

**OPENNESS AS THE KEY TO A PEACE-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
THE 'I' AND THE 'THOU' IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ROBERT  
HILLARY KANE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The understanding of the 'I-Thou' relationship is the recognition that there is a relation between one and another in the world of human being. Each individual is an entity that carries a great deal of dignity and the good appropriation of this dignity fosters a great interpersonal relationship. For there to be any peace-relation among beings, a way to human enquiry and understanding of common good and advancement, there is a need for unbiasedness. In Robert Kane's view, it is through a positive I-Thou peace-relation which is achievable through 'openness' that human beings sustain the moral sphere, and avoid breaking it. It will help them to arrive at truth and a way forward to any debatable issue among human beings. Openness is a form of respect for another even in the face of divided or different opinions. Hence, in any deliberation of any sort, one has to take the part of Openness by limiting narrowness of vision and choose to respect every other point of view and way of life. This will help to foster the ideal I-Thou or inter-human beings' peace-relation in the face of obstacles and conflicts. However, he seems to take for granted the uniqueness or difference in human thinking patterns and so he creates back the problem which he sets out to resolve by not giving a stand on what truth is and how human beings can get to it when openness fails. Adopting expository and analytic methods, the research argues that Kane's idea of Openness appears to be a solution to sustain harmony among human beings.

**Keywords:** Openness, Peace Relationship, 'I-Thou', Philosophy, the Other, Ultimate Responsibility, Moral Sphere Theory, Robert Hillary Kane

**INTRODUCTION**

The intrinsic connection between one and another has been a deep concern for most metaphysicians, existentialist and indeed most thinkers of all time. More so, the question of common ways of advancing peace-relation among individuals is an all important one. When we ponder over problems like terrorism, corruption, mutual distrust, tribalism, ethnic intolerance and cleansing, religious intolerance, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, one wonders whether humanity in this age is making a return to the era of barbarism. We recall that in our world today, there have been incessant issues of ethnic, tribal wars, interpersonal conflicts, electoral violence, wars and massacre going on in our world. Robert Kane discussed his peace-relation through a principle called “Ends principle,” an idea developed from Kant.<sup>i</sup> Kant's moral philosophy which centered around the principle of ends, posits that individuals should always treat humanity, both in themselves and others, as ends and never merely as means to other ends.<sup>ii</sup> The I-Thou relationship promotes authentic connections, empathy, and dialogue, acknowledging the shared humanity and interconnectedness among individuals.<sup>iii</sup> It is in the light of this that Kane tried to proffer some solutions to the problems in human relationships, and in that manner, create a path to peace relation of the I-Thou *via* his existentialist *cum* metaphysical approach. Since the pursuit of peace has been a fundamental aspiration of humanity throughout history, the perspective of Kane will therefore offer us a unique lens through which to explore the path to peace relation of the I-Thou, focusing on the individual's role in forging authentic human connections.

### **A Glimpse at the Inevitability of I-Thou Relations in Human Society as Analyzed by Philosophers**

Plato in the *Lysis* used a dialectical method of interaction to capture the relationship between men in knowledge seeking. The dialectic method here presupposes that understanding is actualized through dialogue. In dialogue, there is an encounter between persons with a view to reach a common ground on which a lasting relationship can be built or actualized. Differentiating love from friendship, Plato contends that the love that is inter-subjective and reciprocal qualifies the status of true friendship. He writes that, “first we thought that if one person loved another, they were both friends.”<sup>iv</sup> But then, “nothing is a friend or the lover unless it loves him in return.”<sup>v</sup> Notably, Kane leans much on Plato, where loving is a return for love, and the avoidance of the breaking of the moral sphere becomes feasible.

St. Augustine contends that the movement of all bodies is time.<sup>vi</sup> He sustains that time is measured by events in the outside world performed by others. The body is never moved except in time. He argues that God is the creator of all mankind, which supposes the existence of other subjects. Thus, God is our helper, He made us and not ourselves.<sup>vii</sup> The existence of the ‘I’ (self) and the ‘other’ is defined by the act of God’s creation. Time can be measured based on the activities emanating from the body of the other through voice communication, which suggests intersubjective existence. He recognizes the other as the kind of his own soul in another body,<sup>viii</sup> and so cares for him. This search for the other is linked to the idea of Robert Kane where the other should seek that there is no moral sphere breakdown by neglect.

