

A STUDY  
OF  
OUR KNOWLEDGE  
OF  
PERSONS  
WITH  
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WORK  
OF  
DR. MARTIN BUBER.

A Thesis  
presented in partial requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy  
University of New Zealand, 1948.

## **CONTENTS.**

**Introduction.**

**Chapter One: The Theory of Knowledge in Reference to Things**

**Chapter Two: Our Knowledge of Ourselves.**

**Chapter Three: The Philosophy of Person.**

**Chapter Four: The Significance of Martin Buber.**

**Concluding Discussion.**

**Bibliography.**

## INTRODUCTION.

The field of philosophy is wide and varied, and often appears to be remote from the common life of men. Yet this remoteness is only superficial for the problems with which philosophy deals arise in the first instance from questions which occur to the man in the street, though he may not pursue them systematically. He cannot avoid meeting them, though he may avoid trying to answer them. What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of the universe? Is the ordering of nature, of society of the individual organism quite fortuitous or according to some unwritten law? How do we know other people and objects? What is the nature of God?

That these questions are dependent upon human reflection is not hard to see. They arise out of reflection, and they depend to a greater or less degree upon reflection for their answer. But we may go further and question reflection itself: What is the nature of reflection? What is its subject matter? Is reflection reliable? In other words, "How do we know?" The examination of this question constitutes that aspect of philosophy known as "Epistemology", and upon the answer to that question the fate of philosophy depends to a great extent.

In this study we are to be concerned with an epistemological question, the problem of how we know one

another, the problem of the nature of our knowledge of persons. The significance of this problem has long been overlooked, for in the past, epistemology has concentrated its attention upon the analysis of two kinds of knowledge, that of things, of the external world, and that of ourselves, of self-consciousness. Knowledge of persons has been assumed to be included as an extension of one of the above two kinds of knowledge, or a combination of both. But is this the case? Can our knowledge of persons be reduced in this way? And if this is not the case, and our knowledge of one another cannot be so treated, what is the nature of the alternative? These are the issues which concern us in this study.

The scheme of the thesis is as follows. In the first chapter we will deal with the theory of knowledge as it is especially related to our knowledge of things. This will provide us with the necessary background to deal with knowledge of self in the second chapter, at the conclusion of which we shall examine the validity knowledge of others by inference from knowledge of ourselves. The significance of Kierkegaard's treatment of person will be the content of the third chapter. The final and longest chapter will deal with the philosophy of person of Dr. Martin Buber, and its significance in the light of the preceding argument.



## Chapter One.

### THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO THINGS.

The theory of knowledge in reference to things is significant for our study in so far as it provides us, not only with a general epistemological background, but also often with the clue to the particular philosopher's theory of how we know ourselves, which, in turn, is closely bound to his view of the nature of our knowledge of persons.

Let us turn our attention to the English Empiricists. They held that our approach to knowledge of the external world should be regulated by the methods of physical science, and that the only knowledge of which we could be completely sure was that perceived through the sense organs. The sense organs stimulated ideas in the mind, so that in the last analysis, what we had direct knowledge of, was ideas in the mind.

It was John Locke's theory of perception which paved the way for the subsequent extraordinary results (by the commonsense standpoint) arrived at by his successors. As a result of the examination of his own experience Locke concluded that the external world consisted of objects which possessed only primary qualities, that is occupancy of space. These objects of the external world impinged on the sense organs, so stimulating ideas in the mind of the subject, and it was these ideas with which the mind had direct contact, and not with the external

world as such. "Out there" is a substance, with no features of its own, but providing the basis for the primary qualities.

Bishop Berkeley developed Locke's theory and eliminated the latter's "substance", arguing, consistently on the Empiricist view, that such a substance was quite beyond our experience and therefore unknowable. The universe he contended may well consist of minds and their ideas. However, to account for the apparent constancy of the objects of the physical universe, Berkeley held they were ideas in the mind of God.

The sceptical position of David Hume was arrived at by carrying the Empiricist theory to its logical extreme. Hume proceeded, by much the same argument which Berkeley had eliminated Locke's substance, to eliminate Berkeley's God. The result is that the external world was held to exist solely as ideas passing through our own passive minds.

This is a view which we feel to be far from accounting for our knowledge of the external world, and yet which is a difficult one to refute, although the scandalised Dr. Samuel Johnson said it could be rebutted by bumping the Irish Bishop's head on the ground!

An opposed view to that of the English Empiricists had been maintained by the 17th Century Continental Rationalists. These latter held that not only do we have experience of physical objects, but more important we have

immediate knowledge of certain "innate principles". By the exercise of reason using these innate, a priori principles as subject matter we could attain to true philosophical knowledge. Significantly enough, they were deeply interested in mathematics, and found greater reality in the principles of that discipline, than in objective physical instances.

Rene Descartes' profound respect for reason led him by systematic doubt to become sceptical of the external world, and to find reality only in his own subjectivism. To G.W. Leibnitz the objects in the external world were centres of spiritual activity, Monads, which are maintained by the thinking of God. Baruch Spinoza conceived the external world to be <sup>one</sup> "extension" of two attributes of God or Nature, namely "extension" and "thought", between which there is a perfect parallelism. It is to be understood in the terms in which a physicist would understand it, that is in mathematical and mechanical necessity.

The Rationalist view does not greatly aid us in our understanding of the way in which we know the external world, although it does represent some truths about the process of reasoning.

In the philosophy of Immanuel Kant we have an attempt to synthesise the opposing Empiricist and Rationalist positions. The account his philosophy gives of our knowledge of the external world is closely bound up with his metaphysical standpoint.

He maintained that there were two elements in our knowledge of the objects of the external world. One element was due to the physical object, and one due to our own nature. We could agree with Kant that a physical object is a distinctive thing, in that it is more than the sum of sense data which one desired from it. However, we may not agree with the roles he assigns to these two elements. He holds that the crude material given in sensation, such as colour, hardness and so on, is due to the object. On the other hand space and time, and the relations between the sense data are given by the mind, for these are ideas inherent in our nature. At the same time they are never called forth except in experience. We have this sureness, that, although the sense data may vary, these innate or a priori ideas will always remain the same because of our nature will guarantee that our experience conforms to this scheme. "The thing in itself", the essential nature of the object is, however, unknowable. What we have in experience is only the appearance of the real thing, only the "phenomenon" and not the course of the perceptions, the "noumenon".

Without entering into a long evaluation of Kant's metaphysic, we may at least say that it has certain advantages over the opposing schools, in that his external world is empirically real, even if not "transcendentally" so, and in that he recognises that a priori principles alone

will not give us knowledge of the world of objects.

We now turn to what is perhaps the most impressive philosophic structure we know: the Speculative Idealism of G.W.F. Hegel.

Hegel asserted that anything that fell short of the whole was clearly fragmentary, and would be incapable of existing were it not that what was lacking was supplied by the rest of the world. From any one object or phase of life, that is, from any part of reality, one is able to build up at least an outline of the whole of reality. The fragmentary nature of things is characteristic, not only of the objects of the external world, but also of the components of the world of thought. The process by which physical objects or thoughts lead on to the whole is called the Dialectic. We first have in mind an object or thought (the thesis), but as soon as we begin to reflect upon it we find that it has turned into its contradictory (antithesis). To obtain any further knowledge we must combine the thesis and the antithesis (synthesis), which in turn becomes a fresh thesis. So the process advances till we reach the Absolute Idea, which, having no contradictory, is incapable of further development.

He regards all objects (and all minds) as mere abstractions from the whole, and in so far as they are held to exist separately in their own right, he holds they are false abstractions.

Hegel's philosophy is in part an attempt to restore confidence in reason, which had been shaken by Kant. He has some important lessons to teach, especially in bringing the theory of internal relations before us. However, as Bertrand Russell points out,<sup>(1)</sup> Hegel's contention that, in order for a physical object to exist, it must contain within its nature references to the things outside it, to which it is related, seems to be founded upon a confusion of the object itself and the truths about it. While it may be the case that a truth which relates two objects could not exist if one of these objects were not present, yet a truth about a thing is not part of the thing itself. Further we could never possibly know all the relations that a thing has to every other thing in the universe. We cannot, in fact, prove that the universe is the tight system that Hegel holds it to be, and it follows from this that Hegel's conception of the external world is also called in question.

The writings of the Realists represent an attempt to hold the commonsense conception of our knowledge of the external world, a conception that has been held by few philosophers, but which is the usual view of the man in the street.

All Realists are united in rejecting the Idealist view that makes external objects to a greater or less

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(1) The Problems of Philosophy. S.144. (H.U.L.)

degree dependent upon the mind of the perceiver.

The Commonsense Realists hold that by a two term process we perceive the external world directly. Not many philosophers have held this simple view, but some, notably Bertrand Russell, have developed Realism beyond this naive stage.

Russell points out that in my perception of a thing, say a table, what I actually perceive is not the whole table, rather it is only a portion of the table, that which is in my line of vision. Yet I unfailingly assume that what I see is a whole table. Actually what I do see is not even a portion of the table, but a selection of "sense data".

Let us give the name of 'sense data' to the things that are immediately known in sensation: such things as colours, sounds, smells, hardnesses, roughnesses and so on. We shall give the name sensation to the experience of being immediately aware of these things. Thus, whenever we see a colour, we have a sensation of the colour, but the colour itself is a sense datum, not a sensation. (2)

On the basis of our direct apprehension of sense data, and of our experience in the past, our minds apprehend the object before us as a "logical construction".

Russell further holds it necessary to distinguish between knowledge of things and knowledge of truths. In each case there are two kinds of apprehension, one immediate

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(2) Russell Op. cit. p.12.



("acquaintance"), and the other derivative ("description"). We have knowledge of things by "acquaintance" with their sense data, and by "description", that is by describing the object in terms of the sense data known to us by acquaintance. Truths we know by "acquaintance" with universals, and by "description", that is by deduction from universals known by acquaintance.

Even Russell's more sophisticated Realism has not founded a strong school, and the indications are that Russell himself has modified his standpoint since he propounded the above theory of knowledge. Nevertheless it is a reasonably simple attempt at the solution of the problem of our knowledge of the external world.



## Chapter Two.

### OUR KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES.

We are now in a position to examine the statements of philosophers on the question of our knowledge of ourselves. Their view of this question will in many cases determine their view of our knowledge of one another. We will see that knowledge of self has an important role in philosophy of the modern period. We will see that the emphasis on it has led to the conclusion

that we reach the knowledge of other minds by means of an awareness of which the major premise is our awareness of our own minds, and the minor our sensible perception of other bodies. I have direct introspective knowledge of the mind inhabiting my own body; by means of my senses I perceive other bodies which look and behave like my own; and I argue from analogy that these other bodies are likely to be similarly inhabited by minds.(3)

The Commonsense view of the self is similar to its view of matter. It believes that we have direct knowledge of ourself, that it is something that remains stable and permanent in spite of changing ideas and experiences. It believes that the self is a kind of substratum supporting ideas and experiences, unifying them, that it is a kind of mental backbone.

This was the view that was attacked by the

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(3) Professor John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, p.204 f.

### Empiricists.

Berkeley held that our knowledge of ourselves consisted in a "notion" of self. This notion was not derived from sense experience and, therefore, is to be distinguished from the ordinary Berkeleyan idea.

Like his "ideas", this notion of self is mind dependent. Actually Berkeley is inconsistent in his theory at this point, for his notion is in fact an a priori idea, which he is at pains to reject in other connections.

Berkeley is hard put to account for knowledge of other minds, but attempts to escape from his dilemma by accounting for it on the lines of inference. He says:

It is plain we cannot know the existence of other spirits otherwise than by their operations, or the ideas by them excited in us. I perceive several motions, changes, and combinations of ideas, that inform me that there are certain particular agents, like myself, which accompany them and concur in their production. Hence the knowledge I have of other spirits is not immediate, as is the knowledge of my ideas; but depending on the intervention of ideas, by me referred to agents or spirits distinct from myself, as effects or concomitant signs. (4)

As we have seen Hume's elimination of Berkeley's God committed him to complete subjectivism. Not only did

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(4) Principles of Human Knowledge, p. 145, quoted by Baillie, p.205.

Hume deny the objective world, but he denied that there was any core of an experiencing self that organised the ideas that passed through the mind. The self was reduced to a stream of ideas that had a gentle tendency to go together in a passive mind. This locking up the mind in its own ideas is known as Solipsism. Other minds to this solipsistic mind existed only as ideas in that mind. Thus Hume denies that we have clear knowledge of ourselves, let alone other selves. Unfortunately for Hume's theory if there were not a core to his experience, his own self, he could not have accomplished the task of writing a philosophical treatise, or ever have argued consistently from day to day in support of his thesis. Implicitly he assumes that he is writing from the standpoint of a self, though explicitly he is at pains to deny it. In a celebrated passage he argues that we do not have awareness of self, but only of perceptions, sensations and thoughts: "For my part when I enter intimately into what I call myself I always stumble on some perception or other ... I never catch myself at any time without a perception..." If however we rewrite the passage emphasising the first person singular, we feel that Hume is much more dependent upon the existence of his own "self" than is he prepared to admit: "For my part when I enter intimately into what

I call myself I always stumble on some perception or other .... I never catch myself at any time without a perception ...." The assumptions of the language continual reinforce what Hume's thesis is concerned to deny.

The conclusion of Descartes' systematic doubt was that the only thing he could not doubt was himself, on the grounds that the very act of doubting implied at least the existence of a doubter. Hence cogito ergo sum: the mind can be more sure of its own processes than of the objects about which it thinks. But the self that is implied by this dictum is far from the conception we have of ourselves; it is merely ~~the object of~~ a thinking process. The mere fact that "a brown colour is being seen" for example, does not imply that it is being seen by that complex organism called myself. The knowledge of the self which we have on Descartes' view is little more than a bare abstraction.

We cannot accept Descartes' account of his knowledge of himself, and indeed he could not suggest it was an account of the knowledge of any other self, for he is obliged to doubt his existence. It is more likely, however, as Baillie points out, that "only in the knowledge of what is other than myself, am I able to rise to the knowledge of my own existence at all."<sup>(5)</sup>

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(5) Baillie Op. cit. p.153.

Descartes' view has the advantage of getting us away from the Empiricist view that ultimate reality is gained through the senses, but it has the disadvantage of involving us in a complete subjectivism and in a disastrous body-mind split.

Kant divides the self into two aspects, as he does reality. There is he says the ordinary, empirical, everyday self, of which we have awareness by introspection, but which is only the appearance of the real, noumenal, transcendental self. The latter is the source of moral experience and a member of the real world. In so far as we act according to the dictates of the categorical imperative we live and move in the real world.

