisms, and the reenactment of presence within the bound of the rules. In other words, civitas occurs where there are enough people committed to being active, the rules of the game are at work effectively, and the organizational arrangements facilitate the performing of people’s work and the enforcement of rules.

Civitates and civilized people do not occur naturally; they arise from the choice of the path of qualitative progress. People deliberately choose to refrain from violating a given set of established standards; hence, to be civilized is to learn how to live and interact with others within the provisions of the set standards. Civitates do not need brilliance but common sense, and as attributed to the French philosopher François-Marie Voltaire (1694–1778), “common sense is anything but common.” A civitas is made of little things; a civitas is no little thing! It is truly a magical creation, when it occurs. Luckily for humanity, civilizations are not the property of any ethnic group, school of thought, epochs, or geographical area. Rather, they are the product of a set of values. In some ways, one could make the point that all civilizations are based on an imaginary and hypothetical contract, the content of which differs based on the epoch and the geographical location. They all share a framework that I call reasonableness, the most important manifestation of which is normative rationality, as will be elaborated upon, specifically in the next chapter. It is not at all surprising that the commingling of production, assumed quality, and style in all human spheres, namely food, clothing, architecture, business, social interaction, and even settlement of disputes, means that the civilized context sets standards, criteria, and measures.
The Greek sage Eratosthenes of Cyrene (276–195 BCE) conveyed the idea and the importance of standards accurately when he echoed the Stoic moral principle of “vice and virtue” as a worthy criterion for the division of men, rather than division between us and them based on race, ethnicity, language, or worse, power and wealth. Contrary to the advice of those who encouraged Alexander the Great (356–323) to consider the Greeks as friends and all others as barbarians or enemies, he recommends the following: “It is better to employ, as division criteria, the qualities of virtue and dishonesty; many Greeks are dishonest, and many barbarians enjoy a refined civilization such as the people of India or the Aryans, or the Romans and the Carthaginians” (cited in Strabo 1960: 1.4.9). Only those episodes of human history that were guided by the standard of virtue yielded inclusivity and left behind civility and civilization. Personally, I have been fortunate to experience life in various conditions firsthand. I have lived under uncivilized conditions, where boundaries and standards did not exist, or were not taken seriously, or ignored and/or confused. I have experienced a revolutionary episode, when liminality and euphoria ruled and the air was impregnated with the possibility of blooming to a new civitas, and under a civilized condition where sufficient standards are upheld to provide opportunities for the life of the heart, the mind, and the soul to flourish in concert. Neither a particular people nor a particular place possesses a monopoly on these conditions; rather, these conditions correspond to the upholding or ignoring of a set of values by anyone and anywhere, pure and simple.

This may explain why civilizations roll on their own wheels and endure for a long time, even after their core states have been destroyed and their actual physical existence has evaporated. Civitates remain the genre and the pacesetter, mode definer and boundary and framework maker for decades, centuries, and even millennia. A good example is the “most spectacular of all the memory palaces of Islamic Spain, the Alhambra” (Menocal 2002: 200). Its construction began in 1238 by the last Muslim dynasty in Spain more than two centuries after the destruction of the core polity of the glorious civilization of the Moors, yet it displays all the hallmarks of that complex civilization. The standard created by the Moors enjoyed the paradoxical feature of local/universal and thus echoed
for centuries after its members had been defeated and even systematically expelled from Spain. Or consider the Mayan civilization that had its zenith two millennia ago. The core state is forgotten while its civilization still attracts attention regularly.

Civitates are the opposite of empires, whose life depends on the presence and the protection of the core state and particularly the figure of central authority; often, the latter’s death or his refusal to defend the empire causes the demise and destruction of the empire. Many of us alive today witnessed such a downfall in the collapse of the Soviet Empire in 1989. The peak of the empire was during the rule of Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) and its fall came when Mikhail Gorbachev (b. 1931) refused to support the life of the empire. Ancient Greece may present even a more enlightening, striking, and revealing example because one can observe the actual dismantlement of an empire and the crumbling of a civilization both almost at the same time in the hands of Alexander the Great: namely, the life of the city-states of Sparta and Athens, respectively. Consider this question: Which one of these cities produced the most famous, the most valued, and the most discussed human experience? Regardless of time, culture, and place, the city discussed and considered worthy of attention has been and continues to be Athens and not Sparta. The reason is that Athens produced all the things that humanity considers valuable, in the areas of politics, society, economy, and culture concomitantly and comprehensively, whereas Sparta is mostly famous for its military power. Not only did the people who lived in Athens enjoy the qualities it offered, humanity continues to enjoy the nuances of its contributions in the areas of governance, art, literary imagination, architecture, the art of fine living, and so on.

Civitates are open, end of story! They create open spaces, break down walls, dialogue with others, welcome new ideas and different ways, and appreciate the contributions of others by embracing them. They are in the business of cultural receptivity and are engaged in mutual stimulation. I will point to a couple of indicators. One is the case of the vernacular. Empires chauvinistically guard their “mother tongue,” whereas a

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2 In my first visit to Spain, I arrived in Malaga. Walking by the beach, I encountered a beautiful building that used to be a private residence, now a public space. The architect and design were so Moorish that I thought it was a relic from that time, but the house was built in the 1930s.
civilization adopts one that serves as the broadest mode of communication and interaction. Often, that language is not the native tongue of the initiator of the polity that serves as the core state of the civilization at hand. The most striking example is the second round of Muslim civilization production from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Muslims created civilizations in India, Iran, and Anatolia. The ruling dynasties of the Ottomans (1299–1923), the Safavids (1501–1736), and the Mughals (1526–1857) were Turkic, yet the dominant language in the three civilized contexts was Persian because all three realized that the accepted language of culture, commerce, and social interaction in the Eastern wing of the Muslim world had been Persian from about the twelfth century onward. Had they aimed to create an empire instead of a civilization, they could have imposed their specific languages, but since they aimed at civitates, they had to be open to a vernacular that was different from those of the dominant political elite. The other indicator of openness relates to the public sphere. A comparison with the Greek Agora and the Roman Forum clarifies this point. With neither gate of entry nor exit, the Agora meant exactly what the word suggested, “a gathering place,” whereas Forum meant what it originally described, an “enclosure surrounding a house.” It was an outdoor place for Romans to display their glory and power, but with controlled entry and exit. Note how the Romans changed the Agora in ancient Greek cities when they dominate the Hellenic world, by making sure it had an entry and an exit so that traffic could be managed and controlled. The modern equivalent of the Agora is the “public sphere”; the degree of the dynamism of one’s public sphere has an underlying link with the degree of civility.

The present book offers a meditation on the constellation of the attitudes, activities, and actual spaces that translate into the mind-set, habits of mind, and institutions and structures that facilitate and maintain such “making of a life.” Humanity has adopted, instituted, utilized, and put them into practice, as reigning standards that, in turn, have produced remarkable legacies in the spheres of material life, art, architecture, imagination, human organization, and quality of living and interacting that continues to awe human minds, regardless of time, place, and culture. I hold that their aggregate amounts to a quality of human interaction we call “civility” and the production of a space among human collectivities that makes having presence and performing human possible. This is the space I have calling “civitas” or civilization. Further, I claim that humanity is here to live a civilized life and produce civitates, which occur across
diverse faiths, theoretical lineages, worldviews, and cultural prejudices. As will be shown, regardless of time and place or the type of worldview (whether religious or secular), approach (historical, sociological, psychological, and so on), or methodology (structural, functional, behavioral, etc.), humanity yearns for civility and civilization because they facilitate fulfillment, achievement, and self-actualization for the individual as well as for the collective. The result is an experience that can be described with terms such as vitality, energy, vigor, and zest. Inspired by and paraphrasing the words of the American world federalist E. B. White (1899–1985) on democracy, I suggest that a civilization produces a feeling of privacy in the personal sphere, a feeling of active participation in the mechanisms and the process of day-to-day collective activities, and a feeling of general responsibility in the public sphere. White defines democracy as “the feeling of privacy in the voting booths, the feeling of communion in the libraries, the feeling of vitality everywhere” (New Yorker, July 3, 1944).

The present book also aims to delineate the nuances that create vigor in the individual, encourage interesting rules of the game that groups eagerly follow, and foster structures and organizations that generate a sense of belonging and solidarity. I contend that these nuances manifest themselves in the working of a series of triumviri, applicable to and observable in every aspect of human life and in every successful epoch of civility and civilization. These triumviri are neither simply “ideas,” nor nominal references, but rather they are either realities or values that work in concert to shape, modify, alter, improve, and enhance the condition of civility and civilization. In other words, I hope these triumviri function as indicators of how civility functions and how a civitas makes performing human possible. Here, I want to be realistic about, sympathetic to, and critical of human history and try to discover what is at work when accord, harmony, balance, and predictability gain the upper hand. Note, I do not deny discord and calamities; I operate from the premise, however, that precisely because of our makeup as humans, adversity, trouble, crisis, disorder, stress, and even war are inevitable and they occur constantly, but also because we are human, civility and civitas are options and deliberate choices that can help us avoid those follies. In some ways, incivility has a role to play in the life we call human, but civility and civitas refer to a condition where we rise above those incivilities and make harmony and balance out of the dominant discourse. Here, I hope to generate a
grand theory for how to rise above our natural instincts and move toward formation of a civitas.