Sören Kierkegaard interprets self-relation as a relating to oneself, where in I relate myself at the same time to an antecedent other on whom this relation depends.<sup>ix</sup> He argues that the human self is a composition of various aspects that must be brought into conscious balance: the finite, the infinite, a consciousness of the relationship of the two to itself, and a consciousness of the

power that posited the self. Henry Bergson holds that human interaction is possible in the context of time, thus presenting an idea of intersubjective relationship anchored on time. Time, for him, has to do with reflective consciousness intertwined with space. His insight presupposes the impossibility to predict with certainty the future conduct of the other. Hence he writes: “to say that a certain friend under certain circumstances will very probably act in a certain way, is not so much to predict the future conduct of our friend as to pass a judgment on his present character, that is to say, on his past.”<sup>x</sup> Martin Heidegger in his *Being and Time* gave an analysis of human existence which began with the unity being-in-the-world, where people exist through their essential involvement in the world. This involvement includes being-there-together in the shared world with other people. His analysis of being-there-with others,<sup>xi</sup> is not a far cry from Robert Kane’s position who emphasizes the help an individual can render in order to avoid the moral sphere breakdown.

Pantaleon Iroegbu in response to the questions, ‘what makes being?’ or ‘what does it mean to be in *Uwa*?’ argues that it is belongingness; thus *Being* is *Belongingness*. What then is belongingness? He defines belongingness as the synthesis of the reality and experience of belongingness.<sup>xii</sup> In this case, the recipient-subject of belonging is involved: something belongs and it belongs to something. Belongingness is a special noun from the verb ‘to belong.’ It means to be part of, *Daisein*-with or to be a member of a group. This act of belongingness gives me rights and privileges that others who do not belong do not have. *To be* is *to belong* and *to belong* is *to be*. Pantaleon argues that the Igbo principle of *Egbe bere Ugo bere* (let the kite perch, let the eagle perch) re-enacts the contents and significance of belongingness as the essence of reality. He believes that what a being is, is its activity of perching (belonging). To perch is to be. To be is to perch. To be is to belong and to belong is to be. This point has been well emphasized by Anayochukwu Ugwu, *et al.* when they wrote:

For the African, the meaningfulness of existence is best expressed in collectivity as evidenced in relatedness; and so, to exist is to exist with-and-for-and-among-‘others’. The rudiments and implications of existence is [sic] expressed holistically in plurality, relationality and communality... At this juncture, it must be understood that for the African, the sense of existence portrays ‘we’ for even if an individual does exist, he exists for and on-behalf of the ‘others’ both of whom are visible and invisible. This existential conceptualization bestows on every existent a sense of humanism, solidarity and communal obligation. From this perspective, existence takes on not only social, but also ontological dimension<sup>xiii</sup>

In Igbo-African conception of existence, to be is to be in collectivity not isolation. By this, existence carries that sense of moral obligation to ensure that while one perches, one makes conducive way for the other to perch also. In another text, Anayochukwu Ugwu, *et al.* went ahead to situate this point thus:

In Igbo, ‘we’ reads *Anyi*, implicating the idea of ‘group’, *Igwe* or ‘generality’... Conception is never in singularity to the African, rather it is in plurality... Though his existence, his beingness is singularly perceived, it goes beyond singularity as physically perceived, to ontologically include the invisible

phenomena of his existence... Thus, the word *Anyi* (we) best describes the African, his existence and his experience.<sup>xiv</sup>

Being a socialist cum humanist philosophy coming out from an indigenized thinking pattern, this act of beingness is one that is participatory; in that, existence is perceived within the expression of 'We', *Anyi*. Existence is ontological a pluralistic concept for it points to the reality of beings, never a being. In this, the art of relatedness and the attitude applied in managing this relatedness stand for the practical aspect of existence while the identifying term stand for theoretical framework for the workability and manifestation of existence. Point out three phenomena, Ugwu and Asuquo stressed it thus:

Certain terms have philosophic connotations in the African communitarianism: *nwanne*, *agbata-obi*, *agwa/omume*. *Nwanne* literarily means 'child of mother'... this *nwanne* of communal interaction is boundless even beyond physical domain existence. Community interaction continues even in the metaphysical realm, and this explains the facticity that existence which the factor behind the interaction does not end, but continues *ad infinitum*... Secondly, the term *agbata-obi* expresses literarily, '(the person) with whom one lives in boundary with'... It is a term conveying one, the idea of universalism; two, embedded with the ethical/moral consciousness in dealing with the 'other'... Thirdly, *agwa/omume* is the way/manner of interaction /communication among the community-elements<sup>xv</sup>

By this, action which is the means of relationship among beings becomes a huge factor to identify true existence. The facticity of existence identifies being, followed by action which is the tool of interrelationship. George Abah and Anayochukwu Ugwu rightly put it thus:

That is to say that the fundamental central characteristic of beings is 'existence'. A being must naturally exist. It is in the nature of beings to exist. Anything defined as a being but does not exist either empirically (physically) or ideally (non-physically) is not a being and will never be... To be is to exist and to exist is to act and to act is to be ontological-bound; in that, any action, whether positive or negative, attracts ontological response. Ontology, therefore, studies being so long as it exists either physically or spiritually and having fulfilled this point, beings cannot but empirically or ideally act and their actions being felt by the whole community of beings. Thus, here comes in the third fundamental central characteristic of a being which is 'action-feeling'<sup>xvi</sup>

The point contained in the above citation was well expressed by Ugwu, *et al.* when they presented a sort of equation for being thus:

Therefore, being implicates the idea of existence in a peculiar particular world, ontological communion with every other being which must get manifestation not only in the invisible but also in the visible world, creation of effects from the ontological interrelationship with other beings, and finally, the feeling of the effects from the activities of the ontological interrelationship. Put differently that essentially, being implicates existence, and existence in worlds, and beings

in the worlds essentially intercommunicate, and the world-intercommunications must create ontological effects which must be felt by beings<sup>xvii</sup>

To conclude this, from an African perspective, the point of emphasis here is that to be is to exist and to exist in community, to act, and the action felt by the community of beings.

### **Kane's Path to Peace Relation between I-Thou**

'Being' is not just about this thinking thing of Descartes, but also about the intersubjective peace setting that should permeate the cosmos where 'being' dwells. It is in line with this that Kane's path to peace relation of the I-Thou challenges conventional notions of reality and human existence. It promotes a view of reality as interconnected and dialogical, emphasizing the significance of authentic encounters and shared experiences in shaping our understanding of the world and ourselves. Kane, an advocate for peace, embarked on this transformative journey towards achieving harmony and unity among individuals and societies by underscoring the importance of intersubjectivity, that mutual understanding and shared experiences between individuals will enhance meaning and value in their shared interactions and will lead to a deeper appreciation of the other's perspective and subjective experience.

Central to Kane's path to peace was his profound understanding of the I-Thou relationship which he conceived and postulated, not like Buber who explicitly used the term I-Thou. In Kane, I-Thou is implied because his entire philosophical approach which revolves around his unique concept of 'openness' is geared toward promoting peace relation between man and his kind, and this in Buber represents I-thou. This notion played a crucial role in shaping his philosophy and approach.

The I-Thou concept, introduced by the philosopher Buber highlights the fundamental nature of authentic human connections. Buber argues that "the world is two twofold in accordance with man's twofold attitude and in accordance with the twofold primary word that he speaks."<sup>xviii</sup> The primary words are not isolated but combined words – I-Thou and I-It. He explains that He and She can also replace It without a change in the primary word. He claims that the I of a man is also twofold because the I of the primary word I-Thou and the I of I-It are different. The primary words do not signify things, rather they only imitate relations. It emphasizes the significance of encountering others as unique and whole beings, rather than as mere objects or means to an end. According to Buber, the I-Thou relationship fosters mutual recognition, respect, and empathy, facilitating genuine encounters and promoting peace.

Kane recognized the immense power of the I-Thou relationship (as analyzed by Buber), as a catalyst for positive changes. He believed that when individuals engage with one another in an I-Thou manner, they create a space for dialogue, understanding, and acceptance. By acknowledging the inherent worth and dignity of each person, Kane aimed to dissolve barriers, bridge divides, and cultivate a sense of shared humanity. For Kane, the I-Thou relationship as a path to peace relation was not limited to personal interactions but extended to the broader context of communities, nations, and even global affairs. He envisioned a world where leaders and citizens alike would embrace the I-Thou perspective, treating one another with compassion, equality, and openness. By nurturing this relational stance, Kane sought to counter hostility, conflict, and injustice that plagued societies.