Of other persons we have the same knowledge as we have of our selves, that is we are able to apprehend the "phenomenal", empirical person. But, he maintains, that the great fact of moral experience of "ought", would be meaningless unless it implies "can". To do our duty, we must be free to carry out its implications - therefore there must be other moral selves in relation to whom we can exercise and fulfil our own moral self. These moral selves we find associated with phenomenal selves.

Kant's rigid distinction between the selves we cannot accept, for in actual fact it is difficult, if not impossible, to draw a hard and fast line between moral experience and other experience. Again if the trans-

cedental self has a causal effect upon the empirical self, then it would appear that the transcendental self loses its characteristic of being purely transcendental. At the same time an advantage of Kant's view is that it makes the moral self dependent upon the existence of other persons, even if this dependency does not extend to their complete being, for the phenomenal self is omitted from this dependency.

How does the self, asks Hegel, know itself at all? Only because, he answers, it distinguishes itself from the Not Self. We must know the Not Self in order to know the Self. Considered apart, treated as if they were independent, they reveal themselves full of contradictions, and meaningless without the other. The synthesis of these two is an act of knowledge, which is both fuller, richer and logically prior to the original concepts.

In Hegel's view that which was the mind's predominant characteristic expressed itself in two ways - it was both conscious of itself, and projected from itself the events about it which were the objects of its knowledge. That is, it was both the subject which knows and the objects which were known. This view of the individual mind served Hegel as a model for his Absolute, the Whole. In it, objects and other people are merely projections of one's own self consciousness, and cannot exist apart from it. No allowance is made for the outgoing nature of the "other",

which is no more significant for us than our knowledge of the external world. While human self consciousness embodies a higher degree of reality than any other type of knowledge short of the Whole, yet it is still fragmentary for knowing mind and object known constitute a whole that is initial to and more real than either of them.

For the Realist Bertrand Russell, mind and other mind or other person are known by the same methods as we know things (as opposed in his philosophy to knowledge of truths). To illustrate his point Russell takes the case of Bismarck.

Bismarck was known to himself by acquaintance, that is, directly. To one who knew him, it was by description:

What this person was acquainted with were certain sense data, which he connected (rightly we will suppose) with Bismarck's body. His body, as a physical object, and still more his mind, were known only as the body and mind connected with these sense data. That is, they were known by description.<sup>(6)</sup>

To those who knew him through history he was known by description, chiefly of a historical nature.

Russell is careful to point out that he considers this acquaintance with our own minds is self consciousness, and not consciousness of self. He thinks that while it is probable that we are acquainted with ourselves, it is not

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(6) Russell Op. cit. p.55.



wise to assert that this is undoubtedly the case. As for knowledge of other persons, he clearly considers this inferential. We infer from the sense data with which we come in contact, and from a knowledge of our own mind infer that the sense data also possesses mind. "But for the acquaintance with the contents of our own minds, we should be unable to imagine the minds of others, and therefore, we could never arrive at the knowledge that they have minds."<sup>(7)</sup>

It will have been seen that an examination of modern philosophy of knowledge of self, of our own mind has led in most cases to an assumption, as Baillie pointed out, that we reach knowledge of other minds by inference "the major premise of which is knowledge of our own minds and the minor our sensible perception of other bodies."

We shall now examine the adequacy of this inferential method account of our knowledge of persons.

#### The Inadequacy of the Inferential Argument.

There are two elements in the argument for knowledge of one another by inference: inference from physical appearance, and inference by analogy from the knowledge of our own minds.

We shall examine both these in turn.

If physical appearance were sufficient to explain the nature of our knowledge of persons, we should be

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(7) Baillie Op. cit. p.49.



justified in imagining that this would always be the case, but as we shall see it is not. It is clear that inference from bodily appearance alone is not sufficient to determine whether a man is a man or, for instance, a waxwork figure. Professor Webb illustrates this point well by telling how in his youth the figure of a policeman stood at the door of Madame Tausaud's Exhibition and the small boy was dared to make sure if this was a real constable or not by administering a sharp pinch! One gathers that the mere physical appearance was not able to provide the small Webb with the sureness he required before applying the suggested empirical test.

Professor Webb holds that physical appearance could not suggest another thinking, feeling, reacting person at all, unless we already possessed this idea in our own mind. And lest we imagine that our own physical appearance is the source of the idea we have of other persons, he reminds us that we were aware of ourselves as persons before we ever saw our own appearance completely in a mirror.

We may now examine the adequacy of the argument for inference by analogy from the knowledge of our own minds.

It is assumed that what we are initially aware of is ourselves, our own thoughts, our own feelings (that is "solipsism"), and before we can be aware of anything

beyond this, we must infer a cause beyond ourselves.

There is, however, abundant psychological evidence to show that this is not the case, and that self-consciousness arises, in fact, in conjunction with knowledge of other minds. The well known psychologist Professor Kimball Young points out that

the infant does not possess a self at birth. There is for him no distinction between self and not-self. This distinction has to be acquired. At the outset he is only a biological organism pitched into a material and social universe in which he must find his way out .... The rise of the self depends upon the capacity of the individual to be an object to himself. The essentials of this process of becoming an object to oneself arise from the introjection into our own reactive system of the response of another person to us. That is to say, one perceives oneself only after one has perceived others.(8)

Moreover, on logical grounds, it is also untenable.

As G.F. Stout says:

Inference by mere analogy is clearly precarious; for it would be generalising from the single instance in which a body is initially known to be concerned with a mind, to an indefinite multitude of cases in which this is not initially known.(9)

As Baillie says:

To one whose whole experience was dominated by the dualism of self as experiencing centre and a world experienced from that centre, what could be more essentially inconceivable than the existence of another centre of consciousness than his own? This is a thought that nothing could make him have if he began by not having it.(10)

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(8) Personality and Problems of Adjustment, Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner (1947), p.167 f.

(9) Mind and Matter p.305.

(10) Baillie Op. cit. p.210.

As Webb says: "That he should take this something other than himself to be a reduplication of that which, also ex hypothesi, is essentially unique, the solus ipse insistence on whose uniqueness for each subject is the very point of the doctrine we are criticising, this I cannot (11) bring myself even to imagine."

We have good grounds, then, for regarding the argument by analogy as inadequate.

There is an alternative to the argument by analogy, which is advanced by Professor Stout, and which we should examine. While he regards the analogical argument as inadequate, he holds that we have inferential knowledge of other persons, not through a likeness, but through responsiveness.

He states his position as follows:

The individual finds the first clue to the existence of other selves in the responsive behaviour of certain external objects as contrasted with the indifference of others. Behaviour is responsive when it is in a distinctive and responsive way relevant to the individual's own interests, his emotions and practical needs ..... If when the baby was hungry, his bottle spontaneously approached his lips in the right position, and spontaneously went away when his hunger was appeased, the bottle would be for him an embodied self, in spite of want of resemblance between him and it. (12)

Now while this view may be regarded as an advance on the analogical view, it is still unacceptable, for in point of fact the bottle could not spontaneously act in the

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(11) Webb Op. cit. p.283.

(12) Stout Op. cit. p.303 f.

suggested manner. Baillie's comment on this view brings out its weak spot very clearly. He says:

Of course it is true that if the baby's bottle behaved spontaneously in this way, the Baby would regard it as another self. And what is more he would be right in so regarding it. A bottle that behaved in that way would be a self .... The point is, however, that he could not possibly come to this conclusion about the bottle, unless he already possessed the idea of another self, which in this case was his mother. (13)

This element of responsiveness upon which Stout has touched is undoubtedly an essential element in our knowledge of persons (as Buber emphasises c.f. Chapter Four of this Study), <sup>but</sup> and we do not merely use this element as a starting point for inferential knowledge of one another.

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(13) Baillie Op. cit. p.211.

### Chapter Three.

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF PERSON.

By the end of World War I it appeared as if the philosophy of our knowledge of others had reached an impasse. In more recent years, however, we have witnessed a re-emergence of the problem of other mind, both in Britain and in the United States. Still more important has been its development on parts of the Continent, and of this aspect Dr. Baillie says:

It is, however, in the German-speaking lands that the new movement of thought has enjoyed its most remarkable development. In the background of this development we are indeed nearly always able to discern, though sometimes only dimly, the Danish figure of Søren Kierkegaard; yet it was only in the later years of the (1914-18) War, and under stress of its increasingly testing experiences, and for the most part on German soil, that this profoundly gifted eccentric began to come into his own after nearly a century of neglect.<sup>(14)</sup>

It is to the contribution of Kierkegaard to the question of the nature of our knowledge of persons that we now turn. Kierkegaard's significance for us lies in his bringing to the attention of philosophers with new force and urgency the fact of person. It was not person understood in terms of cause and effect, or as a part of a metaphysical system, but person, concrete, entire, and "existing", facing up to the

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(14) Baillie Op. cit. p.202.

decisions and choices presented to him on the stages of life's road. If his thesis made little impression on his comfortable contemporaries of the prosperous nineteenth century, it has certainly been taken seriously in our own day, when for millions the very nature of man as person has been called in question as never before.

After a brief account of the circumstances out of which Kierkegaard's writings arose, I will go on to give the main points in his attacks upon Romanticism and Hegelianism, for it is in the execution of these attacks that Kierkegaard develops his philosophy of person that is the reason for our interest in him in this study.

SØREN KIERKEGAARD was born in Copenhagen in 1813, that "unfortunate financial year", as he writes, "when so many other false notes were put into circulation." His parents, Lutheran farmers, were poor but intelligent and well read. Søren rapidly made a name for himself as a kind of drawing room hero in the city, being renowned for his terrible wit and sarcasm. His father's death induced a profound melancholy in Kierkegaard which afflicted him the rest of his life. He now studied theology and philosophy and wrote a great deal, mostly under pseudonyms. This was not in order to remain anonymous, but so that he could use his characters to better debate the problems in his own mind.

Up to the present, his work has been comparatively little known. This oversight Dr. Theodor Haecker considers to be the price of having belonged to a small unimportant

nation, and not having written in one of the major languages, together with the subjective complexities encountered in his writings. His works are at once poetry, philosophy, psychology<sup>(15)</sup> and theology, and present a tangle "of person with matter, of the parts with the whole in all the various stages of reflection, of life with doctrine, and of life with thought."<sup>(16)</sup>

Kierkegaard's writings fall into three main categories: the pseudonymous, the polemical, and the devotional. Of these, the first category may be divided into three sub-categories:

1. The pseudonymous writings -
  - (a) The aesthetic works: Either-Or, The Repetition, Fear and Trembling, The Concept of Anguish, Stages on Life's Road.
  - (b) The philosophical works: Philosophical Crumbs, Concluding Unscientific Postscript.
  - (c) Works attributed to Anti-Climacus: Sickness unto Death, Training in Christianity.
2. The polemical writings: For Self Examination, Judge for Yourself, and The Instant.
3. The devotional writings: Edifying, and Christian Discourses.

(15) "I should like to state that he seems to us in Germany one of the most remarkable psychologists of all time, in depth, if not in breadth, superior to Nietzsche, and in penetration comparable only to Dostoevsky." Werner Brock, Contemporary German Philosophy, Cambridge: C.U.P. (1935) p.75.

(16) T. Haecker.



These works follow one another, not only chronologically, but by reason of the progress of his thought for Søren Kierkegaard was tormented by a great problem: How is one to become a Christian? This was the theme that underlay all his writings, and which is the key to his thought. Kierkegaard's profound mind - searching on this problem, was given added driving force by his bitter revolt against three aspects of the world in which he lived, which made being a true Christian a difficult task indeed.

First was what he felt to be the petty, bourgeois, mediocre, "small town" attitude of the Danes of his day, an attitude totally devoid of any of the qualities of spiritual greatness necessary for the democratic rule they demanded.

Second was the spiritual climate, dominated by two currents of thought: Romanticism and Hegelianism. (More of these shortly.)

Third was the complacency of the Lutheran Church of Denmark, of which he was a member, and its failure to plumb the depths of Christianity. It was the fury of his last attack on this betrayal of what he saw to be its vocation, that led to the final breakdown of health and his death in 1855 at the age of 43 years.

These are the circumstances out of which Kierkegaard's philosophy grew. He was not an academic philosopher; he did not aim at a comprehensive and systematic treatment of the philosophic fixed. He is important for us because in preparing, in the aesthetic



and philosophical works, the ground for his main theme he makes an important contribution to the philosophy of person.

(17) Dr. Denzil G.M. Patrick in a recently published work quotes M. Jean Wahl's penetrating statement that Kierkegaard

triumphs over Romanticism by the aid of Hegelianism; then he triumphs over Hegelianism by the aid of Romanticism. But, in reality, he is as far from the one as from the other. Romanticism and Hegelianism have both contributed to destroy the specific character of Christianity, the one by making it an aesthetic ornament, the other by making it a logical construction. The one is confusion of feeling, the other is confusion of thought ..... Kierkegaard had felt, more than any one else perhaps, the attraction of this double dialectic attitude, both of that which had broken the world into sparkling illogical fragments, and of that which brought it together into a massive and logical unity. But it is because he has felt the danger of these two attitudes that he issues the alarm cry: Away from art, away from the idea.

This quotation will serve us as a starting point for our examination of Kierkegaard's position.

The Romanticism and Idealism against which Kierkegaard directed his attacks had a strong influence upon one another, yet there was a basic difference. The Romantics tried to find how to come in contact with reality; the Idealists on the other hand tried to solve the problem of man's knowledge of reality.

#### The Nature of German Romanticism.

German Romanticism was a protest, not against

Classicism, for the Romantics thought highly of Kant and Goethe, but against the rationalism which became so self-confident with the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment's extolling of man's reason had a great influence, but it was unable to account for the whole of man's existence. The Romantics seized, and did honour to all the elements of human life and psychology that Rationalism had ignored. They exposed themselves to the full force of the mysterious universe; deluging themselves in all that was non-rational and elemental. This surge towards nature was something quite different to Rousseau's movement of the 18th century, and meant a return to the dark and fertile womb of Mother Earth, away from the realms of light. This was motivated by a desire to come into close contact with the source of all being and existence. While, however, the Romantic yearned for immediate contact with the infinite, and was unable or unwilling to follow the laborious explorations of the Rationalists he found himself constantly attacked by the feeling of the instability and the vicissitudes of life. The feeling continually interrupted and spoiled his moments of intensest exaltation.

This fundamental instability in the Romantic mood, resulting in a craving for the aesthetic, was one of the main points attacked by Kierkegaard.