At the same time, I am not suggesting that these triumviri appear in the same fashion in all cases. While these triumviri point to mechanisms and methods that produce civilization, spatial and temporal factors temper and influence the degree and the content of those triumviri in any given civilization. Specific parts of the earth give rise to specific forms of what is considered valuable and what merits attention. Even for a given natural phenomenon, it is the geographical location that gives its significance and role. And of course, temporal conditions accentuate specific issues or factors. Thus, to be inflicted with temporal amnesia (about the significance of the past, the urgency of the present, and the promise of future) and spatial neglect (geographical, family, cultural, group solidarity, and heritage) amounts to a serious omission. For this reason, the suggested triumviri are not mechanistic manual of equilateral triangles that perform magic in all cases, because spatial–temporal factors influence the significance of each dimension at any given time and place. They provide major clues, however, insofar as human agency and its deliberate role in civilization building are concerned. The important point is that a triangle must be formed and preserved, even if one be isosceles and while another scalene and still another obtuse. The use of these triumviri will make my methodology here trichotomous. Each key notion I consider displays a trichotomy, with each component relating to and indeed corresponding to the next. Take the first two notions below, for example, the good and the impulses. Satisfaction relates to freedom, achievements to reason, and serenity to love, and so on.

Before I enter the discussion of these features, a disclaimer is in order. I do not claim to reveal an undisputed truth or to identify the right or wrong ways, but instead I offer clues for a universal way to approach right and wrong. Indeed, I think it is impossible to adjudicate truth claims. It is possible, however, to identify a more realistic, practical, and historically verifiable way of studying how people approach truth, goodness, and righteousness in general. In other words, the bone of contention is not and should not be whether truth exists or not, and whether certain groups live by it while others do not, but rather, whether it is possible to ascertain truth with any degree of certainty or not. Categorically, I maintain that it is possible to state the following two general positions: (1) When one claims that it is possible to ascertain “Truth and Untruth,” the logical conclusion will be the dichotomy of “us,” the possessors of
truth, versus “them,” those who do not possess it, with the consequence of the logic of “all with me,” and the means of conquest and submission; and (2) on the contrary, when one works with the logic that “Truth and Untruth” are concepts that are hard to grasp by any given human reason, we take the stance of “we,” including everyone as seekers of the truth, thus the logic of “all together,” through the means of dialogue, engagement, stewardship, and empowerment. I came to this conclusion by a heartfelt realization that we are finite beings living in an infinite world. Now, how a finite being could claim to grasp the nature of the infinite? I am influenced here by the Talmudic maxim that “we see things not as they are, but as we are.” This realization should humble us to remain seekers and not finders of the truth. Claiming to see the truth, and more dangerously to possess it, inevitably leads to exclusivity, intolerance, and in short, incivility, while humbly recognizing that truth is bigger than any one mind and even our collective minds, leads to openness, tolerance, inclusivity, and civility.

Now, what is intrinsic to a civitas and civilization production? To be civil, one must go beyond what German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) calls the morality of “herd animal and herd instinct” (*Beyond Good and Evil*, Aphorism 202). Instinct breeds certainty, whereas civility requires doubt about the possibility of gaining certain answers for serious questions, let alone the ultimate questions about the human condition. To be civil, one requires resolution, confidence, and faith: the first to begin it, the second to persevere, and the third to have patience. Confident people have unwavering faith in their ability to face the challenges of life and truth, a healthy awareness of the complexity and ambiguity of the truth, and ample doubt about their ability to grasp the end, the meaning of it completely, and the possibility of delivering it. This may explain why such people journey through their lives with little or no anxiety or depression. The combination of strong faith and healthy doubt produces both desirable attitudes and behaviors in enjoying the journey. By contrast, non-confident people have unwavering conviction about clarity and certainty of life and truth, with little or no doubt about their own knowledge or their ability to grasp and implement that truth, and yet are filled with anxiety and depression about consequences; they are frustrated and angry that the world does not conform to the image they hold of it. Thus, the greatest enemy of civility and civitas remains the lack of confidence that ironically manifests itself in two apparently contradictory forms, arrogance and timidity. The Greek notion that
philosophers were the lovers of truth and not its finders, and the Muslim notion that a good believer is not one who lives with absolute certitude, but rather one who functions within the parameter of “Fear of and Hope for” God’s mercy (the Qur’an 7: 56), are two clear expressions of this paradox. A philosopher claims to be a seeker of knowledge, and if she dares to claim what she expounds as the truth, she has already fallen into a dogma. Similarly, a believer is a seeker of God, claiming that humans all live under God’s judgment, but if she claims that what she says or does embodies God’s words or commandments, then she has committed the blasphemous act of declaring God as partisan.

I confess I am writing with the conviction that there are categories that one can call human truth (regardless of their ontological sources) and the question worth asking relates to how one considers these truths to play themselves out in daily human life. For example, I believe that compassion is one of those human truths. It is as real as the sun or the earth and should be upheld for its intrinsic value, pure and simple. When compassion is exercised for an expected return, it reduces this truth to a bargain and compromises its intrinsic value. Just as one must be objective when trying to understand or analyze the phenomenon of the sun or the earth as a subject matter of scientific inquiry, so one must follow certain ethics when approaching human truth. I claim that history attests to two distinct forms of ethics, with opposing consequences for polities and societies. I have already alluded to them, but to make them clearer, one is “the ethic of civility,” which produces civilization while the other is “the ethic of self-righteousness,” which produces hegemony and empire. Whereas the latter requires zeal and enormous drive for power and domination, civitates require a combination of intelligence, creativity, and prudence. My claim is that when the struggle for power, the hallmark of empire, is tempered by care and civility, a process is produced that we call civilization production. The two ways of being are opposite insofar as they lead to two different ways of conducting oneself on earth, but they are intrinsically connected because both reside inside each one of us as a human being. Let us assume that the supreme good lies in the realm of metaphysics and the supreme evil lies in the underground, the earthly existence lies somewhere in the middle, naturally connecting both worlds. Both extreme virtues of perfection and demonic folly remove human beings from their humanity and are unnatural to humanity because they are neither divine nor demon completely. The common wisdom that states “the perfect is the enemy of the good” attests to this point. This realization, along with
a proper understanding of what humanity should or may pursue, invites the question of what constitutes “the good,” a topic that takes me to the first component of my triumvirate.

THE GOOD: SATISFACTION, ACHIEVEMENT, SERENITY

What is humanity to pursue here on earth? What is the *raison d’être* of humanity’s existence? Since Aristotle is credited as the first teacher, I will look at how he articulates an answer to this question. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines humanity’s ultimate end as “eudaimonia,” meaning “the state of having a good indwelling spirit.” When and how does one feel this? Aristotle responds by stating “what constitutes happiness is a matter of dispute; and the popular account of it is not the same as that given by the philosophers. Ordinary people identify it with some obvious and visible good, such as pleasure or wealth or honor” (1095a). For Aristotle, it should include much more, however. The pursuit of pleasure, wealth, and honor is important and adds to one’s life, but humans strive for more. For Aristotle, this comes under the rubric of *Eudaimonia* (living well), and such a life includes virtue, excellence, and reason (ibid.: 1097b–1098a). What is the criterion for measuring these qualities? One can summarize it with another of Aristotle’s notions, namely *telos*, translated as end, purpose, or goal. For him, all beings are endowed with their own unique potentials and the nature of these potentials urges the agent to seek actualization of that potentiality. The combination of the potential and the urge comprises *telos*, which defines humanity’s very being. As he puts it: “what a thing is, and what it is for, are one and the same” (*Physics*. II. 7: 198a, 25–26). The first answer to the question of humanity’s end on earth, thus, is the pursuit of inner bliss.

Aristotle’s teacher Plato offers another answer, namely the pursuit of justice. For him, the tragedy of the trial of Socrates shows that the Athenians had fallen short of living up to the ideals that humanity is created for, namely to attune their life with universal principles of justice (*dike*). In his famous treatise *The Republic*, he explains justice. For him, it is not a notion that can be described easily. Instead, he presents a detailed account of an imaginary city where people live by the principle of justice. This principle means performing “what is appropriate,” which in turn meant that “justice and would make the city just” (434c). In other words, justice means that each section of the city would perform what it is assigned to
do. Correspondingly, in the case of individual human beings, each part of the body works according to its assigned function, harmoniously and in complementarity with the other parts, and in turn, each person does the same in relation to other members of society.

The famous interlocutors of the school of Athens were the Sophists, who offered a third response, namely that the expression of human will, and autonomy constitutes the ultimate human end. Plato describes the most famous sophist, Protagoras (490–420 BCE), as having said that man is “the measure of all things, of the existence of the things that are and the non-existence of the things that are not” (Theaetetus: 152a). Reality consists of what human senses verify, and beyond that nothing exists. Hence, caring for and responding to the imperative of the human physical and bodily desires comprise the ultimate objective of human existence.