Kane's path to peace relation of the I-Thou therefore involves practical initiatives that encourage the development of I-Thou relationships. Kane championed the importance of dialogue and facilitated platforms where individuals from diverse backgrounds could engage in meaningful conversations as will be seen in his idea of the "Retreatants."<sup>xi</sup> These interactions allowed people to express their thoughts, concerns, and aspirations while actively listening to others without judgment or prejudice. Furthermore, Kane emphasized the significance of empathy in fostering the I-Thou relationship. He encouraged people to put themselves in others' shoes, striving to understand their perspectives and experiences. Through empathy, Kane believed individuals could transcend differences, build bridges and work towards common goals rooted in peace and justice. He said:

To accord "respect" in this sense of openness to persons is to accord them rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness ("to live and pursue happiness as they choose") – but only *provisionally*, up the point where they would break the moral sphere (that is, "to the degree that one can do so" while maintaining a moral sphere in which all are similarly treated)<sup>xx</sup>

Kane also recognized the role of education in nurturing the I-Thou relationship. He advocates for inclusive and holistic educational systems that promoted empathy, intercultural understanding, and conflict resolution skills. By instilling these values in future generations, Kane aimed to create a lasting culture of peace that would transcend borders and transform societies. We can therefore state that Kane's path to peace revolved around the profound understanding and cultivation of the I-Thou relationship. By embracing this relational stance, Kane sought to create a world where individuals and communities would connect on a deep and authentic level, fostering understanding, compassion, and unity. Through initiatives centered on dialogue, empathy, and education, Kane aimed to transcend divisions and build a harmonious global society where peace would flourish and this stands as Kane's path relation of the I-Thou.

## **The Doubts of Pluralism and Uncertainty about Objective Values and Kane's Position**

Pluralism and uncertainty about objective values present significant doubts and challenges to Kane's position, particularly in the context of his peace-relation of the I-Thou. Kane writes,

"The starting points of our inquiry are two of the "conditions of modernity"... namely, *pluralism* and *uncertainty* – which have played a pivotal role in raising doubts about the possibility of objective values and ethical standards in the minds of ordinary persons and in the human sciences and philosophy."<sup>xxi</sup>

While Kane's philosophy emphasizes the importance of ethical responsibility and mutual recognition, pluralism and uncertainty cast doubt on the possibility of establishing a universally agreed-upon set of objective values.

Pluralism for Kane, refers to the recognition and acceptance of a diversity of values, moral principles, and ethical frameworks. It acknowledges that different individuals or cultures may have distinct beliefs about what is morally right or wrong. Kane stated it thus:

By “pluralism,” I mean simply the fact that we live in a world of conflicting opinions, philosophies, religions, ways of life and points of view about fundamental matters, including good and evil, right and wrong<sup>xxii</sup>

Kane recognizes diversity of ideas from different backgrounds. It is indeed necessary following the nature of his notion where reality and existence are expressed in interrelationship among beings. However, some philosophers argue that this plurality of values can lead to moral relativism, where there are no objective or universally valid moral truths.

Kane has expressed certain doubts about the existence of objective values and has raised concerns about the implications of pluralism.<sup>xxiii</sup> He argues that the existence of conflicting values across cultures and individuals creates a challenge in determining what is objectively and morally right or wrong.<sup>xxiv</sup> This uncertainty can lead to moral dilemmas and difficulties in making ethical decisions.

### **Openness: A Way to Objective and Universal Values Kane's Philosophy**

To solve the problem of pluralism and uncertainty, Robert Kane introduced the concept of openness. He started his discussion on openness by pointing out that, “openness, when it is conceived as part of a search for wisdom, points the way to belief in some objective and universal values.”<sup>xxv</sup> Kane holds the idea that openness, both in terms of receptiveness to diverse perspectives and a willingness to engage in honest dialogue, can lead to the discovery and establishment of objective and universal values. Robert Kane’s metaphysics highlights the significance of openness as a means to attain these objective and universal values. Kane stated it thus:

To see why, the first step is to note that openness need not be an invitation to indifference. It can be a *way of expanding our minds beyond our own limited points of view*. It can be an effort to find out what should be recognized as true from every point of view (what is objectively or universally true), not just what is recognized as true from our own point of view<sup>xxvi</sup>

Through openness, according to Kane, individuals can engage in dialogue, shared understanding, and open inquiry, enabling the discovery of values that transcend subjective biases and cultural relativism. Kane articulated this point by pointing out that “openness to other points of view would become a way of searching for the objective truth about what is good or valuable.”<sup>xxvii</sup> By remaining open, individuals can fulfill their ethical responsibility and contribute to the establishment of a more just and harmonious society.