#### Kierkegaard's Attack on Romanticism.

Against this emphasis on aestheticism Kierkegaard

set up "stages of existence". His aim was to break up the harmony of the aesthete's feeling, force him to reflect upon his existence, and if he chose to pass through higher stages till he reached the highest stage (Christianity). The force of Kierkegaard's attack lay in his demanding that a person shall face up to his great decisions and to make them, regardless of any aesthetic feeling. He declares bluntly that "choice" is necessary in many life situations, and that we cannot hope to synthesise all into a harmonious whole. Aesthetic choice is not real choice; only Ethical choice is real, and has the property of being a man in touch with the real nature of life.

"In a choice," he says, "what matters is not so much that one chooses the right thing, but that one chooses with energy, seriousness, and feeling. For then the personality declares itself in its inward infinity, and thus the personality is consolidated again. Even if a man had made a wrong choice, he would soon, just because of the energy with which he had chosen, make the discovery that he had not chosen rightly. For if the choice is made with the inmost energy of the whole personality, the nature of the man is cleansed, and he is brought into an immediate relationship to the eternal power that everywhere penetrates the whole world." (18)

So far from aesthetic feeling giving us the key to life it can only give us one point of view which, by reason of its singularity, only gives us a part picture of life. Our knowledge of life must continually be corrected by what appears to be its opposite. Life is

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(18) "Either/Or" German translation p. 43. Quoted by Patrick p.187.

"dialectical" by its very nature. This dialectical element is to the fore in his criticism of the Romantic mood, and it appears in all his works. Haecker considers that it springs necessarily from anyone who wishes to found the philosophy of person:

The last source of dialectics is the person in so far as it has to be thought, that is to say, in so far as the person becomes the object ..... but the person, subjectivity, cannot become the object, yet must if it is to be known; so that by the very fact of thinking it, something essential is taken from it, subjectivity, and something added to it which it is fundamentally not, objectivity. With such a point of view how could Kierkegaard not be a dialectician. (19)

It is Kierkegaard's assertion of the dialectic that breaks up the harmony of the Romantic mood.

#### Kierkegaard's Attack on Hegelianism.

The spiritual preparation for Bismarck's policy was provided during the age of Metternich by the great Prussian philosopher Hegel, who achieved an intellectual ascendancy which lent weight to <sup>Bismarck's</sup> his political doctrine - a doctrine of state absolutism which exalted obedience to a state ruthlessly pursuing its own welfare as the true way of harmony with the world spirit. Kierkegaard's whole nature and experience made him the passionate opponent of Hegel and "the system" as Kierkegaard bitterly called the latter's philosophy. In "the system" he saw, not only the seeds of a political absolutist theory, but

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(19) Haecker Op. cit. p.31.

worse still a prop, a buttress to those weak minds which could not face up to existence, but could only think about existence. He saw in Hegel's doctrine an intellectualized substitute for Christianity.

It must be remembered that when Kierkegaard aimed his blows at Hegelianism, he did so from the standpoint of one who had at one time been an enthusiastic follower of Hegel. In Kierkegaard's youth there was no other philosophy in Copenhagen, and with his characteristic passion he flung himself into its great stream, but not for long. It could not satisfy and hold him, and in his despair he found that the system had fallen away from him leaving him only himself as person, unable to communicate himself to the system. In fact when he thrust person into the structure of Hegel's thought he found that the latter was helpless and mute before person, and unable to understand it unless the person chose to disclose itself. Hegelianism posed as the final and complete answer to the nature of being and the universe, yet had nothing to say about human suffering, about guilt, about decision, about the stages on life's road. To be sure Hegelianism claims these factors of human existence to be the result of an incomplete rationalism, which as the progressive syntheses advance will fall away. At this assertion Kierkegaard's anger knows no bounds. "Here Kierkegaard's objection," says Mr. Barrett, "becomes a positive revolt. How can my suffering - the despair of

my own unique existence - be made to disappear by being enclosed in a logical system?"<sup>(20)</sup> "This was the Hegel, whom Kierkegaard felt he must at all costs expose as a Charlatan who had no answer to the problem of man's existence, and no cure for man's spiritual disease."<sup>(21)</sup>

And the weapon which Kierkegaard used to attack Speculative Idealism was Romanticism. Against Hegelianism he flung real life, not thought. Against Hegelianism he flings concrete human existence, not the abstracted selves of Descartes and of Kant, but the most concrete and entire person. The following quotation from Haecker illustrates well the change that is introduced:

In 'the system' the cardinal distinctions are as between ethics, aesthetics, religion, material existence, understanding, reason, faith; for Kierkegaard they become the differently orientated individuals. First and last, principium et finis, there is the humorous person, not humour, the aesthete, not aesthetics, the ethical thinking and acting person, not ethics, the believer, not faith, the lover and not love; and they are not merely held up to our view, they stand before us 'existing'.<sup>(22)</sup>

What is the task of Kierkegaard's person? What is the essence of the person's being, and how does he realise it?

Kierkegaard's answer is that the person must become "subjective", for, he holds, truth lies in subjectivity and subjectivity is truth.

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(20) Barrett, W. What is Existentialism? New York 1947 p.23.

(21) Patrick. Op. cit., p.22.

(22) Haecker. Op. cit., p.28.



It must be clearly understood that here the word "subjectivity" is used in a sense peculiar to Kierkegaard. It has nothing to do with individualism, or the classical Greek notion of man as the measure, or with the idea that one truth does not exist (there being as many truths as there are subjects), or with solipsism, or with Kantianism. Kierkegaard means that truth is bound up with a man being a concrete and entire person. And this "subjective" person has a peculiar philosophic task.

"Whereas abstract thought," Kierkegaard says, "has the task of understanding the concrete abstractly, the subjective thinker has the task of understanding the abstract concretely. Abstract thought looks away from the concrete human being to the pure (idea of) man; the subjective thinker brings his understanding of abstract human being into the concrete form of being this individual man."(23)

We should also understand that Kierkegaard's use of the concept of truth is broader and deeper than the view more common in European thought. The latter view has generally been that truth is a relation between the concept and the thing, between thought and reality. Kierkegaard does not deny this of course. He does not deny that twice two makes four, but he does say that as a definition and an illustration of truth it is unsatisfying. As Haecker asks: "the question is really whether the separation of intellect from all else in man is not a special character of European philosopher, whether it comes

half so naturally to the Slavs, while it seems fairly certain that it is by no means natural to the oriental." (24)

In point of fact the Hebrew view of truth is much closer to the Kierkegaardian, than is the intellectualised, impersonal and abstracted European conception. A different picture and order to European philosophy is given in the Hebrew idea of truth. The Old Testament opens with the words: "In the beginning God ...", and the New Testament in the words of S. John: "In the beginning was the Word ...." The whole order starts from person, from the person of God and from the person of man made in the image of God, continues through the world of reality and possibility, back again to person. In consequence, its statement appears, by comparison with abstract conceptions of Western philosophy, to be unsystematic. In European philosophy, on the other hand, the order and procedure is the reverse of this. It commences with the world continues to the person and back to the world. "It goes from the objects, things sensations (which, be it noted, are also objectivised) passing as quickly as possible over the self, the individual, back to the objects, things and sensations." (25) But Kierkegaard does not follow established course. He desires to reverse the order for philosophy and for thought.

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(24) Haecker, Op. cit., p.24.

(25) Haecker, Op. cit., p.26.



### Conception of Whole Truth.

In spite of the fact that he felt European philosophy had nothing to say on the questions that he held were of supreme importance for man, Kierkegaard had not rejected that tradition as worthless in all respects. Kierkegaard's dialectical training enabled him to realise that his philosophy of person, subjectivity, implied on the other hand objectivity, and he saw in European philosophy, founded on objective knowledge, the necessary system and method for science. Thus whenever Kierkegaard philosophised objectively, it was with the basic aim of retaining his standpoint in the primacy of subjectivity, but to add to it objective knowledge or truth, so that out of this relationship might come the whole truth.

### The Decisive Hour.

One of Kierkegaard's keenest criticisms of the Idealist position is that this latter depersonalises time, makes it of no crucial significance to the individual. Truth, Socrates considered, was lying dormant in every man, and the philosopher must act as a midwife in the delivery of knowledge already in the man's mind. The emphasis is on the 'philosophic process, and there is really no such thing for a man as a "decisive hour". Truth, so Hegel considered, was to be found in the right conception of the rational progress of world thought, and time will disappear in a full rationalism.

But Kierkegaard uncompromisingly holds that the

really significant thing for me is the "instant in time", that moment in which what previously was not, comes into being. To stand concrete and entire in my instant of time, in my decisive hour and to make my choice, my decision is the "ethical", the fullest knowledge I have of truth.

The ethical is the absolute and to all eternity the highest thing; and the ethical says firmly: 'Dare to become the individual from whom God can demand everything, who has nothing to demand of God!' See, that is a different kind of venture from high-sounding words of a world-historical task and rash projects with world-historical perspectives ..... To be a single individual is world historically speaking nothing, infinitely nothing - and yet it is man's only true and really highest significance.(26)

In our following up of the clues given us in Wahl's comment we have covered much ground and in doing so have touched on the main points of the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard.

"We have travelled with (Kierkegaard)," observes Dr. Patrick, "a long way from aestheticism and speculation, from Romanticism and Hegelianism, into a strange new world - a disquieting world, where what matters is our own personal way of life, rather than our abstract thought, yet where life is subjected to an extraordinary searching dialectical analysis."(27)

### The Philosophy of Person.

Out of Kierkegaard's attacks on aesthetic Romanticism and on Speculative Idealism, made in order to clear the ground for grappling with his great problem,

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(26) Kierkegaard Philosophical Crumbs p. 214 f. Quoted by Patrick, p.233.

(27) Patrick, Op. cit., p.251.

his supreme question, we are able to take a factor of great importance to the theme of our present study. It is the factor of "person", of concrete, entire, existing, "ethical", person.

It is the "existence" of this concrete person (that is, of the stages on his life's road, of his decisions and choices, of his fears and tremblings, of his instants in time) that constitutes the subject matter for a study of philosophy.

It is a person known directly in his existence; of whom to suggest that he was known by inference seems unreal, strange, and contrary to what we feel to be the case.

It is a person who cannot be divided up into component parts, for example into body, mind, and soul, or who cannot be manipulated as if he were a factor in a mathematician's equation without denying him to be what he is.

It is a person, who, because he is personal, and not a thing or a thought, does not give neat system to our philosophising.

It is a person, consideration of whom involves us in dialectics.

It is a person, who involves us in realism, whom we could never think of as an illusion, or as an expression of the nonmenal in the phenomenal, or as a being who claims

that he exists merely because he is able to assert a part mode of existence, namely that he thinks, or as a choice example of the rational nature behind the world-historical processes.

It is a factor with which philosophy must reckon.

### The Role of Inference.

Though it seems inference is not sufficient to account for our knowledge of persons, this does not mean that it has no part to play. Indeed, it has an important part, for it provides us with a means of physical identification of a particular self as a self; and also by observation of overt behaviour, especially speech, with a means of interpretation of the personality of the other. "What we are demanding, then," Baillie says, "is not the exclusion of the inferential element, but the inclusion of an element that is not inferential."<sup>(28)</sup>

Whatever may be said of subsequent encounters in the first instance our knowledge of other person could not have come to us as a result of inference. This knowledge must be a basic presupposition. "We are able to read our signs as we do because we already expect them to mean something, we have already formed somehow the conception of other mind."<sup>(29)</sup> Moreover, this non-inferential, or immediate,

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(28) Baillie, Op. cit., p.212 f.

(29) Hocking, W.E., The Meaning of God in Human Experience. 1912. p.250. Quoted by Baillie, p.213.

element present at our first encounter must always be allowed to be present to some degree in our knowledge of persons and to play an essential part. Webb calls this essential, non-inferential part a rapport. Usually a perception is necessary to indicate the presence of another person capable of social intercourse, "But," says Webb, "this perception by itself would have no effect in bringing about such intercourse without the establishment of a rapport between the communicating parties, which is a direct relation, not analysable into relations of any other kind or explicable in terms of any others." <sup>(30)</sup> Further, he considers this rapport exemplified in ordinary conversation, and of great importance: "Upon the reality or necessity to the life of man as a rational and social being of this rapport, I would insist." <sup>(31)</sup> Knowledge of other mind may be said to be similar to our knowledge of tridimensional space, which we could not have known prior to our first encounter with a physical object, and yet which we could not infer, because it cannot be described in any other terms than <sup>(32)</sup> itself.

We do, then, have an element of immediacy in our knowledge of other mind. It cannot be reduced to an extension of knowledge of the external world or of self-

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(30) Webb, Op. cit., p.285.

(31) Ibid., p.286.

(32) This comparison was originated by Prof. Karl Heim in his book the English translation of which is God Transcendent.

consciousness, or of a combination of both, "but is itself a primary and original mode of consciousness, of equal right with these others and having like them a character sui genesis. Expressing it in Kantian language, we may say that the conception of society is not on a posteriori but on a priori conception." (33)

Now there are several safeguards which we should note.

First, that this conception of society, of other mind, does not imply its chronological priority to actual social experience. It is something that is called forth in such experience.

Second, there is no implication of anything akin to the old idea of "innateness", nor does this now lend credence to anything in the nature of telepathy, which, in any case, deals with knowledge of ideas and not persons.

Third, while the immediate element is always present and necessary in our knowledge of persons, this knowledge is never given except in conjunction with the perception of the bodily accompaniments.

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(33) Baillie, Op. cit., p.

## Chapter Four.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MARTIN BUBER.

While tridimensional space and other primary modes of consciousness cannot be described in terms other than themselves, nevertheless they may be very fully described in those terms. Such a description in the realm of our knowledge of persons has been the great contribution of Dr. Martin Buber. He lays aside the age old limitation of experience to the Subject-object relationship, showing how in knowledge of persons the subject is not confronted with object, but with subject, and indicates significance of this for human thought and experience.

We had to go back one hundred years to Soren Kierkegaard to find the source of what is one of the most striking philosophical and theological movements of our day. But in Martin Buber we have a thinker who has been born at a time when his mature thought can be assimilated by his contemporaries.

Kierkegaard presents us with his "existential" thinking, confounding abstract thought with his concrete person. Buber takes this up and develops it in a masterly way.

It should be noted in passing, that Buber himself owes a great deal to his teacher the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, whom he acknowledges to be "the founder of the history of philosophical anthropology".