Which account truly captures the nature of humanity and its raison d’être? Ironically, Protagoras’s position may help in finding an answer. One could interpret his position as being that humanity was incapable of grasping anything beyond its worldly senses. As he writes: “Concerning the gods, I have no means of knowing whether they exist or not or of what sort they may be, because of the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human life” (Cited from “the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy”). In other words, in the absence of our ability to comprehend the nature of being human, maybe each of the above positions can offer insight into what humanity’s goal might and even should be. To go further, I rely on the notion of each human “as a story-teller animal” to clarify humanity’s raison d’être. I borrow this concept from Scottish/American philosopher Alasdair McIntyre (b. 1929), who advances the following thesis in his classic work, After Virtue: “… man is in his action and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-teller animal. He is not essentially, but becomes through history, a teller of stories that aspire to truth. But the key question for men is not about their own authorship; I can only answer the question ‘What I am to do?’ if I can answer the prior question ‘of what story or stories do I find myself a part’” (1981: 201, italic added). McIntyre seems to rightly suggest that this essential character must be learned. What is important here is that he wants us to appropriate the experiences of humanity as we become human, learn from its areas of strength, and improve on the areas that need more work. Recorded history tells us that stories worth telling and worth participating in are those that reveal how to have presence and how to perform human, which takes the form of civility. Identifying what
people have done during periods of civility may help catalog the end and “the good” that humanity should pursue.

To make the response to the question of why humanity is on earth more mundane and practical, I turn to the stories that humanity has told before and see what values and ends those stories have conveyed, in the hope that by drawing on them one might be able to formulate some relevant goals. As a start, I turn to a story from ancient India, according to which the good or the high value is *tri-varga* (a threefold phenomenon): *kama* (pleasure/enjoyment), *artha* (wealth/power and achievement), and *dharma* (ethics/morality and righteousness). The first caters to the heart’s desire and generates enjoyment; the second invokes the calculating power of the mind and would lead to achievements; and the third observes the soul’s socio-ethical boundaries to foster experiences of uprightness and mental serenity. Some Indian traditions have emphasized one element more than the others. For example, in the epic of *Mahabharata*, the great warrior Arjuna passionately extols the significance of power/wealth: “Performance of duty (*dharma*), enjoyment of pleasures (*kama*), and even the attainment of heaven depends on wealth [*arta*], on which life itself depends” (cited in Datta 1967: 277). At the same time, another strong character in the work, Bhisma, contradicts Arjuna by categorizing wealth as a great evil. Then, there are the *Upanishads* that consider only those who follow the path of higher ends rather than worldly pleasures as worthy of joining the cycle of eternal being. Note the following from the *Chandogya Upanishad*, 5: 10.7:

Those whose conduct has been good will quickly attain a good birth [literally, womb], the birth [or womb] of a Brahman, the birth of a Ksatriya, or the birth of a Vaisya. But those whose conduct here has been evil will quickly attain an evil birth, the birth of a dog, the birth of a hog, or the birth of a Candala. (Cited in Hopkins 1971: 44)

Which one constitutes the highest good for civility and in any given civilization? My answer is that this is possibly the wrong question to ask because those epochs or legacies we call civilizations have produced all three in the past, and future civilized contexts must produce them also. This is so because humanity’s makeup demands and requires all three. In chapter two of *The Laws of Manu*, we read the following: “(Some declare that) the chief good consists in (the acquisition of) spiritual merit and wealth, (others place it) in (the gratification of) desire
and (the acquisition of) wealth, (others) in (the acquisition of) spiritual merit alone, and (others say that the acquisition of) wealth alone is the chief good here (below); but the (correct) decision is that it consists of the aggregate of (those) three” (2. 224). To summarize, it seems that humanity has needs that require satisfaction, wants that demand achievement, and internal longings that require the upholding of values. Thus, a moderate and organic pursuit of them is necessary, possible, and desirable. In a sense, a more important question to ask relates to what condition causes, encourages, and upholds such an organic manifestation. History and contemporary experience suggest that the most fruitful and affable occasion for achieving individual or organic goals occurs in a magical condition we call civilization. No wonder the Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) used the concept of an unending chain of existence, with the world as the garden of this chain, to describe the constant development and construction in his theory of the rise and fall of civilizations (1958: I: 81–82).

As a way of conclusion to this section, I would like to mention that civitates in the end display the triumvirate that the Roman author, architect, and engineer Marcus Vitruvius (80–15 BCE) identified in order to describe a good building: “utilitas, firmitas, et venustas,” that is, utility, strength, and beauty. Like a well-constructed building, civitates facilitate the craft of fulfillment, the science of achievement, and the art of meaning and realization. For this reason, the ideal destination for any searching soul in the past two centuries has been the region generally called “the West.” Those who want to pursue indulgence of passion and pleasure, material gain, scientific and artistic success, religious tolerance, and a sense of meaning feel that going to the West best enables them to do so. It is important to note that these various ends are pursued concomitantly. There is space, opportunity, and possibility for each and all, not just one of them. One should, therefore, concentrate on an anatomy of such a condition because it denotes a magical space, theater, or a stage where humanity feels enabled and proactively empowered to reach its set goal. It is where senses of vitality, dynamism, activism, productivity, initiation, imagination, freedom, and meaningfulness are experienced and encouraged in concert. The accent is on the notion of “experience in concert.” What makes such a concert possible?
Impulses: Freedom, Reason, Love

Civitates make the heart feel happy, the mind obtain satisfaction from its achievements, and the soul experience serenity, because in civitates, all three can manifest themselves, often in concert. The impulse comes from the desire of the heart for freedom, the appetite of the mind for discoveries, and the longing of the soul for love.

What made the Abbasid era, particularly the reign of the fifth Abbasid (786–809) ruler, Harun ar-Rashid (763–809), so memorable, dynamic, and civilized? What was the “vital impetus” (elan vital) of that creative era? I once asked these questions of a contemporary Muslim philosopher in Tehran. His answer first surprised me but made perfect sense. He said one notion explains not only the Abbasid’s civility but explains other civilizations as well: namely, freedom. It makes sense because no imagination is possible without freedom, and no articulation of imagination can take place without freedom. All civitates, past or present, display an enormous amount of freedom of thought, expression, and action. No doubt, however, even in the most civilized contexts, there are groups or classes of people who feel deprived of this right, but even that feeling of being deprived suggests that the society in question values freedom. As will be elaborated in Chapter 3, freedom takes negative, affirmative, and assertive forms and all three forms are needed for any given society. History shows that if a given civilized society deprives a group such as its visible minorities, ethnic, religious, or cultural groups, or women, the norms of the society demand that they present a compelling explanation for exclusion. For example, Athenian society denied rights to women and turned many people into slaves, but it explained this by claiming that both slaves and women deserved their lower status because they were less than human, thus not deserving of freedom. I do not suggest that such an explanation was right or justified, but only to point out that it would have been a contradiction to consider them “human” and yet deprive them of freedom. Even if such justifications seem ridiculous or hypocritical, it is possible to detect some respect for the virtues underlying them. “Hypocrisy is a respect vice pays to virtue,” the famous maxim suggests. Thus, civitates require, uphold, and encourage freedom, but the latter is not the only force behind civility and dynamism; it is necessary but not enough.

The main reason is that if freedom alone reigns over everyone indiscriminately, it may lead to chaos led by the vagaries of human whim. I
will never forget the euphoric months after the revolution in the streets of Tehran in the spring of 1979. People congratulated one another for the arrival of “the spring of freedom.” As a student of politics, I was aware of the horrors of the authors of *The Federalist Papers* and was wary of the risk of falling from the ditch of tyranny to the well of chaos. Day after day, I argued in vain in the streets of Tehran about the “unreasonable” condition of unchecked and unregulated freedom, only to realize that reasoning with revolutionaries was more difficult than building a castle in the air. It was impossible for them to grasp that freedom that is not tempered by passion and reason would amount to the tyranny of the first person to arrive in the street with a machine gun. I failed to convince the revolutionaries that passion would produce empathy and that reason is a sophisticated faculty that guarantees freedom by affording us wisdom, knowledge, wondering, discovery, imagination, daring, and, in short, prudence. When Plato and Aristotle considered reasoning the essence of what it means to perform human, they were not talking to or about the revolutionaries.

Freedom is good, but when mixed with reason, it forms not only tempered virtue but also gives rise to dynamism in all spheres of being, notably the political (politics, economy, and society). Indeed, when freedom and reason work together, they lead to imagination, innovation, industry, and life production. By reason, as I will elaborate in the next chapter, I mean a three-dimensional understanding, which, as Aristotle reminds us, helps facilitate thinking. In my understanding, practical reasoning facilitates and utilizes doing, and moral reasoning facilitates judgment. In other words, reason takes three forms of rationality, utilitarian, positive, and normative that help one in any step one takes, whether constructive or destructive. Then comes the third impetus, which is love.

