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MARTIN BUBER

(1878-1965)

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Buber's discovery of the world of Hasidism—the impassioned religious movement which swept Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century—has gained him an immense influence in contemporary religious thought. Through the gathering of Hasidic tales, Buber revealed the sources of his own religiosity—the philosophy of an on-going dialogue between man and God—as described in his classical work *I and Thou* (1923). Christian theologians accept Buber as the leading interpreter of Judaism for the non-Jewish world; many Jews—such as the renowned scholar Gershom Scholem—fault him for being a religious anarchist, while among liberal Jews he is regarded as the outstanding spokesman of Judaism in this century.

There are those who maintain that Buber's teaching 'dwells in the clouds of glory'; that his exalted ideas are reserved for a limited circle of disciples and scholars; that his thought is irrelevant in our pragmatic world. Buber would certainly have opposed the tendency to contain his legacy in a golden cage of admiration. In fact, throughout his life he was not only engaged in his own intellectual ventures, such as philosophy, sociology and biblical research, but he was also preoccupied with the burning questions of his time: the meaning of human existence in the modern world; nationalism; the essence of Judaism; Kibbutz socialism; Zionism; and the Jewish-Arab confrontation.

Buber also dedicated himself, initially, with Franz Rosenzweig (1885-1929), to the monumental project of translating the Hebrew Bible into German. Even his abstract theories—such as the principle of dialogue—were applied to psychotherapy, politics, human relations and education. Moreover, during a great part of his life Buber served as an educator, as well as a leading figure in the Zionist movement. He was also a political activist for the cause of Arab-Jewish co-operation—mainly in the framework of the *Ihud* ('Union') movement, aimed at the establishment of an Arab-Jewish bi-national State in Palestine.

'All real living is meeting'

Buber proclaims that 'in the beginning is relation'. He assumes that the human being is, by its very nature, *homo dialogus*; that one is incapable of realizing himself without communion with mankind, with the Creation and with the Creator. The Buberian person can also be defined as *homo religiosus*, since the love of humanity leads to the love of God, and vice versa. The Divine Presence participates in every genuine encounter between human beings, and rests upon those who establish genuine dialogue: 'Above and below are bound to one another. The word of a person who wishes to speak with a human being without speaking with God is not fulfilled; but the word of one who wishes to speak with God without man goes astray.'

Dialogue is founded on mutual response and responsibility. Responsibility exists solely where there is real response to a human voice. Buber's teaching about the responsive word always carries a strict reference to a reality to be confronted and dealt with in the 'lived life'. This is also true in regard to the 'word of God', which should not be conceived just as a theological event but as a real presence to be responded to. Buber asserts that the Bible

testifies to an ongoing dialogue between the Creator and His creatures—an encounter in which man is able to make himself heard.

In his renowned work *I and Thou*, Buber points to the two-fold attitude toward the world: the I-Thou and the I-It relationship. Neither the I nor the Thou lives apart, but exists only in the I-Thou context, which precedes both the I and the Thou realm. Similarly, neither the I nor the It exists separately, but only in the realm of I-It. The absolute I-Thou is only valid in regard to God—the Eternal Thou—and cannot be fully realized in other areas of life—including human relations which frequently tend to sink into the I-It sphere.

The real determinant of I-Thou and I-It attitude toward the world is not conditioned by the nature of the object, but by the way in which one relates to that object. A human being is transfigured into authentic life only by entering an I-Thou relationship, therewith confirming ‘the otherness of the other’. Contrary to the sphere of I-It, the I-Thou relations demands total commitment: ‘The primary word I-Thou can only be spoken with one’s whole being, whereas the primary word I-It can never be spoken with the whole being’. At the centre of dialogue is a meeting between two sovereign persons, who do not intend to impress the other or to make use of him. Buber comments that one can live without dialogue, but the person who never met a Thou is not really a human being.

However, one who enters into the realm of dialogue takes upon himself considerable risk, since the I-Thou demands a total exposure of the I, which may be entirely denied and rejected. While the subjective I-Thou reality exists in the terrain of dialogue, the instrumental I-It relationship is anchored in monologue, which transforms world and mankind into an object.

Within the monological domain, the other is regarded as a thing among things—experienced and used, whereas in the dialogical sphere the other is met, acknowledged and addressed as a particular being. Buber defines monologue as *Erfahrung* (a ‘surface’ experience of the external attributes of the other), or as an *Erlebnis* (an insignificant inner experience), in contradiction to *Beziehung*—genuine relationship which occurs between two human beings.

Buber opposes both the extreme individualistic approach, which perceives man only in relation to himself, and the collective outlook, which does not at all see the individual but only society. He believes that a person can only live in the full sense of the word within the interhuman sphere: ‘On the narrow ridge where I and Thou meet; in the realm of between’. The Buberian ‘betweenness’ should not be considered as routine communication or as a subjective happening, but as an existential reality—an ontic event that actually occurs between two human beings.

The educational relationship

Genuine dialogue is an unusual phenomenon, since the I meets the Thou merely by grace. Buber assumes that one can meet the other by ‘making him actually present’—by entering into his ‘dynamic centre’. ‘Meeting’ a fellow human being is not at all synonymous with empathy. Empathy, according to Buber, means the transposition of oneself into another being, thus losing one’s own concreteness; while dialogue is the opposite of self-limitation—it is the extension of the I. This attitude contradicts the approach of prominent educators as Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and Janucz Korczak (1878-1942), who empathized with their educants to the point of self-denial.