It should also be noted that the problem with which Buber is concerned had been treated in a somewhat similar manner by another German writer Professor Ferdinand Ebner, who had also studied Kierkegaard, in a book entitled The World and Spiritual Realities (1921). Ebner's work, however, lacked the incision and penetration that characterises that of Buber, and has not had the widespread influence of the latter.

MARTIN HUBER was born in Vienna in 1878. He is a Jew, and was brought up in the intellectual centre of Eastern Jewry, acquiring a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language, religion, traditions and folk ways. To this was added a background of philosophy, art, and literature in his student years at the Universities of Vienna, Berlin, Leipzig and Zurich. During this period his interest was aroused in Zionism, and later he became the leader of contemporary German Judaism. With the rise of the Nazis he was dismissed from his chair in Frankfurt, and exiled from Germany. Since 1938 he has been Professor of Social Philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

In 1923 Dr. Buber published his little book Ich und Du, a book that "has exercised on the Continent an influence quite out of proportion to its slender size", and which "in view of this influence alone may be affirmed ..... (34) will rank as one of the epoch making books of our generation."

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(34) R.G. Smith in the introduction to his translation I and Thou, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark (1937).

Its significance for us lies in the fact that here Buber works out his thesis of the personal, which is the culmination of the new movement in philosophy which we have been observing. It was not until 1937 that Ronald Gregor Smith's translation, "I and Thou", was printed in Britain.

In 1947 a further translation by Mr. Smith of five works of Buber which fill out what was said in "I and Thou" and apply what was said to the particular needs of our time (35) was published under the title of "Between Man and Man".

In dealing with Buber my method will be to give a factual account of his philosophy, and then an evaluation and criticism of it.

First I shall outline the argument of I and Thou, then selected topics from Between Man and Man, and finally an essay from that book which is particularly significant for us: What is Man?

### A SUMMARY OF "I AND THOU".

Martin Buber goes straight to the crux of the matter, namely, that there is a radical difference in our attitude to things, and our attitude to persons. He expresses it by saying that between a man and a thing there is a relationship of I (the subject) and It (the object), but that between a man and another man, there is a relation of I (subject) and Thou (another subject). In the latter case, the Thou is not the object of the subject, but stands over against the subject, confronts the subject. In the former case the "It" is the object of the experiencing subject, and the words "he"; "she", could be substituted for it, with no change in the nature of the relationship. "I - It" and "I - Thou" constitute what Buber calls the two "primary words" ("Primary words" are not isolated words, but combined words. <sup>(36)</sup>), and "the attitude of man is two fold in accordance with the nature of the primary words he speaks." <sup>(37)</sup>

These primary words are spoken from the being and do not signify things, but relationships.

If Thou is said, the I of the combination I - Thou is said along with it.  
 If It is said, the I of the combination I - It is said along with it.  
 The primary word I - Thou can only be spoken with the whole being.

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(36) I and Thou. Translated by R.G. Smith. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark (1937), p.3.

(37) Ibid. p.3.

The primary word I - It can never be spoken with the whole being. (38)

The I does not exist in isolation and aloofness, but only as part of either of the primary words. "When a primary word is spoken the speaker enters the world and takes his stand in it." (39)

The Realms of It and of Thou.

The life of human beings is lived in two realms, marked off by the primary words.

In the realm of It, the subject "experiences" its object, for example, I perceive something, I make something, I move something. Each It exists in so far as it is bounded off by other Its.

On the other hand the realm of Thou has no bounds. Hegel, as we saw earlier, tried to set bounds to the "self" by setting it against the "not-self". Euber considers this analysis valid when dealing with objects, but not when dealing with persons, and especially with the primary word "I - Thou": "When Thou is spoken, there is no thing. Thou has no bounds;" "When Thou is spoken, the speaker has no thing, but he takes his stand in a relation." (40)

This enables us to point clearly to the differences in the quality of the primary words. In the primary word "I - It", the subject experiences the world, that is, he

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(38) Ibid. pp.3-4.

(39) Ibid. p.4.

(40) Ibid. p.4.

manipulates it, looks at it under a microscope, extracts knowledge from it, ploughs it. But in the realm of the (41) other primary word, the "speaker" does not experience an object but enters into a mutual relation with another subject.

### The Realm of Thou.

The sphere in which a man feels he stands in relation with Thou is not confined to the personal as such, although this is the sphere with which we are concerned in this study, but includes all spheres in which a man "speaks" and feels "spoken to" in return.

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- (41) Buber's terminology is largely that of ordinary speech. He coins no new words; he employs no exotic ones. This is at once an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is that his terminology is simple, and upon reflection we realise that his use of the word has brought out its fundamental meaning, of which in our common usage we have lost awareness. Now Buber always uses his terms with some precision, and in order to follow his thought we must be careful to remember this. Unfortunately it is only too easy to forget this, as the words are in common use, and to relapse into colloquial usage. Some of the words which we have already touched on, which fall into this category are "Thou", "I", "It" and "experience". When this verb is used in the outline it is to be understood in the peculiar sense given it in the previous sentence to the one annotated (41). The word "relation" in Buber's thought has a narrower and deeper sense than in common usage. Buber confines it to that peculiar relation that exists between I and Thou. When he speaks of the "world of relation" or of "entering into relation" he means the realm of Thou, the world which is characterized by the primary word "I - Thou": the state of mutuality between subjects. As soon as an "experiencing" element enters the relation gives way to the subject - object state.

Buber distinguishes three.

(a) Our life with nature.

Here the relation is not clear: it is "beneath the level of speech", for the creatures cannot fully respond on the level at which man is capable of speaking. Nevertheless there is a difference between this relation, and our experience of inanimate objects.

(b) "Our life with men. There the relation is open and in the form of speech, we give and accept the Thou."

(c) Our life with intelligible forms.

In this sphere the relation is "clouded, yet it discloses itself". We feel that we are addressed, though we can perceive no Thou, and we answer in thinking and acting. It is a breath from the Eternal, Thou.

What happens when I face a human being and say the primary word to him? What is the quality involved that is different from experiencing an object?

Buber answers:

This human being is not He or She, bounded from every other He and She, a specific point in space and time within the net of the world; nor is he a nature able to be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. But with no neighbours, and whole in himself, He is Thou and fills the heavens. This does not mean that nothing exists except himself. But all else lives in his light.(42)

The whole is more than the analysed parts: the

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(42) Ibid. p.8.



symphony is more than the collection of notes and phrases, the portrait more than strokes of paint. So it is with the man with whom I enter into the primary relation. Of course "I can take out from him the colour of his hair, or of his speech, or of his goodness," or his personality profile, or his psychograph, or his ego-structure. "I must continually do this. But each time I do it he ceases to be Thou."<sup>(43)</sup>

### Becoming Real as a Person.

In this act of facing a human being and saying Thou to him I become real as a person.

The Thou meets me through grace - it is not found by seeking. But any speaking of the primary word to it is an act of my being, is indeed the act of my being. The Thou meets me. But I step into direct relation with it. Hence the relation means being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one ..... The primary word I - Thou can be spoken only with the whole being. Concentration and fusion into the whole being can never take place through my agency, nor can it ever take place without me. I become through my relation to the Thou; as I become I, I say Thou. All real living is meeting.<sup>(44)</sup>

Our life must necessarily be lived in the world of modern activity, consisting of events and things, and beings regarded as things, having density and duration. At times a person (or perhaps a thing) stands out and confronts us, and we enter into relation with it. We cannot, however, live in a world of pure relation: "as

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(43) Ibid. p.9.

(44) Ibid. p.11.



soon as the relation has been worked out, or has become permeated with a means, the Thou becomes an object among objects - perhaps the chief, but still one of them, fixed in its size and limits."<sup>(45)</sup>

Yet in the world of It we are continually subjected to the addresses of the world of Thou, and having entered relation, it becomes our fate to move at times back to the world of It.

You can perceive this world of It, manipulate it, and

take it to yourself as the 'truth', and it lets itself be taken, but it does not give itself to you ..... you cannot meet others in it. You cannot hold on to life without it, its reliability sustains you; but should you die in it your grave would be in nothingness.<sup>(46)</sup>

#### The Primitive Basis of the I - Thou Relation.

The I - Thou relation is primary in time to the consciousness of the I. "In the beginning is relation."<sup>(47)</sup> This, Buber holds, is made clear both by a study of primitive peoples and of the infant in our own society.

By primitive peoples he means

those that have a meagre stock of objects, and whose life is built up within a narrow circle of acts highly charged with presentness. The nuclei<sup>of</sup> [their] speech, words in the form of sentences and original pre-grammatical structures (which later, splitting asunder, give rise to the many various kinds of words), mostly indicate the wholeness of a relation. We say 'far

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(45) Ibid. p.17.

(46) Ibid. p.32.

(47) Ibid. p.18.

away'; the Zulu has for that a word which means, in our sentence form, "There where some one cries out: 'O mother, I am lost.'" The Fuegian soars above our analytic wisdom with a seven syllabled word, whose precise meaning is, "They stare at one another, each waiting for the other to volunteer to do what both wish, but are not able to do." ..... The chief concern is .... with the true original unity, the lived relation.(48)

Again:

The elementary impressions and emotional stirrings that waken the spirit of the "natural man" proceed from incidents - experience of a being confronting him - and from situations that are relational in character.(49)

Buber further illustrates the primacy of the I - Thou relation by reference to the development of the child, in which we see that "the spiritual reality of the primary words arises out of a natural reality, that of the primary word I - Thou out of a natural combination, and that of the primary word I - It out of a natural separation".<sup>(50)</sup> A good example of this primary, natural combination is to be seen in the ante-natal life of the child in which there is full bodily interacting and interflowing. A sundering of this complete state of intimacy and inter-relation comes at birth, and we enter the world. Yet we always surge in feeling back towards this primal state, not so much out of desire for the womb itself, but for the satisfaction arising out of life in relation. This movement toward relation can be seen from the earliest days of the infant, at times when it does not appear to be hungry, yet

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(48) Ibid. p.18.

(49) Ibid. p.19.

(50) Ibid. p.24.

its hands stretch out delicately as if it were searching for something. Such glances cannot be dismissed as mere "animal action", for they will at length settle on the red pattern of the carpet and not more "till the soul of the red has opened itself to them". A little later these hands will settle on a woolly Teddy-Bear and win from it the unforgettable awareness of a complete body.

Buber's summing up is this: "the thing, like the I, is produced late, arising after the original experiences have been split asunder and the connected partners separated. In the beginning is relation ..."<sup>(51)</sup>

He concludes this section of I and Thou in these words:

It is not possible to live in the bare present. Life would be quite consumed if precautions were not taken to subdue the present speedily and thoroughly. But it is possible to live only in the bare past, indeed only in it may a life be organised. We only need to fill each moment with experiencing and using, and it ceases to burn.

And in all seriousness of truth, hear this: without It man cannot live. But who lives in It alone is not a man.<sup>(52)</sup>

#### The Roles of the It - World and the Thou - World.

Though the history of the individual and of the human race have many dissimilarities, they both illustrate a progressive building up of the world of It. In this realm man comes to experience more things, and to utilise

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(51) Ibid. p.27.

(52) Ibid. p.34.

them to his advantage. But it must be noticed that "the development of the ability to experience and use comes about mostly through the decrease of man's power to enter into relation."<sup>(53)</sup>

So with knowledge: "being is disclosed to the man who is engaged in knowing, as he looks at what is over against him."<sup>(54)</sup> That is, when he is "confronted" by the objects of his knowledge, when they enter into presentness with him. At the same time, owing to the methodology of knowledge an event or object only enters into the structure of his knowledge as an It. The danger is that he will always regard it as an It, to be used and experienced at his own pleasure.

So too in Art: the form which was disclosed to the artist and confronted him, may be turned into a mere "structure".

Similarly it is possible to live only in the world of separation of the I, and of the It, and to move in two separate provinces, the one of feelings, and the other of institutions.

It - World is not Evil.

Buber's distinction between the primary words does not correspond to the Platonic division between spirit and matter. He is careful to point out that the primary

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(53) Ibid. p.40.

(54) Ibid. p.40.

word I - It is not evil. It only proves to be evil in the event of its trying to absorb the qualities of present being. It is possible for a man to let himself be over run and swamped by the world of It, to be robbed of the reality of his own I.

Let us consider the mass society of our own day. It is difficult to see it in any other light, than depending of necessity on a renunciation of the world of Thou and a deliberate embracing of the world of It.

Now it is true, says Buber, that communal life cannot do without the world of It, yet it is also true that a community life based on the world of It divorced from present being cannot but become diabolic. A true communal life must be shot through with Thou, and this is not just a vague ideal, but a genuine possibility. Thus the economist or statesman who obeys the spirit is faced with many difficulties. He is neither a dilettante or a fanatic.

He does in communal life precisely what is done in personal life by the man who knows himself incapable of realising the Thou in its purity, yet daily confirms its truth in the It, in accordance with what is right and fitting for the day, drawing - disclosing - the boundary line anew each day. (55)

#### Causality.

"Causality has an unlimited reign in the world of It." Every physical or psychical event is both caused and is causing. This is fundamental for the scientific ordering

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(55) Ibid. p.49.

of nature, and it is not burdensome to the man who is not limited to the world of It, but who can enter and re-enter the world of relation. In this world of relation the I and the Thou can confront one another in complete freedom from the sway of causality. Moreover in this world "man is assured of the freedom both of his being and of Being. Only he who knows relation and knows about the presence of the Thou is capable of decision. He who decides is free, for he has approached the Face." (56)

And so causality does not weigh heavily upon the man to whom freedom is assured. Neither need he be afraid of the law of "necessity" for in this world he knows true necessity, which is destiny. In the world of relation he meets both freedom and necessity bound together.

#### Our Freedom Attacked.

One of the most serious attacks on freedom and destiny in our own day is constituted by the "quasi-biological and quasi-historical thought of today", which "however different the aims of each have worked together to establish a more tenacious and oppressive belief in fate than ever before." (57) The lot of man is no longer controlled by the might of the Stars, but, as the late Romans thought, by a mixture of gods. In other words by the all impelling will to power, by the drives of our biological and

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(56) Ibid. p.51.

(57) Ibid. p.56.



instinctive natures, by an urge towards society, by the cultural impact. There is no possibility of release, at the most a sullen rebellion. Underlying them all is the supreme belief in ultimate causality, the idea of inevitable "possession by process".