The Anglo-American poet W. H. Auden (1907–1973) famously wrote, “Love each other or perish.” I feel love is much more than a necessary condition for human survival or for sustaining relationship with others; it is needed for the preservation of everything, especially all living organisms. In the Bible, love is equated with God: “God is love. Whoever lives in love, lives in God, and God in him” (John 4:16). In the Qur’an, the word love [َحب] appears 69 times, connoting various categories of God’s love for humanity, human love for things, human affection, and human love for God. According to the mystical understanding of Islam, love is one of the divine attributes. Indeed, insightful thinkers and philosophers
have noted the centrality of love as the engine of existence. For example, the greatest Persian poet, Hafez of Shiraz (1320–1389), wrote “Whoever with love in the world is not immersed – Hold his funeral with my Fatwa as a living dead” (244:7). This may sound extreme, but it is not far from the truth, expressing as it does the importance of love as an impetus of civility.

It is important to note that one should be mindful of the various meanings of love. The Greeks identified three forms of love: Eros, the romantic and the passionate feeling of the heart; Philia, the sense of considered friendship through the working of the mind; and Agape, the virtuous and empathic sense of the soul. I will unpack these more in the next chapter. Suffice it is to say here that a human being desires affection and compassion due to Eros, experiences fellowship because of Philia, and displays empathic emotion for fellow humans due to Agape. This strong emotional energy creates a sense of warmth in humanity about itself, strengthens bonds between people, and deepens people’s connection with the totality of being, the political at its zenith. Indeed, Aristotle considers love and friendship the binding material that ties citizens with their government in his ideal polity (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8).

Freedom, reason, and love working together would lead to enormous dynamism, but would that be enough to create a civilization? Now, if there were enormous amounts of passion, instrumental reason, and freedom, such an aggregation alone might lead to the formation of a powerhouse, but not a civilization. One must therefore ponder the factors that turn this dynamism into civilization. What forms the grand desideratum of a civilized age?

**Passions: Enthusiasm, Appreciation, Generosity**

Not all human productivity leads to the formation of either a powerhouse or a civitas: Many produce great ideas, doctrines, schools of thought, and even sophisticated cultural systems, but not a civitas. For example, Taoism originally emerged as a school of thought in China but has remained a set of cultural indicators and the bedrock of a cultural system. Yet, there have been many occasions when production of power, ideas, empires, and cultural systems have changed a society’s direction and oriented it toward a process of civilization production. For example, the traditions of the Muslims (twice, once during the tenth to thirteen centuries, and the other during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries), the Athenians, the Chinese,
the Indians, the Persians, and the Christians all led to the emergence of great civilized ages. What were the contributing factors? At first, I thought of creativity as the main feature, but history tells of great creativity on the part of many non-civilized peoples who did “create furiously” (Bell 1928: 71). For example, the Nazis were extremely creative and productive in their institutionalized ways of establishing restricted order and devising a complex and sophisticated system of exclusion and destruction. Human creativity must focus on those deliberately agreed-upon values that I elaborated above under the rubric of “the good” and stick to them with few or no exceptions.

Positively, civitas happens when the grand desideratum becomes achieving the triumvirate of satisfaction, achievement, and serenity, and is pursued with passion by at least the elite members of the society. Bell claims this is what happened in the Athenian society of ancient Greece and repeated itself in eighteenth-century Europe. I surmise from his explanation that one could also formulate a triumvirate of “enthusiasm, appreciation, and generosity” (ibid.: 71–80). In his mind, the people of eighteenth-century Europe became excited about life in general, and thus appreciated themselves, others, and the world, and were generous in supporting high culture and the life of the intellect. The coming together of these values created a tipping point in the development of European history and launched Europeans on the path of present civitates, based on the philosophy of modernity. I agree with him and think that enthusiasm, generated by the heart, appreciation measured by the mind, and generosity extended from the soul, oriented the impulses of freedom, reason, and love, discussed in the previous section.

A civitas is defined by key characteristics in more than fifty-one percent of the population. (1) They are enthusiastic about engaging in activities bigger than those that lead to making a living. They consciously commit themselves to make a life and take an active part in the collective determination to do so. (2) They also appreciate themselves first and foremost, and then value the potential that exists either in fellow citizens or in their environment. Each and everything and everyone have intrinsic value that deserves care and respect. In a cosmological worldview, this is so because they embody the God’s or gods’ creation, and in the modern universal worldview, they have natural worth or rights. (3) Finally, people are generous with their time, wealth, and effort to advance the cause of civitas, again in the old worldview to please divinity and in the modern
to enhance the general good. Note, for example, that according to Statistics Canada, in 2013, 12.7 million Canadians or 43.6% of the population volunteered. If one considers the under- and over-aged segments of the population, who are not part of the workforce, this means that more than half of the workforce participated in volunteer activities. In 2017, the estimate is that volunteers contributed more than two billion hours of labor, amounting to a value of $55.9 billion in 2017 or the equivalent of 2.6% of the GDP (The Conference Board of Canada 2018: 4).

It is no surprise that the attitude, mode, and mechanism of material production in civitates, both historically and, as one can observe, in contemporary civilization, relate to robust capitalism, where every aspect of life has “capital” value. Every tangible and non-tangible things that have slightest tangible value or material and non-material potential is cherished. A distinction between “capital” and “merchandise,” which gives rise to capitalism and mercantilism, is important and informative. A capitalist considers everything as valuable—obviously, wealth and power, but also reputation, ethics, fairness, neighborhood, qualities of performing humans. Mercantilists are generally fixated on merchandise—money, oil, pride, and so on. To me, the legendary, the cultural, and the historical icons of the latter are Scrooge and the Merchant of Venice. One may say that even these characters displayed the passions of enthusiasm, appreciation, and generosity toward their chosen merchandise. To go back to the distinction between “making a living” and “making a life” or between powerhouse and civitas, the mercantilists focus on “me,” whereas the capitalists focus on “we.” And the sense of “we” not only includes other fellow human beings within my civitas, but humans. Even more broadly it includes ancestors and descendants and demands respect for the past and the future.

A sense of capitalism thus includes historical legacies and future promises. Bell is accurate when he writes: “In a highly civilized stage, the artist is neither hostile to nor mistrustful of tradition but helps himself freely to whatever it can give” (1928: 79). This attitude dominates; most members of the civitas have the same mind-set. A meta- or macro-tradition, composed of local or mini-traditions, plays a major role in the way each person conducts herself and conducts her relations with others and with the totality of lifeworld. Together, these individuals form a giant orchestra, playing the harmonious music of “making a life” within the civitas. And they all do it jointly on a bridge linking the past to the future. The former gives a clear sense of departure and the latter a sense of destination, without which one is lost and on holiday from history.
This observation applies to all civitates, East or West. No wonder individuals, groups, and societies that are either busy conquering or on holiday from history lack such historical consciousness or a sense of conscience about the fate of the future generations. They are not agents who cherish various forms of capital but crude mercenaries of their chosen merchandise, possessed in a shortsighted way by zeal and passion. The most tragic contemporary examples for me came to pass in 2001, when the Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar (1960–2013) ordered the bombing and destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan. These are the great statues of the Buddha erected between 507 and 554, even before the birth of the Prophet of Islam. Imagine: Muslims have lived with them for more than half a millennium, considered them capital and a possible source of inspiration, yet ironically the leader of a group that calls itself “students” (Taliban) is so blinded by a mercantilist attitude toward Islam that it feels threatened by them. Humanity has displayed this dual approach to creativity that is appreciation or monopoly while expressing its passion, creativity, and sense of elevation before and it would do so again in the future because these feelings stem from its very makeup. In other words, there are certain elements in the human species that generate these im-petuses and impulses. Where they are generated in humanity is the question I turn to next.

**Apparatus: Heart, Mind, Soul**

The occasion or the moment of civility is an intelligible occurrence. It transpires when one senses and experiences with the totality of one’s being and not just with one faculty. I propose that we are composites, consisting of not one but three selves. The Irish-born writer Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) has wittily written, “To be really medieval, one should have no body, to be really modern, one should have no soul” (2007: 151). Taking this statement at face value, in each instance, one needs a mind to figure out how to be. Given this, I think we should edit this maxim as follows: “to perform human, whether according to the medieval world view or the modern one, it is suicidal not to care and cater the body, the mind, and the soul.” My reasoning is that humanity is biological and natural (body/heart), intellectual and cerebral (brain/mind), and psychometaphysical and ethereal (spirit/soul), all at the same time. Humans reflect themselves in the emotional, the empirical, and the spiritual realms, corresponding for me to the working of the heart, the mind, and the soul.
These constitute three powerful drives in any human and contribute to human appetitive, spirituous, and virtuous demands. To experience the world with the heart alone would be to miss both the scientific wonders of the mind and the awe of the soul at the mysteries of being. To do so with mind alone is to mean that life loses its emotional and spiritual warmth. To detach oneself from the world for the sake of divine experience alone goes contrary to the very order of things in being human. I already introduced the three selves in the introduction—the inciting, the rebuking, and the tranquilizing—that reside in each human being. Here, I like to reminisce about one of the oldest epics in human history, namely the Mesopotamian epic *Gilgamesh*, to shed some light on this concept.