Openness, in the context of Kane’s metaphysics, refers to a receptive attitude towards diverse perspectives and availability to engaging in genuine dialogue. It is a fundamental quality that allows individuals to transcend subjective biases and limitations, thereby enabling the exploration and recognition of objective and universal values. Openness involves setting aside preconceived notions and being receptive to new ideas, perspectives, and experiences. Kane likened openness to the activities of natural sciences, where testing of theories and evidence opposed to one’s theory is allowed. He pointed out that this limits narrowness of vision and helps in finding the objective truth about nature.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Kane argues that through openness, individuals can move beyond subjective preferences and cultural relativism to discover objective and universal values. Objective values refer to ethical principles and moral truths that hold independent of individual beliefs or cultural contexts. Universal values, on the other hand, encompass values that are applicable to all individuals across diverse cultures and societies. Openness paves the way for meaningful dialogue and shared understanding among individuals. By engaging in open and honest conversations, individuals can exchange ideas, challenge their own assumptions, and arrive at a deeper understanding of different perspectives. Through dialogue, diverse viewpoints can be examined critically, enabling the identification and validation of values that hold true across various contexts.

Kane introduces the concept of reflective equilibrium as a method to reconcile diverse perspectives and reach objective and universal values. Reflective equilibrium involves a process of balancing and refining one's moral intuitions and considered judgments to arrive at a coherent and consistent ethical framework. By engaging in this process with openness, individuals can identify shared moral principles that are grounded in reason and experience. Kane acknowledges the existence of ethical pluralism, where different moral frameworks coexist within societies. Openness allows for an open inquiry into these diverse moral perspectives, fostering an environment where different value systems can be examined, critiqued, and compared. Through open inquiry, individuals can discern commonalities, bridge gaps, and arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of objective and universal values. Openness also intersects with ethical responsibility in Kane's metaphysics. By remaining open to different perspectives and engaging in respectful dialogue, individuals can fulfill their ethical responsibility to consider the well-being and perspectives of others. Ethical responsibility entails a commitment to act in ways that promote the flourishing of all individuals and foster harmonious relationships. Kane held thus: "Inquiry into the truth about ethical matters and the nature of the good life must involve practical engagement in the world, including engagement with others."<sup>xxix</sup>

While openness holds promise as a pathway to objective and universal values, challenges and limitations must be acknowledged. Differing interpretations and understandings of openness may arise, potentially leading to conflicts or misunderstandings. Additionally, the practical application of openness in complex social, cultural, and political contexts may present challenges. It is important to recognize these limitations and continually strive for open-mindedness while respecting diverse perspectives. The path to peace relation of the I-Thou must be lit with the light of openness; without openness, achieving peaceful relation between the I and the Thou will become an impossible feat.

## **An Elucidation of Moral Sphere Theory**

The moral sphere as conceived by Robert Kane represents a realm within which the moral dimensions of human existence unfold. It encompasses the ethical landscape in which individuals exist. It also extends beyond the individual to encompass the collective moral community. In Kane's philosophy, ethical choices do not occur in isolation but within the context of this moral sphere, where intersubjective relationships and ultimate responsibility converge. This sphere challenges conventional views of ethics, communication, encounter and intersubjectivity by asserting that our choices and actions have ultimate moral significance,



contributing to the moral fabric of the interconnected world. To illustrate the concept of the moral sphere, we can draw upon the ideas of Immanuel Kant. Kant argues that rational beings are bound by an unconditional moral requirement to treat humanity always as an end and never as mere means. Kant derives this requirement from the principle that humanity is an end in itself. Kant's moral philosophy posits the existence of a 'kingdom of ends,' wherein rational beings are treated as ends in themselves rather than means to other ends. Kant argues that moral principles are derived from reason and have universal validity. In this context, the moral sphere aligns with Kant's notion of the kingdom of ends, emphasizing the transcendent nature of moral principles that guide human actions. As already stated, Kane defined the moral sphere as a sphere where people are treated with openness; as ends, not as means. He stated it thus:

Moral sphere is defined as a sphere in which all persons can be treated with openness by all others in the sense of being allowed to pursue and realize their desired ends or purposes, and hence to pursue their ways of life, without interference<sup>xxx</sup>

In the moral sphere, the consequences of individual choices and actions are not limited to the individual alone. They reverberate through the moral community, affecting the well-being and ethical climate of society. The recognition of moral subjectivity through intersubjectivity prompts individuals to consider the impact of their choices on the collective moral whole. Consider the example of a person faced with a moral dilemma: whether to act honestly or dishonestly in a business transaction. Within the moral sphere, the choice to act honestly is not merely a pragmatic decision but a reflection of adherence to moral principles. Kantian ethics would assert that treating others with honesty and respect is an imperative guided by reason, and it contributes to the moral order of the interconnected world, the moral sphere as posited by Kane. The moral sphere is intricately linked to the philosophy of openness. Kane's philosophy challenges the traditional view of ethics as a set of rules and duties imposed externally. Instead, he argues that ethics arises from within the open system of interconnected individuals, where choices and actions impact not only oneself but also others within the moral sphere.

The interplay between intersubjectivity and the moral sphere is evident as individuals navigate their ethical choices. When they recognize others as moral subjects with inherent worth, their choices are guided by a sense of empathy, compassion, and ethical deliberation. This recognition extends beyond individual interactions to shape the broader ethical fabric of society. To illustrate this relationship, we can turn to the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's philosophy emphasizes the radical freedom of individuals and the concept that 'existence precedes essence;' as Sartre puts it: "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards." In an open system where individuals are interconnected, the choices they make define their essence and influence the essence of others. Sartre's ideas align with the notion that openness allows for the co-creation of moral meaning within the moral sphere as elucidated by Kane.

Imagine a scenario where individuals in a community come together to address a pressing social issue, such as poverty. Within the philosophy of openness and the moral sphere, their collaborative efforts are not merely a response to external moral imperatives but a manifestation of their shared moral agency. Their choices to address poverty collectively reflect

their recognition of interconnectedness and their commitment to shaping the moral fabric of their community and their ability to treat all as equal in terms of their points of view, will create a moral sphere where people will feel free to offer their suggestions with the knowledge that it will be treated with openness. To avoid a breakdown of moral sphere, personal accountability and ultimate responsibility must be taken into account.

### **Existential Implications of Ultimate Responsibility in the Moral Sphere in Promoting Peace Relations between I-Thou**

Ultimate responsibility entails that individuals are the ultimate sources of their choices, and they bear the moral consequences of those choices. This implies that ultimate responsibility underscores that individuals are not passive victims of circumstance but active agents who shape their own moral destinies. Kane argues that within the moral sphere, individuals possess ultimate responsibility for their choices and actions. This responsibility extends beyond mere causality and determinism, as he asserts: “to be ultimately responsible for the choice, the agent must be in part responsible by virtue of choices or actions performed in the past for having the character and motives he or she now has.”<sup>xxxix</sup> Ultimate responsibility becomes the power to initiate new chains of causation. Kane maintains that ultimate responsibility (UR) lies in the person who performs out of his will, even when that act is traceable to the Self Forming Action (SFA). The basic idea is this: “to be ultimately responsible for an action, an agent must be responsible for anything that is a sufficient reason, cause, or motive for the action’s occurring.”<sup>xxxix</sup> In Kane’s philosophy, this freedom and responsibility are intimately connected to the intersubjective nature of human existence which is maintained and sustained through openness. Our choices ripple through the interconnected web of relationships, affecting not only ourselves but others as well. So when we don’t treat others as ends, the moral sphere is broken down and we cannot insinuate that we had no choices. As Kane succinctly puts it,

To treat persons as ends (to accord them respect in the sense of openness) is to treat persons with openness to the degree that one can do so while maintaining a moral sphere in which all persons can be treated with openness by all others, and to do this as a way of allowing persons to show by how they plan to live in relation to others that they are worthy of being treated with openness by all others, including oneself. Our choices and actions shape our characters and affect others<sup>xxxix</sup>

Thus, we said that even if Luther’s assertion, “Here I stand, I cannot do other,” was determined by his character and motives when he made it, Luther could still be responsible for his assertion to the extent that he was responsible for forming his present character and motives by many earlier struggles and choices in the past that brought him to this point. Often we act from a will already formed, but it is our own free will by virtue of the fact that we formed it by past free choices and actions. This is the idea behind the condition of ultimate responsibility. Ultimate responsibility does not rule out the possibility that our choices and actions might be determined by our wills, characters, and motives, but it does require that whenever this is so, to be ultimately responsible for what we are, and therefore to have free will, we must be responsible for forming the wills or characters that now determine our acts.