The dogma of gradual process is the abdication of man before the exuberant world of It. He misuses the name of destiny: destiny is not a dome pressed tightly down on the world of men; no one meets it, but he who went out from freedom ..... but the dogma of process leaves no room for freedom....(58)

Even so we need not be overcome by this dogma, for the world of Thou is still open, and "he who goes out to it with concentrated being and risen power to enter into relation becomes aware of freedom. And to be freed from the belief that there is no freedom is indeed to be free".(59) And to be free in the world of relation is to be aware of reality, of reality that is neither merely subjectively owned by him, nor merely external to him. It is an activity in which I share, and which I can never take for myself. In so far as I try to take it for myself, in so far as I do not share it, there is no reality. The more directly I contact the Thou the fuller I share, the more I know of reality.

The central point is that a man who knows this reality can never be overcome by the world of It, though he has to live and move in it, for always "the seer (of

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(58) Ibid. p.57.

(59) Ibid. p.58.



relation) remains in it", and he is free to move from It to Thou.

The Nature of I as the criterion of Mankind.

"The stronger the I of the primary word I - Thou is in the twofold I, the more personal is the man."<sup>(60)</sup>

This I is the test, the shibboleth, the criterion of mankind. How a man says I, what he means when he says I places a man where he belongs, indicates where his road leads.

Let us hear the word spoken!

The I of Socrates, the I of an endless dialogue is lively and impressive. The I of Goethe standing in singleness and unreserve with nature is "lonely ... and legitimate". But the I of Napoleon is an I that sounds discordant, for it is an I that does not enter into relation, but only experiences.

He was for millions the demonic Thou, the Thou that does not respond, that responds to Thou with It, that does not respond genuinely in the personal sphere, but responds only in his own sphere, his particular Cause, with his own deeds.<sup>(61)</sup>

This sphere of the demonic Thou is, says Buber, the "elementary barrier of history, where the world of connexion loses its reality, its character of mutual action." And here we see the phenomenon of self-contradiction, that state of a man who having refused to say Thou to the other, turns around and says Thou to his own I, where

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(60) Ibid. p.65.

(61) Ibid. p.67.

there is by our very nature no room for it to develop. The man may try to pass it off as a relation, even as a religious relation, but he is bound to discover again and again the deception in the explanation. (62)

The Eternal Thou and The Meaning of Life.

"The extended lives of relation meet in the Eternal Thou," that is, in God.

How is God to be found?

He is not to be found by a denial of the reality of the I, as is implicit in mystical writings, nor by looking away from the world, nor by staring at the world, by inferring Him from nature, or from history. In Buber's own words "something else is not 'given' and God then elicited from it; but God is the Being that is directly, most nearly, and lastingly, over against us, that may properly be addressed, not expressed." (63)

Again, God is not to be sought in any "feeling" of dependence as being the reality in the relation with God, for, as in love, "feelings are a mere accompaniment to the metaphysical fact of the relation." (64)

Nevertheless this relation is not something strange and remote. It is something which, if we have said Thou to one another is a natural progression, for "the relation with man is the true simile of the relation of God." (65)

(62) Ibid. p.70. This process of turning in on oneself Buber calls in Between Man and Man (p.22) "reflexion".

(63) Ibid. pp.80-1.

(64) Ibid. p.81.

(65) Ibid. p.103.

In this relation man is not so much the content of a thought, as a "presence" which drenches the other's life in "the fullness of real mutual action", which gives confirmation that life has meaning, and that it has meaning, not for "another life", not for a "life yonder", but here in this world, in this life of ours.

### VERIFICATION OF BUBER'S ACCOUNT.

The account which Dr. Buber gives in I and Thou of interpersonal life may be verified by reference to our experience. The question is: have we had experience of such intimate mutuality as in the meeting of I and Thou, a mutuality that is "given", not achieved by seeking or striving, and in which the participants become real as persons?

Most people can testify to having had such experience. I will give an instance of my own in which I was conscious of being concerned in a meeting of an I and a Thou.

I am accustomed to do a good deal of my study in the university library. Most of the many people that gather and move about in this place, remain unknown to me personally, chiefly because they are wrapped up in their own purposes and I in mine, and because also authority frowns on conversation. I enjoy working in these familiar surroundings and in the presence of others also engaged in study, even though I am not aware of most of them as individuals.

On the particular day of which I am speaking I entered the library and took a seat at a table. I was dimly aware of the student next to me. I did not know his name, nor anything about him, nor had I ever spoken to him. I was aware only that he was not a stranger, for one rarely fails to note a newcomer to the library.

Towards the middle of the afternoon the building was shaken by an earth tremor, so that, in company with others in the library, I gave a start. A moment of tension followed and then of relief when the tremor was not repeated. Until then I had remained within the frame of my own thoughts, but at this point I became strongly conscious of the bond of the personal, of a basic relatedness to my neighbour. I was aware of him and he was, I knew, aware of me. I knew further that I must acknowledge this fact. For a moment my physical poise over my books, the pressure of my work, and the silence of the library strengthened my reserve and I did not look up, although I had no doubt at all that this was nothing less than a refusal to acknowledge the mutuality. It was a refusal to acknowledge that the externals of a self next to me had become a person, and a person to whom I must respond. To have rested in this refusal would have involved a conscious denial of what I felt to exist between this man and I; it would have involved a denial of the other as a real subject, and it would have done violence to something essential in my own nature as a person. And so I turned my head. As I did so he turned his, and our eyes met. They met only for an instant, and nothing was spoken, but in that meeting I found full and complete confirmation that this student had stepped into my circle of experience and had become real for me as a person, and I for him.

Later I wondered whether to say anything to him

of what had happened, but there seemed little point in surrounding with words that instant of simple awareness we had of one another as real people. Besides I had begun my work again.

Later too it seemed that it was not the aggregate of people in the library, or even those at my table, but this one person, my neighbour, that represented to me the human element in my experience of a common enough, but potentially disastrous, earth tremor. I realise that this is part of its philosophical significance for me now, but that at the time the student was present to me simply as person not as a representative.

While refusal to acknowledge the mutuality would have been a denial of person, nevertheless my return to the world of activity, to the world of It, Buber would agree, was necessary in order to carry out my work, although he would caution me not to allow the world of activity to so swamp me that it becomes impossible for the meeting of I and Thou to break through and take place.

From Between Man and Man.

COMMUNITY.

Before passing on to a full outline of the essay What is Man? I will touch on a point that is central to the essays Dialogue (1929), The Question to the Single One (1936) and which is the underlying basis of Education (1926) and Education for Character (1939). The question to which I refer is that of the nature of community. It is developed from the basis laid down in I and Thou.

There are, says Dr. Buber, three ways in which I may perceive a man (and here he is not speaking of "perception" with a scientific reference).

I may be an observer, wholly intent on "noting" the man, on gaining objective knowledge of him, of regarding his behaviour.

(66)

I may be an onlooker and see what would be presented to me. As an onlooker I would not be greatly concerned with carefully noting objective data, but would prefer the knowledge re-presented by my organic memory. Great artists fall into the category of onlooker.

I may become aware of a man, and in this state, I do not experience him an object, rather he stands in a relation to me as subject. What is more I feel myself

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(66) I do not think that the word "onlooker" brings out the distinction that Buber is making here. It may be of course quite clear in the German, but a greater sense of participation is required in this stage, judging from the characteristics Buber ascribes to onlookers.



"addressed", "spoken to", not so much by the man as by the situation. Indeed the man may not use any vocal expression; he may not know I am present. "It can be something about this man, for instance that he needs me. But it can also be something about myself." (67) Further the agency by which something is spoken to me is not limited to a man, (68) but may be an animal, a plant or a stone. "Nothing can refuse to be the vessel for the Word. The limits of the possibilities of dialogue are the limits of awareness." (69)

### The Signs.

We continually meet "signs" that here in a particular situation is the possibility of "becoming aware" of something, and yet wearing the armour of familiarity we ward them off. We recognise the existence of such situation, when we ask ourselves: "Has anything particular taken place today? or was it just an ordinary day?" Yet there is nothing mysterious or mystical about the signs: they are just the events I meet in everyday life. Nevertheless it is possible to live with the events of daily life at an altogether too superficial level, and not to realise that my very being involved in them "speaks" something to me personally. "What occurs to me addresses me. In what occurs to me the world happening addresses

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(67) Between Man and Man. Essay Dialogue.

(68) Buber had already enumerated the sphere of "relation" in I and Thou p.6.

(69) Between Man and Man, p.10.

me." (70)

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### Responsibility.

When I genuinely respond to the world happening (71)  
I understand what is meant by "responsibility".

Genuine responsibility exists only where there is  
real responding.

Responding to what?

To what happens to one, to what is seen and heard and  
felt. Each concrete hour allotted to the person,  
with its content drawn from the world and from  
destiny, is speech for the man who is attentive. (72)

The efficient, executative man who is able to  
cope with a situation the moment it is presented to him does  
not know responsibility. He only is responsible who knows  
he must confront the problem and step into it.

And once more Buber insists that the sounds of  
which this speech consists are the events of personal  
everyday life: "I repeat it in order to remove the mis-  
understanding, which perhaps is still possible, that I  
refer to something extraordinary and larger than life."

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(70) Ibid. p.11.

(71) This term, says Buber, must be rescued from being an  
abstraction in specialised ethics, and must be under-  
stood in a context of "lived life". Smith, in a note  
(p.206), points out that the German words Wort,  
Antwort, Antworten, Verantworten etc. allow a much  
better understanding of Buber's point than does the  
English translation. "If the reader will remember that  
"responsibility" carries in itself the root sense of being  
"answerable", then the significance of the "word" in  
actual life will not be lost. Buber's teaching about  
the "word" always carries a strict reference to "lived  
life", and is very far from being an abstraction,  
theological or otherwise."

(72) Ibid. p.16.

### Community.

In dialogue, in the relation between man and man we have the basis of community.

The political viewpoint of today sees the only important thing in groups to be "what they aim at and what they accomplish". What goes on within the group, what takes place between man and man is significant only in so far as it consolidates the party aim: "Precise obedience will do as well (as comradeship), if enthusiastic drill makes up for the associates remaining strangers to one another; there are indeed good grounds for preferring the rigid system." (73)

Now what we have here is not community at all; it is collectivity. "Community is where community happens;" that is, where men are conscious of one another as persons, conscious that they "have to do" with one another, conscious that here they are addressed and approached for an answer, conscious that marching in step is no substitute for being with one another. "Collectivity is based on an organised atrophy of personal existence, community on its increase and confirmation in life lived towards one another." (74)

To the criticism that inter-personal life of this kind is possible only to the highly intelligent, or to those on vacation from the cold hard world, Buber replies: "the life of dialogue is no privilege of intellectual activity

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(73) Ibid. p.30.

(74) Ibid. p.31.

like dialectic ..... There are no gifted or ungifted here, only those who give themselves and those who withhold themselves." (75)

In the essay "What is Man?" we shall see how Buber makes practical application of his philosophy of person and community in developing a "philosophical anthropology". In the meanwhile we shall touch on three other instances of his practical application with reference to large scale production the body politic and political decision.

#### Large Scale Production.

Is it possible for the leader of a great technical undertaking to practise the responsibility of dialogue?

It is possible, says Buber, and that possibility is realised when he sees his organisation, not as a merely great structure of men and machines useful for production, but as an "association of men with faces and names and biographies" engaged in production, but not only, or even primarily, having value for that reason. Even when he cannot hope to know each man or woman separately, nevertheless he is always conscious that he is dealing with concrete, whole persons; so that "when one of them ..... steps really as an individual into the circle of his vision and the realm of his decision, he is aware of him without strain, not as a number with a human mask, but as a person." (76)

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(75) Ibid. p.35.

(76) Ibid. p.38.

The path is, of course, full of difficulties. No doubt both capital and proletariat will decide his course at first, but harmony will increase and production rise. When this latter happens there will be more difficulties, for others will then copy his methods, but unfortunately not his thinking. Nevertheless his course is clear.

### The Body Politic.

It is to Kierkegaard that Buber owes his concept of existential living. To be a real person one must enter into relation. Kierkegaard, however, limited existential living to relation with God, and was "chary" about "having to do" with others. Buber on the other hand holds existential living must not be limited to God, but must include relation men. Now there is one sphere in which this essential relation between persons is most clearly manifested, the sphere of marriage. In marriage the life of dialogue, of community is fully experienced.

Buber attaches philosophic significance to the opposed paths of Luther and Kierkegaard on this question.

The philosophic significance of Luther's marriage Buber takes to be an attempt to lead the Christian man of his day out of a separated religious existence, into a full religious life in and with the world. On the other hand Kierkegaard's refusal to marry is an attempt to lead the religious man of his day out of "crowd" (in which men do not exist as concrete persons), along the stages of life way into solitariness before God.

Buber agrees with Kierkegaard that "crowd" constitutes a danger to persons. But this does not mean that we should shun others, the "body politic". In fact it is only in and through the "body politic", through communication between man and man that we become real persons. In marriage one is never more essentially concerned with the "body politic".

Marriage essentially understood brings one into relation with the "world"; more precisely with the body politic, to its malformations and its genuine form, to its sickness and its health. Marriage, as the decisive union of one with another, confronts one with the body politic and its destiny - man can no longer shirk that confrontation in marriage, he can only prove himself in it or fail.(77)

#### Political Decision.

With the clues of the events about us as "speech", of "community", of the "body politic" Buber criticises collectivist politics.

First he points out that the conception of political decision which <sup>is dominant</sup> faces him, no longer involves facing up to one's own decisions in one's own decisive hour (i.e. in the Kierkegaardian sense of being a Single One), but joining the Party. When this happens

The time of deciding is over. From then on one has

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(77) Ibid p.61. From the essay The Question to the Single One. In this essay Buber discusses the significance of Kierkegaard's Single One, and compares it with the man of Kierkegaard's aesthetic contemporary, Max Stirner. Using this consideration as a basis he goes on to discuss community, and to make a critique of the politics of collectivism.



only to share in the group's movements. One no longer stands at the cross-roads, one no longer has to choose the right action out of the possible ones; everything is decided. What you once thought - that you had to answer ever anew, situation by situation, for the choice you made - is now got rid of. (78)

In the face of this, the man who is a Single One must resist entirely the tendency of our age to escape from the tension of that "ever anew" by a "flight into a protective 'once-for-all'."

Further the man who is a Single One will not strip the personal significance from the events that confront him. He will not live in banality.

"I say therefore," continues Dr. Buber, "that the Single One, that is the man living in responsibility, can make even his political decisions properly only from that ground of his being at which he is aware of that event as divine speech to him; and if he lets the awareness of this ground be strangled by the group he is refusing to give God an actual reply." (79)

Buber goes on to point out the inadequacies of the political theories of Carl Schmitt (a Roman Catholic) Gogarten (a Protestant) which suggest that because of the depravity of man we cannot afford to be too particular about political institutions.