The text depicts the story of a hero called Gilgamesh who is portrayed as being two-thirds divine and one-third human. He ruled the city of Uruk in ancient Mesopotamia. He proved an intolerable tyrant who violated all boundaries: “Heavenly Father, Gilgamesh—noble as he is, splendid as he is—has exceeded all bounds” (2004: 73). In response to his tyranny and oppression, the people called upon the gods to “create a new hero,” and then “let them balance each other perfectly, so that Uruk would have peace” (ibid.: 74). The gods responded by creating another being as strong as Gilgamesh, called Enkidu. But while Gilgamesh was more divine than human, Enkidu was more animal than human. When they faced one another, they wrestled for days without either defeating the other. Realizing each other’s strength, they recognized the wisdom of abandoning animosity and thus became friends. They joined forces and the long poem narrates their adventures together. The relevance of the epic to my story is that the union between the two presented a turning point, creating a new balanced force that proved to be equally animal, human, and divine combined. As a result of this union and the working of the three forces together, the city becomes civilized, exhibited through its gardens, beauty, order, dynamism, and life. The epic ends with Gilgamesh inviting a certain Urshanabi to observe the beauty and the greatness of Uruk, “its mighty foundations… the palm trees, the gardens, the orchards, the glorious place and temples, the shops and marketplaces, the houses, the public squares” (ibid.: 199).

For me, the portrait in this passage depicts the “comprehensive, concurrent, and convivial forces” that resulted in the development of the city of Uruk. We can see here the main mechanisms of civilization making. I employ images of the heart, the mind, and the soul as pointing to
these three dimensions: the animal, the human, and the divine, to repre-
sent the three faculties comprising any human being. In fact, the heart 
(passion and spirit), the mind (intellect and reason), and the soul (verve 
and vivacity) comprise the epitome of a human being. To perform human 
means displaying the working of these three dimensions in concert. The 
sensation and indulgence of the heart for satisfaction, the observation 
and articulation of the mind for meaning and achievement, as well as 
the aspiration and imagination of the soul for experiencing the rapture of 
feeling alive and a sense of elevation, while working in concert, lead to 
the production and construction of civility and civilization. It will occur 
when humans engage individually with the world on their own terms. I 
have already alluded to the new scientific findings about the functioning 
of the human brain and its various parts and once again emphasize the 
fact that this is different from the Cartesian rational agency and is in line 
with the finding of cognitive science that emphasizes the working of a 
“frame narrative, and metaphor” as shaping human action and behavior 
(Lakoff and Ide 2005). The experiences of civility and civilization occur 
as a result of robust and dynamic functioning of the devotion of the heart, 
the consciousness of the mind, and the awakening of the soul.

The heart responds to stimuli mechanisms of the senses; the mind 
reacts to the drives for the understanding of how things work; and the 
soul harmonizes human interaction and engagement with others and the 
world. The interplay of the three in synergy works in a cross-referencing 
way, to make possible the concomitant, comprehensive, and convivial 
production. One may ask whether the organic and interactive way is 
a natural process or like civilization production itself is nurtured and 
incurred. No doubt, there may be some people who are born with sound 
common sense, but to have a critical mass of people doing the right thing 
at the right time requires conscious and deliberate efforts.

How should one study this tripartite being consisting of heart, mind, 
and soul? There is an enduring cliché about the wisdoms of the East and 
of the West. It suggests that the wisdom of the East focuses on the soul, 
so the study of the soul is its master science, while the wisdom of the West 
focuses on the mind, and so study of the political and the ways of forming 
human institutions is its master science. If we consider ancient Greece as 
the hinge, the juncture, and the axis between East and West, we might 
say that these wisdoms found their most elegant and eloquent voices in 
ancient Athens, in the persona of Plato and Aristotle and the Sophists, 
respectively. At the heart of Plato’s system of thought lies the soul and its
ordering, while at the heart of Aristotle’s philosophy is the city and the ordering of human life in it. And for the Sophist, catering to the passion of the material aspects of being human has priority and relevance. It is no surprise that the ideal city for Plato comprises of good and orderly souls, whereas for Aristotle the ideal city is defined by good rules. Plato looked for spirited souls and Aristotle for sober and thoughtful agents. Aristotle makes it clear that one may be a good person but not a good citizen, and vice versa. Aristotle emphasizes how the development of the mind contributes to the quality of human life. I think both Plato and Aristotle have a point because one needs both kinds of wisdom; all actual examples of human civilization demonstrate that both types of wisdom are necessary not only for the good of the community but also for the capacity to understand it. Human dynamism can only exist where there are solid, self-conscious souls and solid mechanisms and structures within which they can operate.

Modernity ushered in a new wisdom emphasizing solid, independent institutions that temper, modify, and keep in check the desires of the heart, to facilitate smooth and coherent interaction among wise and spirited citizens. Modern philosophers, especially the English philosophers Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and John Locke (1632–1704), advocated for these frameworks under the rubric of the “social contract.” This delineates the matrix, the texture, and the framework for any forms of interaction. At the global level, the social contract has taken the form of the international system of states; at the national level, it has become the constitutional state; at the regional level, it is provinces or states; at the local level, we call it the city, district, county, and so on; and at the individual level, we call it the autonomous self. At every level, these structures uphold and guard the parameters of expectations, articulate orderly conduct, and make possible predictability. Any given civilized context both satisfies these expectations and in turn nurture and attracts people who consent to those expectations. Thus, in studying any given civilization, attention will be paid to the wisdom of the heart, that of the mind, and that of the soul in combination. Is there a framework or boundary that orchestrates these activities? I think there is, and that it is an accepted moral framework. It is to this idea that I turn next.
**Ethics: Consequential (Utility), Deontological (Contract), Virtuous (the Good)**

The heart, the mind, and the soul wonder constructively within some form of limit or boundary. The potential of human desire, imagination, and longing knows no limit and can extend to destruction and inhumanity. The need for limits becomes all the more necessary given that this enormous potential encounters other human beings of similar potential. Aristotle’s insight is forever true in that “anyone who by his nature and not by ill-luck” decides to live outside human association “is either too bad or too good, either subhuman or superhuman” (*The Politics*: 1253a). I even take it one step further in that human beings are relational creatures in three senses. They pursue their lives in relation to at least three forms of interlocutors: their own self, other souls, and the order of existence as a whole. As an example, note the imbalance in one dimension, i.e., climate change. This phenomenon is targeting humanity’s well-being because of imbalances inflicted on the ecosystem and biosphere by which we have neglected, ignored, or outright violated the order of existence as a whole.

Recognizing this imposes the responsibility to create some form of moral framework, which requires constant observation, evaluation, and re-examination at every step of the way. This is exactly what German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) means when he distinguishes between two orientations in applying ethics: “ultimate ends and responsibility.” As he writes, “conduct can be oriented to an ‘ethic of ultimate ends’ or to an ‘ethic of responsibility’” (1958: 120). What is this responsibility for? Weber invites us to question our motives and be clear about why we do what we do. We cannot ignore how one’s intentions may manifest in reality. Those who focus on the ethics of ultimate ends only tend to forget the fact that evil can result even when it is not intended. Instead of relying on purity of intention, one has to evaluate whether one’s implementation of good intentions passes the test of the limits that we call the “moral framework.”

I propose another triumvirate here that reveals the dimensions of the moral framework: those of the personal, the communal, and the general/universal. The personal applies to respecting the demands of the self (the desires of the heart), the communal or those boundaries that social life imposes on humanity (the aspiration and responses of the human calculation with its mind), and finally the universal, relating
to the limits that the whole of existence levy on humanity (related to the longing of the soul for serenity). The violation of the personal has immediate consequence, that of the communal will compromise the social order, and violation of the universal will shake the cosmological balance. À la Bentham, I call the first consequential, the second, à la, Kant I call deontological, and third, à la Aristotle, virtuous ethics. Others may have labeled them differently, conveying the same distinctions. I will unpack all three further.

The consequential framework, which has the motive of utility, is prevalent and more immediate. It sets the standards for our material existence, the area I identify with the notion of quantity. It works based on laws of cause and effect, with humanity being both the agent of initiation and the final arbiter of choosing between what is pleasurable over what is painful. The British moral and legal philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and the British economist, philosopher, and Bentham devotee John Stewart Mill (1806–1873) are credited with elaborating and popularizing this framework. I shall refer to their work in presenting the content of utilitarian moral framework.

