

Highland

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One passage from Buber's "I and Thou" has stayed with me, as a kind of fresh, high country spring:

"True community ... comes into being [when] people stand in a living, reciprocal relationship to a single living center, and they have to stand in a living, reciprocal relationship to one another."

We constantly debate what that "center" is, but it must be a "living center." As Buber sees it, there must be an "I" and a "Thou" and they must be in a reciprocal relationship — a person-to-person connection, mutually committed to the same central relation.

When someone asks why atheists were created and another asks why believers were created, it may turn out that a living relationship is actually being created in the very act of curious questioning.

Chris Highland served as a Protestant minister and interfaith chaplain for many years. He is a teacher, writer, freethinker and humanist celebrant. Chris and his wife Carol, a Presbyterian minister, live in Asheville. Learn more at chighland.com. His new book, "A Freethinker's Gospel," is available from Pisgah Press.