His conclusion is that:

"The person has become questionable through having been collectivised." (p.80)

and "The truth has become questionable through being politicized." (p.81)

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(78) Ibid. p.67.

(79) Ibid. p.70.



Because of this there is urgent need for men to face up to their own personal responsibility for making their own decisions out of a deep seriousness concerning the significance of what has been addressed to them. There is urgent need for such persons to live the life of dialogue, of mutual responsiveness, and of community.

"WHAT IS MAN?"

In this important essay Dr. Buber does not aim at writing a systematic philosophy, but rather, as Professor Gibson points out, to get away from the systematisers and to return to those whose experience they systematise. For this reason he is more interested in Augustine, Pascal, and Kierkegaard than in Aquinas, Descartes and Hegel.

His aim is to trace the progress of a question asked by Kant: "What is Man?" The field which is covered by the answer to this question, Kant called "anthropology", and Buber sets himself the task of examining and developing a "philosophical anthropology". To Buber's disappointment he finds that although Kant posed the question, and includes in his writings and lectures many shrewd observations on man's psychology,

yet the question, what man is, is simply not raised, and not one of the problems which are implicitly set us by this question - such as man's special place in the cosmos, his connexion with destiny, his relation to the world of things, his understanding of his fellow men, his existence as a being that knows it must die ..... not one of these problems is seriously touched upon. (80)

Buber acknowledges that it is doubtful if one could build a whole metaphysic upon philosophical anthropology, and that this is not its task.

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He states the aim of anthropology as follows:

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(80) Ibid. p.120.

(81) For the sake of brevity, in the remainder of this outline I shall use the word anthropology to mean Buber's "philosophical anthropology". When I use anthropology in the sense in which we usually understand it it will be seen by the context that it is being used in that sense.

Philosophical anthropology is not intent upon reducing philosophical problems to human existence and establishing philosophical discipline so to speak from below instead of from above. It is solely intent on knowing man himself. This sets it a task that is absolutely different from all other tasks of thought. For in philosophical anthropology man himself is given to man in the most precise sense as a subject. Here, where the subject is man in his wholeness, the investigator cannot content himself, as in anthropology as an individual science, with considering man as another part of nature and with ignoring the fact that he, the investigator, is himself a man and experiences his humanity in his inner experience in a way he simply cannot experience any part of nature .....(82)

He must enter into the problem with no personal reservation, and "stake nothing less than his real wholeness, his concrete self", and he must do this "without any prepared philosophical security; that is, he must expose himself to all that can meet you when you are really living." (83)

From Aristotle to Kant.

Buber now points to a condition that is necessary for anthropological thinking:

The man who feels himself solitary is the most readily disposed and most readily fitted for the self reflection of which I am speaking; that is, the man who by nature or destiny or both is alone with himself and his problematic, and who succeeds, in this blank solitude, in meeting himself, in discovering man in his own self, and the human problematic in his own. (84)

Further he holds that it is possible in the history of the human spirit to distinguish periods in which man has felt comfortable and undisturbed and periods in which he has felt uneasy and has been forced to think about

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(82) Ibid. p.123.

(83) Ibid. p.124.

(84) Ibid. p.126.

his own nature and destiny. As Buber says:

In the history of the human spirit I distinguish between epochs of habitation and epochs of homelessness. In the former man lives in the world as in a house, as in a home. In the latter, man lives in the world as in an open field and at times does not even have four pegs with which to set up a tent. In the former epochs anthropological thought exists only as a part of cosmological thought. In the latter, anthropological thought gains depth and, with it, independence.<sup>(85)</sup>

ARISTOTLE, he says, makes the universe a universe of things, and man into a thing among things. Aristotle does not ask the anthropological question, which has to wait seven centuries for Augustine to pose it anew.

Buber points to the difference between the two men thus:

The Aristotelian man wonders at man among the rest, but only as a part of a quite astonishing world. The Augustinian man wonders at that in man which cannot be understood as a part of the world, as a thing among things; and where the former wondering has already passed into methodological philosophising, the Augustinian wondering manifests itself in its true depth and uncanniness. It is not philosophy, but it affects all future philosophy.<sup>(86)</sup>

Then came Aquinas and his "world-system man", the unification of "the human soul, the lowest of the spirits ... with the human body, the highest of the physical things."<sup>(87)</sup> This man is "housed and unproblematic", and the anthropological question has come to rest.

In this house man dwelt, "safely hedged in", through the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. But "all

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(85) Ibid. p.126.

(86) Ibid. p.128.

(87) Ibid. p.129.

the walls of the house were in fact already crumbling beneath the blows of Copernicus, the unlimited was pressing in from every side, and man was standing in a universe which in actual fact could no longer be appreciated as a house." (88)

Pascal, mathematician and physicist

"experienced beneath the starry heavens not merely as Kant did their majesty, but still more powerful their uncanniness: le silence eternal de ces espaces infinis m'effraie. With a clarity that has not since then been surpassed he discerns the twin infinities, that of the infinitely great and that of the infinitely small, and so comes to know man's limitation, his inadequacy, the casualness of his existence;" and once more the anthropological question is framed: "qu'est ce qu'un homme dans l'infini?" The proud confidence of the Renaissance man "is here opposed by the solitary man, who endures being exposed as a human being to infinity." (89)

From the point of view of this question Spinoza, while accepting astronomical infinity, left it "stripped of its uncanniness." Spinoza does not provide man with the world as his house, but man is no longer problematic to himself.

It was Kant, whom, as we saw earlier put the question so explicitly in modern times, but who does not answer it. Nevertheless the urgency and clarity with which he sets the question forth appoints us a task from which we must not try to escape.

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(88) Ibid. p.129.

(89) Ibid. p.131.

HEGEL AND MARX.

We now come to that philosophy, which drew forth from Kierkegaard, at first his admiration, and then his bitter opposition - the system of Hegel. In it Buber sees: "the dispossession of the concrete human person and the concrete human community in favour of universal reason, its dialectical processes and its objective structures." "Man is now the only principle in which the universal reason reaches perfect self consciousness and thus completion." (90)

Aristotle had attempted to house man in a cosmological security, Aquinas in theological security and now we see Hegel's great attempt to house him in a "logological" security. "Hegel undertakes to give man a new security, to build a new house of the universe for him. No further house can be built in Copernican space; Hegel builds it in time alone, which is 'the supreme power of all that is'." (91) The time of which Hegel speaks is not that instant in time, that decisive hour (Kierkegaard), it is not significant for the person, he does not feel himself addressed in it: "The time which Hegel introduced into the groundwork of his image of the universe, cosmological time, is not that actual human time, but time in terms of thought." (92)

Within this system there is no guarantee of the

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(90) Ibid. p.136.

(91) Ibid. p.139.

(92) Ibid. p.141.



future, only the recurrence of the stages of universal reason following one upon another - according to the law of dialectic.

Buber agrees, however, that within the Hegelian field there is "a significant phenomenon", which appears to have within it a guarantee of the future lacking in Hegel's thought, namely Karl Marx's doctrine of history.

What Marx has carried out with Hegel's method can be called a sociological reduction ..... What Marx wants to give the man of his age is not an image of the universe, but only an image of society, more precisely, an image of the way by which human society is to reach its perfection. (93)

Upon society and the means of production Marx proposed to build a house for man, when the house is ready. The guarantee of its fulfillment, he sees in the existence of the proletariat.

Buber considers Marx right in claiming that social life can produce forces which can renew it, but feels that Marx in the main just follows the Hegelian footsteps, particularly in regarding the renewal as an automatic process. Marx does not realise the crucial significance of "the problem of human decision as the origin of events and destiny, including social events and destiny." (94) Further he depersonalises man and regards him as a mere unit in the historical process, and having significance as a person only in so far as his actions are in harmony with the dialectic.

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(93) Ibid. p.143.

(94) Ibid. p.144.



Socialist man can believe in automatic and non-personal succession, only until in some crisis, in some instant in time, in some decisive hour, he is brought face to face with the anthropological question, and must as a solitary man ponder that question: What is Man? (95)

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(95) A good example of this point is to be found in Mr. Arthur Koestler's grim interpretation of the logic of the Moscow trials, his novel Darkness at Noon. (Translated Daphne Hardy. Published in Penguin Edition, London 1946.)

The story turns around the fate of a Revolutionary hero of the old school, who, having fallen into disgrace, is arrested. In the preliminary examination he is induced to confess to fantastic counter-revolutionary activities. So that the finding of the public trial will serve to strengthen the Party discipline, and in agreeing to this he will have the satisfaction in his last act of acting in a pro-revolutionary manner.

In the solitariness of his cell, between the continual interrogations, this orthodox Marxist of the previous era makes some startling discoveries.

On one hand he discovers that there is a core to his self that cannot be accounted for merely in terms of economic necessity:

"He found that those processes wrongly known as 'monologues' are really dialogues of a special kind; dialogues in which one partner remains silent, while the other, against all grammatical rules, addresses him as 'I' instead of 'You' ..... These experiences held nothing mystic or mysterious; they were of a quite concrete character; and by his observations Rubashov became convinced that there was a thoroughly tangible component to this first person singular, which had remained silent through all these years and now had started to speak." p.100.

And on the other hand he discovers that when human beings are its content, the mathematical system of thought, of consequent logic, of historical necessity, does not work out.

"The sole object of revolution was the abolition of senseless suffering. But it had turned out that the removal of this ... kind of suffering was only possible at the price of a temporary enormous increase in the total sum ..... was such an operation justified? Obviously it was if one spoke in the abstract of 'mankind'; but applied to 'man' in the singular, to the (I), the real human being of bone and flesh and blood and skin, the principle led to absurdity." p.225.

"Today," says Martin Buber, the spiritual leader of European Jewry writing in the year 1938, "Today this security has perished in the ordered chaos of a terrible historical revulsion. Gone is the calm, a new anthropological dread has arisen, the question about man's being face us as never before in all its grandeur and terror - no longer in philosophical attire, but in the nakedness of existence."<sup>(96)</sup>

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(96) Ibid. p.145.

### FEUERBACH AND NIETZSCHE.

We now turn to some philosophers whose proximities have lead Buber to his own position, Feuerbach and Nietzsche.

First Feuerbach whose philosophy, in spite of its limitations, gave to Buber in his youth a "decisive impetus".

We have seen that it was Kant who put the anthropological question in modern times, but in answering it Kant only went so far as to make human cognition the starting point for philosophy. Feuerbach makes a big advance, and "wishes to make the whole being, not human cognition, the beginning of philosophizing".<sup>(97)</sup>

Unfortunately Feuerbach goes too far. He holds that nature itself can be understood only as the "basis of man". He holds that man is the only real object of philosophy, and philosophical anthropology the universal science. As for the question: What is man?, it is swept aside unasked, and man becomes once more unproblematic, and yet Buber is at pains to point out that in his conception of man, Feuerbach has made a major contribution to modern thought. Feuerbach realises that the clue does not lie in man as individual, and considers that:

The individual man for himself does not have man's being in himself, either as a moral being or a thinking being. Man's being is contained only in community, in the unity of man with man - a unity which rests, however, only on the difference between I and Thou.<sup>(98)</sup>

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(97) Ibid. p.146.

(98) Ibid. 147.

So Feuerbach discovers the Thou. The importance of this discovery Buber quotes Karl Heim as describing: "the Copernican revolution" of modern thought and "an elemental happening which is just as rich in consequences as the Idealist Discovery of the 'I'," and "is found to lead to a new beginning of European thought, pointing beyond the Cartesian contribution to modern philosophy". (99)

NIETZSCHE is a great debtor to Feuerbach's anthropology. He falls short of him by slurring the significance of the I - Thou relation into a mere interpersonal one. He rises above him however in bringing man to the centre of his thought about the universe, not as unambiguous and unproblematic, but as a great and perplexing problem. This problem is not just an isolated incident in Nietzsche's writings, but the central theme of his philosophy. "The questionableness of man is Nietzsche's real, great theme, which engages him from his first philosophical efforts to the end." (100)

Early in his career he pondered the nature of man and says: "He is something dark and veiled." Later he decides that man is "the animal that is not yet established", yet which may become established through the affirmation of the unconditioned will to power, till the super man is bred, who will be the real man.

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(99) Heim. Op. cit.

(100) Buber, Between Man and Man, p.148.

We may leave aside a discussion of Nietzsche's fierce philosophy, simply noting that his very ferocity and passionate anthropological concern puts the Kantian question to us with a new urgency.

Buber concludes: "We know that to answer it we must invoke not merely the spirit but also nature to tell us what it has to tell; but we know that we have also to approach another power for information, namely, community." (101)

### Modern Attempts.

Buber now considers several important modern proximations to his own position, pointing out that it is only in our time that the "anthropological problem reached maturity".

Now this maturity is not only due to philosophical development, but to two other factors. One is the "increasing decay of the old organic forms of the direct life of man with man", and their replacement by the bustling, hurrying activities that serve to lull the consciousness of lost security. The other factor is the modern "crisis" of man's works and creations outstripping man their master. He sees this crisis especially in the realms of techniques, economics and politics. It is of the utmost significance Buber holds that the Phenomenological School arose in the troubled decade after World War I.

Before passing to a consideration of this School



he points to the fact that it is to Søren Kierkegaard that the School owes its individualistic character, and it is in this connection that he notes an important divergence in modern existential thought from the stream set by Kierkegaard.

"The phenomenological thinkers of whom I have to speak, and pre-eminently Heidegger, have certainly taken over Kierkegaard's mode of thinking, but they have broken off its decisive presupposition ..." with the result that "the character and thus also the effect of 'existential' thought represented by Kierkegaard have been almost converted (102) into their opposite".

He agrees that a modification of Kierkegaard's theological thought is necessary to some extent if anthropology was to acquire its philosophical basis. "The problem was whether it would succeed in doing that without losing at the same time the metaphysical presupposition of the concrete man's bond with the absolute. As we shall (103) see, it did not succeed."

The creator of phenomenology was Edmund Husserl, "the man in whose school and method the most powerful attempts of our time to construct an independent (104) philosophical anthropology made their appearance". Husserl did not himself specifically treat the

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(102) Ibid. p.161.

(103) Ibid. p.163.

(104) Ibid. p.159.

anthropological problem, but in a last and unfinished work on the crisis of European science he made three points of significance for anthropology.