Bentham states categorically in his treatise *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* that “nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do” (1970: I: 1). In his account, the standard of utility dictates both what must and shall be for the individual and for the public at large, including decisions of the government as the representative of the public. Any action that produces more pleasure than pain is the right course of action to take, and moreover, this should be the “principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever” (ibid.: 2). The highest principle of morality, whether personal or public, therefore relates to the maximization of pleasure and happiness over pain and suffering. The main reason for this rule’s universality is that it “is capable of being consistently pursued” (ibid., II: 10). It is also comprehensive in that utility will apply to all major human spheres: the physical, the political, the moral, and even the religious because it is “capable of giving a binding force to any law or rule of conduct” (ibid., III: 2). Of course, Bentham is wise enough to know that not all human feelings can be measured, so he introduces the principles of “the internal sentiments of approbation and disapprobation” (ibid., II: 11–13) and “the principle of sympathy and antipathy” (ibid.: 2). Even these, however, have the same effect of either augmenting
or diminishing happiness. By way of summary, for Bentham, utility is both descriptive and prescriptive; it explains, and it dictates. Therefore, he assigns utility its imperative power. As he puts it, if the balance happens to be “on the side of pleasure, will give the general good tendency of the act, with respect to the total number or community of individuals concerned; if on the side of pain, the general evil tendency” (ibid., IV: 6, emphasis in the original).

Later, John Stuart Mill tried to humanize this rather dry and stringent principle, without abandoning its main framework. He endorsed the general principle that utility as a natural philosophy is rooted in the human tendency to seek pleasure and avoid pain. He reiterated that the principle of utility “holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure” (1957: 10). Unlike his mentor, Mill postulates that there are higher and lower benefits, and the principle of utility is valid when applied to the higher benefit. Satisfaction of higher needs is a worthy goal for human beings. As he writes: “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied” (ibid.: 14). What distinguishes humans from other beings is that humans can know both positions. As he continues: “And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides” (ibid., emphasis added). What is the criterion for distinguishing between the two? Mill relies on human common sense. This is how he expresses his position: “Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure” (ibid.: 12). Similar to Bentham, Mill allows for the utilitarian principle to be the ultimate arbiter in all cases of moral judgment, including one’s belief in God. In his defense of utility against those who “summarily stigmatize it as immoral doctrine by giving it the name of Expediency” (ibid.: 29), he argues two points. The first is that religious commands are in absolute harmony with the principle of utility and the second is that even the sanction of the divine commands is also subject to human choice; it is the believer who validates both God and the commands. The ultimate sanction for any system of morality is “a subjective feeling in our own minds.… The sanction, so far as it is disinterested, is always in the mind itself” (ibid.: 37).
To summarize, the utilitarian moral framework considers the self as the sole judge of what is true and worthy of pursuit. The outside world is real, but only insofar as it serves human desires and whim. One does not need to look for any intrinsic value in it. Further, even if one assumes intrinsic value in the objective world, it would be irrelevant unless and until human beings declared it valuable. The world simply offers raw materials, waiting to be appropriated and assigned their value and function. Utilitarianism is useful, powerful, and desirable only insofar as it helps civitates to satisfy the inciting self. The traditional Aristotelian designation of *economia* for activities that manage human desire was extremely accurate and insightful. *Economia* covered the activities that one had to do to satisfy one’s survival and daily needs. Beyond this, however, one requires a different kind of moral framework.

Some look for the alternative in the deontological ethics that manifest in each civilized context as “contract,” “constitution,” and “charter.” These manifestations usually require the kind of solid foundation that German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) called “categorical morality.” For the Kantian and categorical moralist, in any given situation, there is an intrinsic “right” position and it is the duty of the agent to discover and live by it. How does one grasp the meaning of categorical morality? Kant authored his magnum opus *The Critique of Pure Reason* to show how both traditional and utilitarian approaches to reason and moral framework were insufficient. Instead of following the forefathers of an established tradition on the one hand, or the commands of usefulness and a cost–benefit formula on the other hand, Kant invites humanity to go beyond the world of quantity and to question things. This requires following the universal principles of morality that have always been part of existence. He does not claim to introduce something new, because he thinks that would be presumptuous. He is simply reminding humanity of the quality in our very being. As he writes: “Skepticism is a resting place for human reason, which can reflect upon its dogmatic peregrination and make a survey of the region in which it finds itself in order to be able to choose its path in the future with greater certainty, but it is not a dwelling place for permanent residence” (1998: 654). It requires conscious effort for human beings to exercise this skepticism, thus Kant’s emphasis on human autonomy and agency. But not just any volition is worthy of being a human quality. He distinguishes between just any will and the worthy one, which he calls the “goodwill.” By good, he means possessed of intrinsic value that is good in itself: “We have, then, to develop the
concept of a will which is ‘to be esteemed good in itself without regard for anything else’” (1997: 12).

What does the good mean? Kant considers something good when and if it is done out of duty and not inclination or reaction to the demands of tradition or worldly need. To be reactive is to give in to the whim of outside sources. In the case of categorical morality, human beings are neither an author of “the good” nor do they act as a tool of discovering it, but instead one takes ownership of an a priori truth that permeates one’s being as well as the entire cosmos. It is in this sense that “every rational being exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will” (ibid.: 45). The goodwill is, thus, the one that is done proactively and is done because it is the right thing to do. How does one know the difference? The goodwill is a duty-bound act that complies with moral laws that are congruent with “categorical imperatives.” Kant’s autonomous agent knows the bounds of utilitarianism, contractual as well as universal. He acts within those bounds and in a sense acts within what Kant calls the “realm of ends” where all moral categories are observed (ibid.: 50). The realm of ends has dignity, while other realms have a measurable value that “can be replaced by something else” (ibid.: 51). This distinction is very telling. When one’s decision can be disputed or quantified, then it is not based on the categorical framework and thus is not made for “the right reason.” When an act does not face dispute and is unquantifiable, then one has done the right thing and has acted within the boundaries of the categorical moral framework.

The categorical moral framework begins with the assumption that humans are its discoverers and even to an extent its authors, provided their design does not contradict the structure and the constitution of the cosmos. Humanity acts as a discoverer and to a limited degree an inventor, but only insofar as it makes new things by combining natural materials and turning them into novel items. For our discussion here, American legal philosopher John Rawls’s (1921–2002) understanding of truth and justice, which he terms “fairness,” is very helpful in understanding the place of categorical ethics. He uses two paradoxical positions to clarify his theory. The first he calls “the original position” and the second “the veil of ignorance”—two notions first introduced by the economist John C. Harsanyi (1920–2000) in his 1955 essay “Cardinal Welfare, Individualistic Ethics, and Interpersonal Comparison of Utility,” and which Rawls expanded. For Rawls, the original position is a hypothetical condition, comparable to the “state of nature” in the theories of Hobbes and Locke.
Rawls uses this as a starting point for his analysis. He invites us to accept that “the parties in the original position are equal” (1999 Section 4: 17). Further, “no one should be advantaged or disadvantaged by natural fortune or social circumstances” when it comes to the condition of “the choice of principles” (ibid.: 15). What about the fact that these distinctions are part of human existence and cannot be wished or washed away? Rawls’s position is that “the natural distribution is neither just nor unjust; nor is it unfair that persons are born into society at some particular position. These are simply natural facts. What is just and unjust is the way institutions deal with these facts” (ibid., Section 17: 87). It is an invitation to see the natural inequality as facts and value them as such but refrain from assigning any judgmental position. I remember with candidate Barak Hussein Obama speaking to a television talk show host who asked him “but sir, you are a black man.” His answer is wholeheartedly Rawlsian as follows: “Of course I am, but that ‘fact’ does not define me.” Later, we will deal with the distinction between “equality” and equality before the law (what Arendt calls “isonomy.” The natural distribution also has another important utility, in that such a position offers a “fair procedure so that any principle agreed to will be just” (ibid., Section 24: 118). The operational dimension of this is provided for by his other concept, namely “the veil of ignorance.” The original position works well when it operates behind the veil of ignorance, i.e., a condition where “the parties do not know certain kind of particular facts. First, no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength and the like. Nor, again, does anyone know his conception of the good” (ibid.). They agree to ignore those distinctions to make it possible for justice as fairness to work. It is the working together of the two notions of the natural distribution and the veil of ignorance that leads to the emergence of justice as fairness.

For Rawls, the human moral category is basically political rather than either utilitarian or metaphysical. Meanwhile, the individual is an autonomous agent, but he proposes an embedded notion of autonomy rather than absolute autonomy. Thus, he is secular without being utilitarian in his conception of moral framework. As he writes in Political Liberalism: “Transcendent idealism and other such metaphysical doctrines play no role in their organization and exposition” (2005: 100). The last phrase refers to justice and fairness. Again, this is very important and useful: As with the consequential moral framework, communal and
contractual standards of morality help only in some areas, mostly those requiring human imaginative investigation and observation. Human life-world extends to areas that go far beyond either usefulness or practicality, however. Some existential experiences that defy utility or workability, and humanity confront *a priori* truths whose validity does not depend on human desire or decision. Of course, utility and speculation play their respective roles in facilitating these experiences, but they do not suffice in and of themselves. When it comes to spheres that defy the useful or the contractual, these two categories prove not very effective; hence, the categorical moral framework is based on truth as it is hidden within each one of us. What makes possible the experiencing of this category is that the spheres it covers are innate within all and every human being. Once again, we desire by our heart, imagine by our mind, but then building on those sensory occurrences, we experience a sense of being with our soul. Experiencing this serenity occurs because of some sort of enlightenment, awakening, initiation, and witnessing. This explains why prophets and sages alike invite humanity to envisage and discern such conversion. Plato invited humanity to turn from the confusion of the cave to make a turn toward the light. The irony is that even the unenlightened souls cannot help experience guilt for violating the boundaries of categorical morality.