In a world marked by openness and intersubjectivity, individuals are not just passive recipients of external forces, but active agents shaping their own destinies and the destinies of those around them. Ultimate responsibility introduces a radical shift in our understanding of agency and personal accountability. In a deterministic worldview, where every event seems predetermined by prior causes, the notion of ultimate responsibility asserts that individuals possess the power to initiate new chains of causation through their choices and actions. Kane states it thus:

The basic idea is this: to be *ultimately responsible* for an action, an agent must be responsible for anything that is a sufficient reason, cause, or motive for the action's occurring. If, for example, a choice issues from, and can be sufficiently explained by, an agent's character and motives (together with background conditions), then to be *ultimately* responsible for the choice, the agent must be in part responsible by virtue of choices or actions performed in the past for having the character and motives he or she now has.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Consider a classic philosophical dilemma: the trolley problem. In this scenario, a runaway trolley is headed toward five people tied to a track, and you have the option to pull a lever and divert the trolley onto another track, where it will hit one person instead of five. From a deterministic standpoint, one might argue that whichever choice you make is determined by a complex interplay of factors, and you bear no ultimate responsibility for the outcome. However, the ultimate responsibility as elucidated by Kane challenges this view by asserting that you possess ultimate responsibility for your choice. Your decision to pull the lever or not is not predetermined; it arises from your deliberation and will.

The concept of ultimate responsibility introduces a moral dimension to choices that we make within this existential realm. In the trolley problem above, your decision carries moral weight, as it directly affects the lives of others. This moral dimension underscores the interconnectedness of your actions with the well-being of fellow beings within the moral sphere. It can therefore be said that the choices we make in the moral sphere has the power to shape our moral character and affect the moral character of others. Thus, the exercise of ultimate responsibility has far-reaching ethical implications and has a major role to play in the actualization of peace relation of the I-Thou in the existentialist metaphysics of Robert Kane. This is because ultimate responsibility (UR) challenges us to consider the ethical implications of our choices and actions within the framework of openness. It compels us to recognize that our decisions are not made in isolation but impact the lives of others within the interconnected web of relationships. From a philosophical standpoint, this concept aligns with the existentialist notion that 'existence precedes essence,'<sup>xxxv</sup> meaning that our choices define our moral essence. In Kane's thought, intersubjectivity serves as the fertile soil in which the roots of ethical responsibility take hold.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Let's examine a real-world example to illustrate the ethical implications of ultimate responsibility: environmental conservation. Imagine you have the choice to recycle your household waste or dispose of it in a non-environmentally friendly manner. From the perspective of ultimate responsibility, your decision holds ethical significance. By recycling, you contribute to the well-being of the environment and future generations. Conversely, by choosing not to recycle, you bear moral responsibility for contributing to environmental

degradation. This scenario aligns with Kane's assertion that our choices and actions shape our moral character and affect others. Your decision to recycle or not is not merely a matter of personal preference; it carries ethical weight because it impacts the shared world and the well-being of others. Ultimate responsibility underscores the moral dimension of our choices, urging us to consider the broader ethical implications of our actions. At this juncture, ethics meets existentialism in Kane and here posits that true freedom lies in embracing ultimate responsibility. It challenges individuals to make choices that align with their values, even in the face of uncertainty and existential angst. In the moral sphere, these choices ripple outward, influencing not only the individual but also the broader moral community. The recognition of moral subjectivity through intersubjectivity magnifies the ethical significance of these choices, highlighting their impact on others.

From the above analysis, we come to realize that to actualize peace relation of the I-Thou, we must be aware that what affects one, affects all. The *Ubuntu* philosophy comes to mind and it succinctly reminds us that we are connected to each other and that until we see, admit and live in that manner, actualizing peace relations between the I-Thou would continue to elude us.

## EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

In the philosophy of Robert Kane, openness emerges as a profound and transformative key to fostering peaceful relations between the 'I' and the 'Thou'. Kane's emphasis on openness reflects recognition of the intricate dynamics involved in human relationships and the significance of vulnerability and honesty. Openness implies a willingness to share one's authentic self, thoughts, and emotions, creating a space for genuine connection. Kane's perspective aligns with existentialist and phenomenological traditions, highlighting the importance of subjective experiences and interpersonal encounters. By encouraging openness, he suggests a departure from superficial interactions towards a deeper understanding of the self and others. This approach lays a foundation for empathy and mutual respect, fostering an environment conducive to peaceful coexistence.

In conclusion, Robert Kane's philosophy underscores the transformative potential of openness in human relations. By embracing openness, individuals engage in a meaningful exchange that transcends mere communication, creating a platform for shared understanding and empathy. In the realm of "I-Thou" relationships, this openness becomes the catalyst for peace, as it dismantles barriers, encourages vulnerability, and allows for the recognition of shared humanity. Kane's emphasis on openness offers a profound guide for navigating the complexities of human connections and promoting harmony.

While Kane's emphasis on openness brings valuable insights, it is not without its criticisms. Some may argue that the practical application of complete openness might encounter challenges in certain cultural contexts where privacy is highly valued. Additionally, critics may contend that an overemphasis on openness could lead to a lack of boundaries, potentially jeopardizing individual autonomy and personal space. Furthermore, the idealistic nature of Kane's philosophy might face scrutiny in the face of real-world complexities, where power dynamics, societal structures, and external influences often shape relationships. Skeptics may question whether complete openness is always achievable or even desirable in every circumstance, considering the multifaceted nature of human interactions. In essence, while

Kane's philosophy offers a compelling vision for achieving peace through openness, its practicality and universality may be subject to scrutiny and contextual considerations.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>ii</sup> William F. Lawhead, *Voyage of Discovery*, (USA: Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data, 2002), 343
- <sup>iii</sup> Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom*, 17-18
- <sup>iv</sup> Plato, *Lysis*, Translated by Stanley Lombardo; in *the Collected Works of Plato* (USA: Hackett publishing Company Inc, 1977), 212d.
- <sup>v</sup> Plato, *Lysis*, 212d.
- <sup>vi</sup> St. Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, Translated by John K. Ryan, (NY: Doubleday and Company, 1960), Book II, Ch. 23, Paragraph 29.
- <sup>vii</sup> St. Augustine, Book II, Ch. 27, Paragraph 34.
- <sup>viii</sup> St. Augustine, Book IV, Ch. 6, Paragraph 11.
- <sup>ix</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto death*, Translated by, Howard V. Hong and Co, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 13-21.
- <sup>x</sup> Henry Bergson, *Time and Free will: An Essay on the immediate data of consciousness*, translated by F.I. Pogson, M.A, (NY: Dover Pub, Inc., 2001), 184
- <sup>xi</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (London: Basic Blackwell, 1983), 25-27.
- <sup>xii</sup> Pantaleon Iroegbu, *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy* (Owerri: International Universities Press, 1995), 374
- <sup>xiii</sup> Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, *et al.*, "A Critical Review of African Communitarianism," *Madonna University Thought and Action Journal of Philosophy*, 1, no. 1, (2022), 70-71 (69-79)
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- <sup>xvi</sup> George O. Abah and Anayochukwu K. Ugwu, "A Discourse on the Meaning and Cultural Implications of *Ala* to the Igbo," *International Journal of Integrative Humanism*, 13, no. 1, (March 2021), 205 (183-207)
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- <sup>xviii</sup> Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Trans. R. J. Smith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2011), 3.
- <sup>xix</sup> Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom*, 27
- <sup>xx</sup> Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom*, 35
- <sup>xxi</sup> Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom*, 9
- <sup>xxii</sup> Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom*, 9
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom*, 9
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom*, 11
- <sup>xxv</sup> Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom* 15



- xxvi Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom* 15
- xxvii Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom* 15
- xxviii Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom* 16
- xxix Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom* 20
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- xxxi Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 121
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- xxxiv Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 121
- xxxv Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London: Methuen, 1973), 28
- xxxvi Kane, *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom*, 242