First he said that the greatest historical phenomenon is mankind wrestling for self understanding; second, 'if man becomes a 'metaphysical' and specifically philosophical problem, then he is called in question as a reasoning thing'; third 'Humanity in general is essentially the existence of man in entities of mankind which are bound together in generations and in society'. (Quoted by Buber p.160. Between Man and Man)

In view of the man Husserl himself, a German Jew, and of the time in which he spoke, Buber considers these statements of great importance.

Husserl's first point, Buber holds, confirms the significance of anthropology. The second is true, however, only if it is recognised that "reasoning" is not the only characteristic necessary for making a being "specifically human". The third point is a sharp corrective to the work of other phenomenologists and existentialists who saw in community either no significance at all, or a stumbling block.

The cases of the two men whom Buber now considers are instructive for both were seriously concerned for the troubles of modern man, and approached them existentially, and not merely cognitively. And yet both fell short of what Buber requires of a philosophical anthropology "the



one because of aloofness from the world, the other because of asceticism in the world". (Gibson.)

### HEIDEGGER.

Heidegger was much influenced by Kierkegaard, but differed from him in important points.

As we have seen Buber is concerned with man's three-fold living relationship; with the world and things; with persons (both individual and in community) and with "his relationship to the mystery of being ... which the philosopher calls the Absolute and the believer calls God." (105) Against this background Buber compares Kierkegaard's man and Heidegger's man.

"The relation to things is lacking in Kierkegaard, he knows things only as similes." Heidegger's on the other hand is a purely technical one, and thus cannot be "existential".

Kierkegaard's relation to his fellowmen is "a doubtful thing" (Buber), and so emphatic is he that his essential relation is to God alone, that human beings tend to become obstructions in the way of this relation. (106)

(105) Ibid. p.177.

(106) This is the reason for the central act of his life, his renunciation of his fiancée Regine Olsen, the "queen of my heart", because he had "a secret" (i.e. his melancholy) which he felt he could communicate only to God. This is says Buber to sublimely misunderstand what is required in this situation, for "speaking with God is something toto genere different from 'speaking with oneself'; whereas, remarkably, it is not something toto genere different from speaking with another human being". Between Man and Man p. 50.

(Buber strongly maintains that here he is "mistaken in his conception of the nature of God, if communication with the latter means "unessential" relation with others".)

The relation of Heidegger's man to others, an advance of that of Kierkegaard's man, it is one of solicitude. Even so, Buber feels this to be inadequate and not a true existential, I - Thou relation:

In ~~mere~~ solicitude man remains essentially with himself, even if he is moved by extreme pity ..... he makes his assistance not his self available to others ..... he "is concerned with the other", but he is not anxious for the other to be concerned with him. (107)

Man's third living relationship is, Buber says, his relationship to the absolute. For Kierkegaard this is the sole essential relation, and by which all others become unessential. In Heidegger's thought, however, the relation is totally lacking. Having abandoned Kierkegaard's theology

apparently nothing more remains to the solitary man but to seek an intimate communication with himself. This is the basic situation from which Heidegger's philosophy arises. And thereby the anthropological question, which the man who has become solitary discovers ever afresh, the question about the essence of man and about his relation to the being of what is, has been replaced by another question, the one which Heidegger calls the fundamental-ontological question, about human existence in its relation to its own being.

There remains, however, one inefragable fact, that one can stretch out one's hands to one's image or reflection in a mirror, but not to one's real self. Heidegger's doctrine is significant as the presentation of the relations to one another of various "beings" abstracted

from human life, but it is not valid for human life itself and its anthropological understanding, however valuable its suggestion for this subject.(108)

SCHELER 1875-1928.

Scheler's anthropology arising from the School of Husserl is "the second significant attempt of our time to treat the problem of man as an independent philosophical problem".

Like Heidegger, Scheler is deeply concerned with the troubles of modern man, and perceives the nature of the problem: "We are the first epoch in which man has become firmly and thoroughly 'problematic' to himself: in which he no longer knows what he essentially is, but at the same time knows that he does not know."<sup>(109)</sup>

"The sheer concreteness of man" is the corner stone of Scheler's philosophy, and he resolutely refuses to abstract man's existence, that is, "his relation to his being", as Heidegger had done. However, while Scheler recognises the anthropological question and deals with the whole person, it is person permeated with a metaphysic. This metaphysic has unfortunate results for the anthropological question.

He conceives "primal and present being", "the world's ground" to consist of "two attitudes, spirit and impulse". God is part of the first attribute, spirit, and

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(108) Ibid. p.167.

(109) Ibid. p.182.

so is neither dynamic or creative. Impulse on the other hand is dynamic and forceful, but does not perceive spiritual values and ideas. Now man becomes true man in so far as he holds the values and ideas of the spirit before the great impulsive force so sublimating the latter that it is given direction, and spirit is given life, and the energy to rise to higher levels.

The result is that the realms of the spirit and that of the primal drives fall apart more widely than before. Man is for ever troubled about his lack of unity, and reflects upon the problem of unifying them.

Buber is of the opinion that Scheler's analysis of man is very understandable in view of the contradiction in the spirit of modern man. Even so, he believes Scheler's man is not descriptive of the basic type of spiritual man. Rather it is a description of aesthetic man.

"Scheler's description may fit some who are aesthetics by a decision of the will and who have reached contemplation by the way of aestheticism", <sup>(110)</sup> that is by resisting and suppressing the impulsive side of their nature. But it does not fit men like Rembrandt, or Shakespeare, or Mozart. Certainly genius of this kind will have to impose discipline upon itself: "It too will constantly have to carry out aesthetic acts of denial, of renunciation, of inner transformation; but the real conduct of its spiritual life

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(110) Ibid. p.190.

is not based on asceticism." (111) He concludes:

The true negotiations and decisions take place, in the life of these and in general of great men, not between spirit and instincts but between spirit and spirit, between instincts and instincts, between one product of spirit and instinct and another product of spirit and instinct. The drama of a great life cannot be reduced to the duality of spirit and instinct. (112)

Moreover he holds that spirit cannot be separated from life, but arises out of a man's concord with things and with instincts, out of the living relation between man and man.

Scheler takes the concept of spirit arising with energy out of a repression and sublimation of the instincts from the psychology of Sigmund Freud.

Buber considers that the psychological categories of Freud have a general validity, but that the Freudian obsession with instincts and their paramount importance for the whole structure of personal and communal life does not characterise the life of man in general, but only the typical man of today. (113) And "this man is sick, both in his relation to others and in his very soul". Freud's categories rise out of psycho-pathology and are valid for that state.

(111) Ibid. p.190.

(112) Ibid. p.191.

(113) "If Freud had taken his psychological outfit down a Lancashire coal mine or on the floor of the Stock exchange, he may have found it fitted the cultural patterns less well than the Viennese milieu."  
T.H. Pear. Perspectives in Modern Psychology.  
B.J.P. General Section. March 1948. XXXVIII Part 3.



The real crisis for man in our day is deeper and more fundamental than that of which Sigmund Freud wrote. "If I were to express our crisis in a formula," says Buber, (114) "I should call it a crisis of confidence." In other words we are today living in one of those epochs of homelessness, of insecurity and uneasiness, in which man has become problematic to himself.

Yet it should be recognised that an element of security, of social certainty may be retained "by a small organic community living in togetherness". It is when the general insecurity is reinforced by the insecurity arising out of a disintegration from within of that small organic community that the condition which Scheler claims to be universal arises. "The divorce between spirit and instincts is here, as often, the consequence of the divorce between man and man." (115)

Buber sums up his discussion of the instructive failure of Scheler's philosophy in these words:

The powerlessness of the spirit which Scheler considers to be original is always an accompanying circumstance of the disintegration of community. The word is no longer received, it no longer binds and orders what is human participation in souls is forbidden to the spirit and it turns aside and cuts free from the unity of life, it flees to its citadel, the citadel of the brain. Hitherto man thought with his whole body to the very finger-tips; from now on he thinks only with his brain. Only now does Freud receive the object of his psychology and Scheler the object of his anthropology -

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(114) Ibid. p.196.

(115) Ibid. p.197.

the sick man, cut off from the world and divided into spirits and instincts. So long as we suppose this sick man is man, man in general, we shall not heal him. (116)

### Prospect.

The attempts to found a philosophical anthropology which we have examined, have gone part of the way, but have failed to give us a whole knowledge of man's being. And the terrible events of our time relentlessly put to us Kant's question: What is Man?

The answers to this question have fallen into two groups, groups which in different ways have tried to reckon with man's homelessness in the cosmos.

In individualism, and the attempts of Heidegger and Scheler fall into this category, man has accepted his solitariness, and has resorted to the expediency of glorifying it. As a result man dwells "essentially" in his own mind, in his own thinking, in his own imagination. And yet, says Buber, it is at this very point that individualism founders for in turning in upon oneself one cannot cope with reality, cannot "conquer the given situation".

Following the failure of the first alternative comes collectivism. A collective aims at providing a "total security", but here man finds no answer to the problem of his solitariness, to the problem of what he is. "Man's isolation is not overcome here, but overpowered and numbed ..



Modern collectivism is the last barrier raised by man  
against a meeting with himself." (117)

Buber's criticism of these two attempts is summed  
up as follows:

... if individualism understands only a part of man,  
collectivism understands man only as a part: neither  
advances to the wholeness of man, to man as a whole.  
Individualism sees man only in relation to himself,  
but collectivism does not see man at all, it sees only  
"society". (118)

The day of individualism as a force is over; that  
of collectivism at its zenith. Buber foresees a day in  
the not far distant future where a genuine third alternative  
will be recognised. By this he means a point of view that  
is neither a modification of either of the first two, nor a  
mere combination of both, one that arises out of a meeting of  
man with man.

When imaginings and illusions are over, the possible  
and inevitable meeting of man with himself is able to  
take place only as the meeting of the individual with  
his fellow-man - and this is how it must take place.  
Only when the individual knows the other in all his  
otherness as himself, as man, and from there breaks  
through to the other, has he broken through his  
solicitude in a strict and transforming meeting. (119)

The third alternative will recognise that "neither  
the individual as such nor the aggregate as such" but man  
with man is the fundamental fact of human existence. "What  
is characteristic of the human world is above all that

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(117) Ibid. p.201.

(118) Ibid. p.200.

(119) Ibid. p.201 f.

something takes place between one human being and another,  
 the like of which can be found nowhere in nature." (120)

This sphere Buber calls that of "between"; it is "a primal category of human reality". It is from this point that the third alternative must begin, and knowledge of it will "help bring about the genuine person again and to establish genuine community".

Buber concludes:

"The central subject of this science is neither the individual nor the collective but man with man. The essence of man which is special to him can be directly known only in a living relation. The gorilla, too, is an individual, a termitary, too, is a collective, but I and Thou exist only in our world, because man exists, and the I, moreover, exists only through the relation to the Thou." (121)

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(120) Ibid. p.203.

(121) Ibid. p.205.

### CONCLUDING DISCUSSION.

This study has sought to bring out the inadequacy of attempting to account for our knowledge of persons by analogical inference and to give grounds for believing such knowledge to be of a primary kind, sui genesis in character, and of equal standing with the modes of our knowledge of ourselves and of the external world. We noted the major contribution to progress of the problem given by the until recently neglected Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, and in the present time by those who have taken their "existential" standpoint from him, Husserl, Heidegger and Scheler.

It is suggested that our knowledge of others is like that of tridimensional space, in that we could not have inferred it prior to our first encounter with it, because it cannot be described in terms other than itself. And further, that although this knowledge is immediate yet it is never given, save in conjunction with the physical form of man.

The philosophy of Martin Buber is the culmination of those "existential" philosophers, and whose standpoints approximate to a greater or less degree to his own.

Buber has not set out to write a complete and comprehensive philosophy, but is concerned with that neglected part of philosophy dealing with person. It is in this connection that we may make some observations.

(1) A Methodical Account:

Although I have endeavoured to maintain the position that the solution to the problem of our knowledge of persons lies along the lines outlined by Buber, Buber himself is not concerned with constructing arguments in favour of his own standpoint. Rather it is (unlike Kierkegaard's) a methodical account or description of the nature of inter-personal life and its philosophical significance. He is, in other words, writing at first hand, and in so far as he criticises and evaluates other philosophers, he does so from what he feels to be the real nature of personal life.

(2) Realism:

With this point of view he is necessarily a realist, drawing his inspiration from those philosophers who have dealt with "existence", rather than with metaphysics.

He differs from a Realist like Bertrand Russell in that he has an altogether richer and fuller concept of person or than Russell's intellectualised and abstracted concept of "self".

(3) Not a Mystical Writer:

Buber has been described by some as a "mystical" writer. Now if what is implied by this term is simply that he has a great capacity for seizing upon the significant in what, to more prosaic minds, appears to be the common place, then it is a correct designation. If, however, "mystical" is taken to mean the absorption of the person

in the act of the direct apprehension of Being, then it is completely inapplicable to Buber. He is a stern critic of such mysticism, which violates the very principle which he is concerned to maintain, namely that person is concrete, entire and existing.

(4) Relation to Kierkegaard:

Buber owed a great deal to the works of Kierkegaard. He accepted and developed the latter's "existential" emphasis, correcting at the same time the distortion resulting from Kierkegaard's aversion to other people. He agrees with Kierkegaard that "crowd" menaces the character of the concrete person, but points out that the opposite error of shrinking from having to do with the "body politic" must be avoided. To be a real person we must be concerned with the body politic. There are no aesthetic elements in Buber's thought; there is no antinomy between "moral man and immoral society". (Reinhold Niebuhr's phrase.) For Buber it is only through others and with others that he comes to know the Absolute. Professor Gibson says of Buber's relation to Kierkegaard: "He appropriates his (Kierkegaard's) formula and extends it to include humanity."

The writings of both are characterised by a burning urgency, by a knowledge that something is "rotten in the State of Denmark" and that they must help to set it right.

The later phenomenologists and existentialists have all contributed something to Buber's thought as he indicates in the essay "What is Man?", but he feels them

to be inadequate, and in his own writings seeks to avoid their failures.

(5) Relation to Dilthey:

During his student days Buber came under the influence of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Professor of Philosophy at Berlin.

Dilthey held the then revolutionary view that philosophy did not arise out of a "Critique of Pure Reason", but <sup>out</sup> part of a "Critique of Historical Reason". By this he meant that philosophy could be understood only as arising out of, as bound up with and reacting upon historical life.

(6) A Non-inferential Element:

The salient point arising from Buber and the new movement is that there is in the ordinary perception of a person, something that remains unaccounted for, something that is basic to a knowledge of other mind. Some may say that this is merely the old dictum - that the sum is greater than the parts. To be sure - this is so, and yet there is a deeper significance attaching to Buber's words "In the beginning is relation".