Both consequential and categorical elements are important insofar as the first helps the heart to navigate properly and the second helps the mind to reach some degree of certainty. The soul, however, requires a third form of ethics: virtue ethics. *A priori* principles of utility or abstract principles are either one-dimensional or unrealistic, Aristotle would say. I put it differently: They are too “experimental” for humanity, which consists of “experiential” beings. The distinction is significant in that experimental agency requires the medium of utilitarian (here, through experiment) and positive rationality (here, through abstract reasoning) to arrive at a conclusion, while experiential agency requires direct engagement. In the words of the Persian poet Sohrab Sepehri (1928–1980), it requires one to “swim endlessly in the lake of the ‘now’.” Aristotle begins his work *The Nicomachean Ethics* as follows: “every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good” (1094a). Taking Sepehri and Aristotle together, we can see three variables at work: agency, the good, and the now, with the now containing within it both past and present. Thus, a virtuous act is that which is proper, which means that it is good in any given time and place and in the eye of
a specific agent such as “me.” What happens when the heart, the mind, and the soul have made a proper choice and for the right reason? I answer this question next.

**Hallmarks: Conviviality, Allure, Balance**

What are the attractions of civilization? How does one recognize civility? What are its indicators? What makes a context civilized? I argue that for a triumvirate of characteristics that define civil society: conviviality, tolerance, and balance. I parse the three concepts below.

I have already introduced the notion of conviviality as part of the general definition for civitas as concomitant, comprehensive, and convivial production of values and reminded the reader of the etymological root of convivial in the Latin verb *vivere*, meaning to live. It is about being alive, dynamic, vibrant, and emanating brightness. To make clearer my meaning, I recall the controversial essay entitled “The Clash of Civilizations,” later enlarged in a book with the same title (1998), by the late political scientist Samuel Huntington (1927–2008). In both pieces, he claimed that the clash of civilizations has characterized public life. I have even heard him in person make the assertion that this idea should serve as a “paradigm” for understanding human interaction, including in the globalized world of the new millennium. This could not be farther from the truth because the phrase “the clash of civilizations” is a contradiction. I believe that he confused civilizations with empires, dominions, and powerhouses: These are solely interested in maximizing their interests, whether inspired by commerce, politics, religion, or ethnic solidarity, and function within categorical, imperious, and clear and certain categories, thus declaring any forms of dialogue and interaction polluting. They are ambitious, exclusivist, and restricted and thus do not engage, converse, and exchange, but rather they command, impose, and dictate. They build barriers and walls because empires and imperial minds clash and are jealous of their possessions and what they consider to be their parameters. They assume special status for themselves and consider others either as competitors or as enemies. Empires and imperial minds strive for homogeneity and consider any trace of heterogeneity as a threat. Commercial, political, or religious powerhouses are not interested in providing space for presence and performing human; they are too busy advancing narrow interests.
Civitates by their very nature do not concentrate on conquest, even though they are also engaged in the production, distribution, and balancing of power, insofar as the keeping of security and order dictates (Morgenthau 1978). They are too busy “making a life” worth narrating to focus on conquest. If they happened to be in competition, it would be with their own potentials, whether acting individually or collectively, all people focus on their own ideals and measuring their means for realizing those ideals. In their interactions, they must engage in dialogue, fecundate, and learn from one another; they build bridges to do so, while those individuals, collectives, or communities that are imperium build walls to protect their own powers and keep their perceived enemies out. It is those bridges that bring with them diversity and heterogeneity, qualities that in turn yield the spontaneity and geniality that make civitates both possible and attractive to the outside world.

The second feature of a civitas relates to how appealing and inviting it is to outsiders. As mentioned before, civitates can easily be recognized at any historical epoch by the direction of migration. What do people, capital, and investment consider to be “the land of opportunity?” From time immemorial, capital, expertise, and the people who possess both have answered this question with their deeds. They voted with their feet before they could speak the language of civitates or enter a ballot box. This has been so clear to me whenever I have visited the site of a civilized context, whether contemporary or its historical remains.

Take, for example, Andalusia in Southern Spain, the site of the civilization of the Moors. While there, I resided in Malaga, which was occupied by Muslims until 1487 and was the chief port of the Emirate of Granada. Then, at the peak of the Moorish civilization, it was the destination of the people of means, knowledge, and craft, and today in the twenty-first century, it is once again a destination for people of means, seeking either a place of residence or entertainment. What was amazing is that my landlords did not even speak the language of the locals but were more than happy to invest their capital and energy in today’s Spain. The main reason is that nowadays, the “West,” broadly defined, is the land of civility; hence, it is a desired destination. It is not at all surprising that from the four corners of the world, people spend money, exert efforts, risk their livelihood, and on occasion even risk their very lives for the hope of getting to the “West.” The direction was not always westward. In the ninth century, all roads led to Baghdad, Cairo, or Cordoba, when these cities were the cradles of knowledge, imagination, and toleration. Indeed,
the keyword for the enormous allure of the West today and Baghdad, Cairo, and Cordoba, then, was nothing but openness, hospitality, tolerance, and acceptance. The latter means one is filled with hope that one can be and become what one’s potential dictates or what one desires to be, without fear of objection, question, ridicule, harm, exclusion, or persecution. The case known as “the Syrian refugee crisis,” caused by the Syrian Civil War (which began in 2011 and continues to the time of writing in 2020, with no end in sight), illustrates this point. More than six million people are displaced and reside in refugee camps in neighboring countries. Even though these camps are located in the Muslim world, scattered in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, almost all refugees are attracted to, interested in, and focused on migrating to “the West,” the epicenter of civitas in the world today.

Finally, there is moderation and balance. The third overarching hallmark of a civitas relates to a sense of balance that dominates it and guides all aspects of life. Balancing between the bodily needs (worldly existence), human wants (life of creativity), and spiritual/moral aspirations (sacred experience) is not a luxurious enterprise but constitutes necessary and sufficient conditions of civility and civitas. I will deal with the most sensitive area for the balance, i.e., the boundary between the secular and the sacred. I have avoided the word “religion” intentionally because this word is commonly associated with a sense of divinity and God. I contend that the two realms of “the sacred and the secular” may or may not have a metaphysical ontology and root, but always exist in any human society. One may have a sense of sacredness aside from or even despite any concern with God or divinity. For example, Buddhism, which can count as its adherents about 10% of the current world population (as of 2020), does not concern itself with metaphysical questions. Here is how the founder explained it: “[Whether] the cosmos is eternal is undeclared by me… And why are they undeclared by me? Because they are not connected with the goal, are not fundamental to the holy life. They do not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, Unbinding” (cited in Noss 1956: “Buddhism”). Yet no one can deny the enormous presence of the sacred in a Buddhist person, a Buddhist gathering, or the Buddhist tradition at large. Anecdotally, when I visited a sacred place honoring “Buddha’s tooth,” it was as though I had been transposed into a holy shrine in the Muslim World, such was the similarity.
As to the relation between the sacred and the secular, I offer the following general observations: No society can afford to separate the sacred from the secular ontologically and at the same time no society can mix the institutions that deal with the sacred with those that deal with the secular. Simply put, morality and politics are ontologically linked because humanity is interested in both the physical and the metaphysical. To be secular and to have a hunger for a sense of sacred are both strong human tendencies. The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (b. 1931) rightly claims that all human orders, present or past, are moral orders (2007). At the same time, institutions charged with moral injunctions should not be mixed or confused with institutions charged with political and administrative affairs; there is a clear division of labor that should not be confused. I suggest that we have here an oval-shaped balance: a two-centered existence where the lack of either morality or politics leads to instability or even the destruction of the whole. This is extremely important because insisting in a circular or one centered existence amounts to imposition of the rules of “all with me,” that makes either a dogmatic context or an empire, while civility and civitates require the rules of “altogether.”

For this reason, the triumvirate of concomitant, comprehensive, and convivial production of all spheres of life in concert would lead to a balanced context. It results in order and justice (politics), prosperity and fairness (economy), imagination and originality (science, art, and technology), family and community (society), and memory and edifice (heritage). In addition to giving significance to the past in the context of the present, in a way, monuments legitimate, socialize, and even glorify existing order and authority. Here, the emphasis is on the themes of “concomitant, comprehensive and convivial.” It is comprehensive in that all human aspects are covered; the production takes place at the same time in concert, and it is produced in a dynamic and friendly way. I turn next to an examination of the factors that contribute to such a production.

**Pillars: Presence, Ethos, Theater (PET)**

Which are the main factors making a civitas possible? In another context and in my other work entitled *Globalization on Trial*, I took the position that civitates occur when human beings manage to bring together “a world vision with a historical system” in order to create a new space to perform human (2000: 52–53). In hindsight, I feel there are two problems with that summary. First, I feel I attached too much importance to
the engineering dimension of civilization production. Indeed, it sounded as though civility and civilization are a project to manage, whereas human development, particularly “making a life,” is complex and organic, with engineering only as one dimension; civitates may result from a process that comes about as a result of a complex interaction of factors. I use the notion of “may” because a healthy dose of fortune has played an enormous role in the past and will continue to do so in the future. Not every world vision has been translated and turned into a civilized context. Take the example of some contemporary ideological systems such as Nazism, Fascism, and Maoism. They offered a world vision, and even attempted the creation of a world system, but that was not enough. All three ended as temporary powerhouses. Second, in *Globalization on Trial*, I did not elaborate on, and indeed omitted, any discussion of the mechanisms at work in the interaction between the historical system and a given human vision. I hope to rectify both issues here.

Every time a new civitas occurs, it is a new creation, but in a paradoxical way it is also a reenactment of former civitates. In other words, it is a creation insofar as the future is concerned but it repeats the past insofar as it relies on previous human experiences and achievements. There is a saying about the nature of religiosity, which accurately applies to civility and civilizations as well: “Invent your own religion or it means nothing to you; follow the religion of your parent or you lose it.” Similarly, civitates must be invented; otherwise, they do not make sense or do not enrich us. But also, they must be embedded in the great values of the past; otherwise, they alienate us. Which human qualities would be needed for performing such a task? Who could preserve individuality, without taking it to the extreme form of individualism? At the same time, the emergence of civitas demands imagination and ingenuity, to establish a framework that is solid, has deep roots, and is constructive in responding to immediate conditions. Individuality and imagination require a third dimension, namely institution; it appears that all human-organized activities, from war to civitas, require numbers, cohesion, and organization. The union of these three is a necessary condition. When a critical mass of more than fifty percent of the population, who agree on a set of values, direct their energy to creating sophisticated organization, much is accomplished, with the result that humanity achieves both material success and a non-material sense of worth. Now, when this success manifests itself in the form of a mind-set (a term I consider to be more nuanced than “vision”) shared by influential individuals, the result is first, a set of mechanisms that shape
an ethos that the citizenry embraces and implements, and second, institutions that taken together secure a public arena or a “theater,” within which civility and civilization arise. Thus, a meeting place of individuality, imagination, and institution—manifesting as “presence, ethos, and theatre”—forms the paragon of any given civitas.

Once again, we see the necessity for the three dimensions of the heart, the mind, and the soul, to work as a dialectic, or better yet, in concert with each other. The working in concert is not free from tension, however. Indeed, without a constructive tension among the three, no balanced and harmonious working will be possible. This tension results in a sophisticated process of actualization that is evolving and does not remain unchanged. As Toynbee puts it, “Civilization is a movement and not a condition, a voyage and not a harbor” (cited in Tehranian 2004: 82). The voyage provides occasions of human wonder and awe. Beauty, both natural and artificial, invokes this wonder; there is a difference between the two, however. We should distinguish between the web of a spider, which inspires awe because of its beauty and complexity, yet it is a natural phenomenon produced by instinct, and human constructs such as a civitas, a wonder that is produced artificially: While human nature may have some role in it, it is not natural, but artificial and cultural. The next three chapters will elaborate on the deliberate triumvirate of presence, ethos, and theater as an artificial construct called civilization. Because as Bell puts it, “So long as a man remains natural and follows instinct, he will not go far towards civilization. Civilization comes of reflection and education. Civilization is artificial” (Bell 1928: 62). But before delving into the three concepts in detail, I will provide an introductory treatment.

By presence, I mean the conscious and deliberate manifestation of human potential, abilities, skills, and daring in community of others. Presence occurs when all human potential can emerge. I hope to identify the various aspects of this potential. In his work Discourse on Method (1637), the French philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650) points to one enormous aspect of potential as Je pense donc je suis, meaning the expression of human mind and reason. At the same time, by becoming the foundation of the philosophical thinking of modernity, this concept has led more to misunderstanding than to revelation of potential. No doubt, the uniqueness of human beings inheres in their ability to think, but we do not live on earth due to or because of contemplation alone. I make the claim that the thinking subject is inadequate because “ergo,” “I,” or agency represents a composite, and not just the intellectual dimension of being human.
The dominance of Descartes’s “subject” is all the more tragic because reason came to be understood as rationality or “reckoning with consequences,” as it has become fashionable and dominant following the views of the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). To consider human essence as rationality omits other major components of a complete human being, as will become clear later. To avoid this misunderstanding, I have employed the notion of “presence” to convey human’s display of all needs, wants, potential, resolutions, senses, achievements, and aspirations. The details of these will come in Chapter 2.

While “presence” refers to the propensities of individual humans, “ethos” refers to the habits of mind of those humans in their interactions with one another as well as in their relations with the space or the “theater” that they call home. The nuanced aspects of presence may seem to overlap with some of the intricacies of the ethos. For me, however, they are distinct and should be treated separately. For example, “self-worth” refers to a propensity in an individual that arises from one’s awareness through contemplation in solitude. A sense of “respecting others” relates to habits of mind that require practice, repetition, socialization, institutionalized instruction, and punitive procedures. Avoiding abusive behavior, discriminatory practices, and cultivating even simple positive habits of mind such as observing traffic regulations requires serious education, habituation, and socialization. It is not surprising that even in the big urban centers of the most civilized context today, traffic violations and domestic abuse constitute the most common and the most recurring forms of incivility.

Finally, by “theater” I mean the physical, structural, and institutional spaces that make it possible for individuals and the collective to gather and experience meaningful interaction. The theater refers to a place where presence and ethos are materialized. Others refer to this space as the public square, the marketplace, and more commonly as the public sphere, but I prefer “theater” because it conveys a sense of dynamism and anticipation for the proactive appearance of performance and action. By providing a secure, open, empowering, and encouraging space, a civilization allows for all potential to bloom and even allows for faith to become stronger by permitting its followers to regulate and manage their relations with the divine and with one another in their own time and manner. This explains the currency of tolerance in all civil conditions, old or new, traditional, or modern. In short, it takes one person to generate presence and two people to agree on a set of rules, while there is a need for three or
more people to create a public space. These pillars create the conditions and occasions in which human beings experience creativity, serenity, satisfaction, meaning, and awe at being alive. The acronym PET is fortuitous because the word “pet” as both noun and verb denote domestication, caressing, cherishing, and indulgence. Civilizations display an enormous degree of all of these.

The greatest enemy of the PET is complacency and indifference, ignorance, and neglect of the rules of the game, and prejudices and systemic injustice. The link among the three PET elements is organic and basic. None can survive individually and independent of the others. Individual agency manifests as “rights” but rights do not function unless they are expressed according to just rules of the game. Meanwhile, the rules of the game will not advance individual rights unless the societal structure guarantees the rights of all. John Rawls captures this sophisticated relationship in the following passage: “Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society cannot override. Therefore, in a just society, the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests” (1999: 3–4).

I propose the various components of a circle—the most complete and simple form, according to the Greeks—as a graphic way of explaining the PET. What I call here “presence” may be taken as the center of the circle, “ethos” as the circumference, and “theater” as the radii. The ethos or circumference offers the parameter or standard that must be followed; presence offers some core pole and the radii point to various institutional ways and forms that civilizations have manifested themselves throughout history. Citizens should be robust enough to act as the pillar because they must resolve to act civil, but they should be aware that they are bound by the rules of the game. One should neither ignore nor violate these rules, since the castle of civilization is precarious and requires gentleness and care. But at any given time and place, the point of connection between the center and the circumference can change, and this is the beauty of it. The way one chooses to connect oneself to the circumference varies based on time and place, and the point of the circumference that one chooses to connect oneself with is optional, subject to one’s predilection and volition. Compare this to flora and fauna, whose limits and standards are set by instinct. By contrast, humans are bestowed with the gift of choosing a set of ethical standards to observe. If the circle works in balance, the interactions among the three major components reinforce, accentuate, shape, modify, and redefine the nuances they need to work and be productive.
There is versatility here too: The point of circumference that one chooses to connect could be secular, non-secular, or agnostic, making it applicable to historical epochs of the past, present, and future.

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I hope the combination of the above triumviri offers a general portrait of that moment I have called civitas, where civilization production takes place. It is also where the art of performing human becomes possible. The following table depicts civitas and its working visually. As a reminder, I repeat that presence, ethos, and theater serve as the paragons of making civitas working possible, and so I have devoted the following three chapters to them, respectively.

Portrait of a civitas at work

| Categories | Spheres                          |
|------------|---------------------------------|
|            | Natural (body/heart)            | Cerebral (brain/mind) | Ethereal (spirit/soul) |
| The Good   | Satisfaction                    | Achievement           | Serenity               |
| Impulses   | Freedom                         | Reason                 | Love                   |
| Passions   | Enthusiasm                      | Appreciation           | Generosity             |
| Apparatus  | Heart                           | Mind                   | Soul                   |
| Ethics     | Consequential (utility)        | Deontological (contract)| Virtuous (good)        |
| Hallmarks  | Conviviality                    | Allure                 | Balance                |
| Pillars    | Presence                        | Ethos                  | Theater                |

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