Now this is what C.C.J. Webb means when he says that perception by itself does not give us knowledge of other person unless there is established "a rapport between the communicating parties which is a direct relation, not analysable into relations of any other kind or explicable in terms of any others." It is what William Stern means when he speaks of a primal element of relatedness out of



which our different levels of awareness arise; a substratum of the mind "that has existence going beyond or prior to the differentiation into the mental and the physical".<sup>(1)</sup>

It is what Sigmund Freud means when he says that the basic experience from which a man commences his life, is the security and close relatedness of the womb.

Buber sees his statement against the background of the experience of primitive peoples, and of the experience of the child's earliest days in our own civilisation.

John Macmurray has a similar point of view when he holds that all consciousness is derived from a primitive religious origin: "All primitive societies are religious. Religion is, indeed, the natural expression of primitive human consciousness ..... the different forms of consciousness ... are, indeed, abstractions of the religious form, derived from it by a limitation of attention."<sup>(2)</sup>

Another writer whose position is similar to Buber and Macmurray on this matter is Dorothy M. Emmet. In a recent article she urges the thesis: "that thinking itself is only possible on the basis of a pre-existing relatedness - that is to say, of communication."<sup>(3)</sup> She cites the tendency of more recent anthropological thought to regard the

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(1) General Psychology from the Personalistic Standpoint. New York: Macmillan (1938) p.69.

(2) The Clue to History. London: S.C.M. (1938) p.27.

(3) Communication Theology. March (1943) p. 53 f.



fundamental experience from which a primitive man starts as the pervasion of his life by the mysterious powers of nature that surround him. Of this she says: "I would suggest that something like this is the fundamental form of experience from which we all start. The idea that we begin by thinking of ourselves as conscious 'subjects' entertaining ideas which we then project on to the world beyond ourselves, is too sophisticated as an analysis of our primary experience."

Emmett arrived at the above view partly through a study of the philosophy of Professor A.N. Whitehead (she is the author of Whitehead's Philosophy of Organism. Macmillan.). Thus when Whitehead speaks of each real thing in the world as a "concrescence of prehensions" he has in mind the individualisation of the basic relatedness of everything in the world. He envisages the "organic connections between things in terms of something like feeling".<sup>(4)</sup> Logical support for this doctrine is found in Hegel's theory of internal relations, and empirical support from recent developments in physics. Further to Whitehead's view Emmet remarks: "The difficulty of Whitehead's thought is due in part to the fact that he is trying to express this fundamental stage of experience prior to the sharp distinction between subject and object."<sup>(5)</sup>

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(4) Emmet. Quoted by Joad in Guide to Philosophy. p.575.

(5) Emmet. Op. cit. p.56.

These philosophers have the same situation in mind as Martin Buber when he says: "In the beginning is relation." It is upon this basis that he builds his philosophy of person. It is against this background that his philosophy implies our immediate knowledge of one another. It is on the basis of this situation that he describes in some detail the nature of the relation between man and man, and the nature of community.

(7) Method of Evaluation:

How is one to evaluate Buber's work? On what grounds should one base criticism of his philosophy?

In the first place because Buber has not constructed a metaphysic, because he has not set out to write a comprehensive philosophical treatise, but simply to give a philosophical account of the nature of inter-personal life, the more usual methods of philosophical criticism are not altogether applicable. It seems to me that an evaluation of his work should first take into consideration the verification of whether or not the events which Buber describes in inter-personal life do actually happen. Second an evaluation should consider whether or not Buber is justified in attaching the philosophical significance he does to these events. For my part, my own experience does verify Buber's account. I feel that I am acquainted with the things of which this man speaks. Some of them I had already formulated in my own mind, though in different words; for others I had to search my experience before I saw the

correspondence. The credibility of his account will depend largely on whether it is felt that he is describing the facts of the situation.

Whether or not Buber is justified in the philosophical implications he draws is more difficult to ascertain. I do not know of any other philosopher who has brought these personal categories into operation in any great detail as a basis for examining the attitude of philosophers towards the question what man is. Others certainly have introduced concrete person into philosophy (Dilthey even speaks of Thou and of I), but they have not methodically considered the whole sweep of philosophy from this basis as Dr. Buber does. His attempt appears to be remarkably successful, for instance his concepts of epochs of homelessness and epochs of habitation of which he makes such good use, might well become central to many future philosophical considerations. Buber, unlike Kant, is not obliged to go beyond this world; neither from a consideration of this world and of experience does he arrive at the Idealist denial of the external world. Throughout his writings we feel his point of view is essentially in line with our knowledge of the personal life.

If, however, one denied that the facts of interpersonal life were as Buber claims, then the philosophical significance attached to them would also be called in question. If we do grant his claim that there is a difference in our attitude to things and in our attitude to

persons, and that the latter are present to us in different degrees of awareness at different times, and that the clue to the nature of person lies in our relations with one another, then we must agree that of these he has given a remarkably clear account, and represented their philosophical significance in a manner that at least claims the serious attention of the philosopher.

### Other Evaluations:

I have discussed Buber with a number of people. All agree that he is "on to something", but while conceding this some have found Buber's approach, for various reasons, disagreeable. They commend his personalism in an impersonal age, but doubt whether his emphasis is intellectually "respectable". I shall now discuss some of these criticisms.

#### (a) The Question of Terminology:

Some stated that they thought his terminology too individualistic, and that his approach would be more acceptable if his terminology was more impersonal. For instance, instead of referring to the It-world he should have used perhaps "objective world".

We must be careful, however, to avoid judging the worth of a philosophy upon our own personal preference. In this case we are not being asked to supply a terminology, and this is Buber's. If we are to discuss Martin Buber then we must be content to use his own choice of words. At the same time we have every right to ask these questions: Does this philosopher's terminology adequately represent the

factors about which he is speaking? Are the terms he uses consistent with one another? Does he apply them consistently throughout his discourse?

A familiarity with Buber's work enables me to answer in the affirmative to these questions.

To be sure Buber is not easy reading, but this is not due to a lack of consistency or clarity, neither is it due to Mr. Smith's translation, which is smooth flowing and seems to have caught the spirit of the author. Its difficulty is due to a complete lack of padding in his writing, to the almost poetic manner of expression he sometimes employs, and to the continual fine distinctions and balances of thought he draws. The difficulty (as with Whitehead) is due mainly to the nature of his subject matter.

(b) An Esoteric Philosophy?

Another criticism was that his work seemed to be esoteric.

What does esoteric mean? It means "meant only for the initiated" (Concise Oxford Dictionary). But that of which Buber is speaking is not the prerogative of the intellectual, or of the mystical, but simply of those who are prepared to recognise that at times we are faced with another person, who confronts us, not as our object, but as another subject. No initiation is required, only the capacity to respond to "person". "There are no gifted and ungifted here," says Buber, "but only those who give



themselves and those who withhold themselves."

(c) The Question of Means of Knowledge:

Some have argued that to really know a person it would be necessary to have known him from a small child and to have had the same constitution and temperament, to have grown up in the same household, school, town, to have had the same adult experiences, in fact to be so absorbed in the other that one would almost cease to exist as an individual.

Buber, of course, disagrees that this is the means by which we come to know another person. (On purely logical grounds it would be impossible to know everything about another person, as this would require us to be anthropologist, physicist, psychologist, physician, biologist and even then we would still only be standing on the threshold of knowledge.) Through such a method, Buber would say, we come to know about another person, about his history, about his present circumstances, about his thoughts, about his opinions (and there are circumstances in which such knowledge is required e.g. "case history" method in psychotherapy), but we still might not know the person.

Buber holds that the essence of the matter in the relation between man and man is often given in a flash. In that instant we feel we are addressed and approached for a reply. It may come about as you are sitting on the same park bench as another man, or when you bump into a person



in a crowded street: it may come about in the most unlikely places. You may not know in the first instance anything about the other at all, and yet you know with complete sureness that someone has stepped into your awareness and addresses you.

This is true of the first instance especially. It is how we first come to know the other at all, and while we necessarily build up our store of knowledge about the persons we know the essence of the relation does not lie in this knowledge of the It - world. Real meeting, Buber says, takes place in the realm of Thou.

(d) The Charge of Irrationalism:

A further suggestion has been that this talk of rapport, of direct knowledge of one another, of a non-inferential element savours of irrationalism. (Buber himself does not use the word rapport, which is Webb's term, but it is descriptive of the relation between an I and a Thou.)

Should "irrationalism" here be taken to mean illogical, then even a fairly cursory reading of Buber will show the care and consistency with which he develops his theme.

I take it that the charge of irrationalism is of a deeper order, namely, a criticism that there is in this account of our knowledge of persons an ultimate element which cannot be analysed, assessed and reckoned in terms of cause and effect.

That there is such an element in this account, and that it is of necessity and fundamental importance is certainly the case.

Now is the charge of irrationalism justified? If Buber were aiming at constructing a systematic metaphysic, a great structure of thought then this criticism would have to be taken very seriously. But such a construction is not Buber's aim. He aims at a treatment of the nature of personal life, not so much as we conceive it, but as it is actually lived. And it is this experience that suggests, to Buber, Webb and others at least, that personal life cannot be subjected to the same analysis as one would give a chemical compound in the laboratory, without doing violence to the relation that exists between an I and a Thou. Even those who might question this, who hold a completely inferential view of our knowledge of one another would feel it strange in conversation to address a friend in the third person. Yet one could imagine this to be in order if there were not an element of immediate knowledge, or a rapport. If there is such a thing as rapport in personal life, as there is such a thing as emotion, then philosophy cannot afford to dismiss it, saying that it is beyond its scope. To do this would be to strip philosophy of those elements which make it personally significant for men, and banish it to the realms of the remote and irrelevant to our experience. The great contribution of the Freudians to psychology has been to direct the attention of

psychologists to the emotional and non-rational elements in the motivation of men. In the same way one of the great contributions to philosophy of this movement which we have been discussing has to face philosophers to recognise as worthy of their intellect problems that are real and significant in the life of men and communities.

If, however, we cannot analyse this non-inferential element, we can (as has already been pointed out) describe it very fully in its own terms, and bring out its significance very clearly. With inter-personalism as the clue, Buber was able to evaluate and criticise the whole field of philosophy on the way philosophers have treated the Kantian questions: What is Man?

(8) Clue to Buber's Thought: The Hebrew Consciousness:

Having discussed some of the individual criticisms which have been levelled against Buber, we may ask ourselves what is the real standpoint from which such criticism is made? What is the underlying attitude out of which they arise?

They arise, I think, from the inability of Western - Renaissance man to grasp the nature of the Hebrew consciousness, and to understand it sympathetically, and while Buber is well versed in European thought and learning, he is a Jew, and writes in the Hebrew tradition of thought. If we are to appreciate his scholarship we would do well to consider in brief that Hebrew consciousness.

We may note in passing that an anticipation of the

necessity for this consideration it will be remembered was given in our account of Kierkegaard's conception of the nature of truth, or more correctly of whole truth. It was there pointed out that the Hebrew and personalised conception of truth was much closer to Kierkegaard's than was the abstracted European conception.

"The reason for this curious inability to understand the Hebrew culture," says Macmurray, "lies in the general habit of thought which characterises Western civilisation ..... it (our habit of thought) is non-religious and, therefore, dualist, and because it is dualist and non-religious it is impersonal. To put it negatively, we are incapable (though not incurably so) of thinking religiously."<sup>(6)</sup> It was the achievement of the Hebrews that they never allowed the secular and the sacred to be split apart, but retained a synthesis of action and reflection. Their culture is peculiarly integral. Throughout their classical literature there is a total absence of an emphasis upon another Ideal world, and upon the immortality of the soul (a doctrine that betrays Plato's lack of appreciation of the true nature of religion). The crown of Hebrew thought is that it retains, as Macmurray puts it, "the capacity to think of this world religiously." This has important results upon the Hebrew conception of community and of history, which have clearly influenced Buber

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(6) Clue to History. London: S.C.M. p.20.

to a marked degree.

Jewish reflection thinks of history as the act of God. Where our historians say, 'Caesar crossed the Rubicon,' or 'Nelson won the Battle of Trafalgar' the Jewish historian says, 'God brought his people up out of the Land of Egypt.' This is no mere concession to religious prejudice, but the continuous form which all Hebrew reflection takes. It means that Hebrew thought is at once religious and empirical. It is religious in that it reflects upon history in order to discover the nature of God and the laws of divine agency.(7)

Unless we understand this background we will naturally find it difficult to appreciate Buber's point of view when he says: "Each concrete hour all other to the person, with its content drawn from the world and from destiny, is speech for the man who is attentive," and again: "What occurs to me addresses me. In what occurs to me the world-happening addresses me."

Further in order to sympathise with Buber's emphasis upon community as opposed to collectivity or to individualism, one must realise that the idea of community is a stock idea of Jewish Thought. Macmurray puts it thus: "One of the most characteristic effects of their retention ... of the religious consciousness is that the Jews never lost the sense of family relationships at the basis of society. Nationality never became an alternative to community. They think of themselves as the Children of Israel." (8)

Hebrew thought is non-dualist, realist, synthetic,

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(7) Clue to History p. 38.

(8) Op. cit. p.34.



historical, existential and personal. Buber has absorbed these elements and re-presented them in a form which claims the serious attention of Western man. In so re-presenting Hebrew thought he has given us a full account of a philosophy of person and of community that accepts as its basic premise a theory of knowledge of one another that is neither an extension of our knowledge of ourselves or of the external world.

His work is significant not only from a philosophical point of view, but from the urgent and practical point of view of a world which the very nature of man, of human existence and of human community is called in question. I cannot do better than to quote Professor Gibson on the significance of Martin Buber in these two aspects.

Of Buber's action in 1936 in publishing his "Question to the Single One", Gibson pays tribute thus: "If more religious leaders and philosophers in Germany had written in this strain in good time as Buber had the courage to do when the Nazis were actually in power, things might have happened differently."<sup>(9)</sup>

And for the significance to philosophy of Martin Buber especially, and of Maratain and Macmurray he says:

Perhaps it is not an accident that leading thinkers of the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant communities should converge on this conception. It is the religious communities, despite their sluggishness and their compromising commitments which have kept alive the vision and the practice of a society of persons who are more than individuals, whose links are mutual and not collective. Now that this theme is exercising

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(9) Gibson. Review of Between Man and Man. <sup>Aust.</sup> A-J- Philos. (May, 1948)



the minds of philosophers and is helping to solve their persistent problems, it is natural that men who have been moulded by the disciplines of their religious enterprise should lead the reformed battalions.(10)

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(10) Ibid.

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