While Pestalozzi devoted his whole life to the well-being of children, Korczak—‘the father of the orphans’—followed the children under his care to the Treblinka Death Camp.

Buber distinguishes clearly between acceptance and confirmation in asymmetric relationship—such as in the realm of education or psychotherapy. Obviously, education cannot

be based upon unconditional acceptance of the pupil as he actually is, but only through affirming his being 'as he has been created to become'. Confirmation is not necessarily identical with agreement, nor does it negate the teacher's task of leading his student in 'the right direction'. Buber remarks that people who are incapable of differentiating between acceptance and confirmation are unable to offer help to those who need their assistance. In his article 'Healing through Meeting' he describes cases in which he had to assist others to find their unique personal direction, even against themselves.

The concept of 'inclusion' in the educational context is one of Buber's major contributions. Inclusion, according to Buber, means the ability to develop a dual sensation among those engaged in dialogue: experiencing oneself and simultaneously perceiving the 'other' in its singularity. The inclusion of a person causes one to 'know' one's fellow human being both physically and spiritually, in the Biblical sense of 'knowing' a lover. Buber illustrates this two-fold sensation of inclusion with an erotic metaphor: a man who caresses a woman who lets herself be caressed, unexpectedly senses the contact from both sides—through the palm of his hand, and through the woman's skin. This two-fold event occurring between two human beings is the actualization of love, which is the expression of responsibility of the I for the Thou.

Buber describes the basic conditions needed for communication in asymmetric settings, such as the educational process, as 'an event experienced by two persons in common, in which at least one of them actively participates; the fact that the active partner of the communion does not forfeit anything of himself and of the reality of his activity'. The hierarchical status between the dominant person and the dependent partner demands not only intimacy but distance as well. Buber assumes that those who become over-involved emotionally with their students (or clients) are doomed to lose their self-awareness and forfeit their professional status. Nonetheless, dialogical moments may be found even in situations of total absence of mutuality. The noble task of the teacher is to be attentive to his students, in order not to 'mismatch' the graced occasions of dialogue, as already noted.

Dialogue requires two basic conditions: sovereign partners and a free choice by both sides to enter into relations. These demands contrast strongly with the educational reality based on the pupils' dependency on their teacher. The schoolroom is characterized by absence of mutuality—being dominated by authority exercised by the teacher upon the young pupils. The inferior status of the pupil leads him to relinquish his own will and accept the choice of the teacher. Moreover, the curriculum is in most cases dictated by the school authorities without taking in consideration the pupils' opinion, and in contradiction to the atmosphere of liberty required by dialogue. Furthermore, the teacher does not select his/her pupils, similarly not only do the students not choose their teacher; in most cases he/she is forced upon them.

Despite the apparent hierarchic relationship prevailing in the educational process, Buber claims that the pedagogical realm is entirely dialogical. The lack of mutuality in education can be bridged, according to Buber, through one-sided inclusion by the educator. The teacher must stand simultaneously at the two poles of the education scene: his own and the student's. While the educator is capable of apprehending his student's being, the latter is unable to comprehend the complexity of the teacher's personality. Buber's follower, the great educator Ernst Simon (1899-1988), said: 'the teacher who feels offended by his pupils is a poor educator, not being aware of the fact that he must understand his students while they are incapable of understanding him. Whenever this asymmetric situation is altered the pedagogical reality enters into a new phase, such as friendship or love.'

Buber indicates that the presupposition of dialogue is the setting of a primary distance between oneself and the other. By setting a distance with the surroundings, one allows the existence of independent opposites—thus creating a ‘world’ to relate to. The distance can either be expanded until turning the other into an object (an It); or narrowed until he becomes an unpredictable Thou. Distance is especially essential for relations characterized by hierarchy. The art of teaching is expressed in the flexibility of the educational boundaries: by setting minimum distance to maintain discipline, and by striving to the maximum intimacy for the promotion of dialogue—essential for genuine learning.

In his article ‘Seeming and Being’ Buber denounces the false life of those whose existence is not determined by their authentic being, but by the impression they wish to make on the other. Those preoccupied with their own image are totally incapable of listening to their fellow human beings. The educator must be truly present in the classroom. Buber argues that teaching in itself does not educate: it is the teacher who educates—while silent and while talking, in the intervals between classes and through occasional discourse. But the teacher educates primarily through his behaviour, by his very being—assuming that he is really present and available.

The exemplary educator and the child

The predicament posed by the question ‘To what must we educate?’ is one of Buber’s major concerns. He sees the exemplary educator in the image of the Hasidic leader—the *Zaddik*: ‘who does whatever he does adequately, and whose main teaching is in that he enables his pupils to participate in his life, and thus become acquainted with the secret of his work’. The intimate interaction between the craftsman in the Middle Ages and his apprentice also serves for Buber as a classical model for the all-embracing influence exerted by the traditional educator, who no longer exists today. He noted that it was only in times when representative human images existed—such as the Christian, the Gentleman, the Citizen, the Biblical scholar, or the *Hasid*—that one could answer the fundamental question about the aim of education.

Buber defines education as ‘the selection of the effective world by a person’. This function is manifest in the educator, whose role is to set order in the chaotic realities of life which overrun the child’s soul. Thus, the educator can be described as a ‘filter’, whose task is to refine the diverse messages arriving from the surrounding. This noble role can only be performed by the educator who comes in person to meet, draw out and form his pupil in a dialogical context. The function of the teacher as a ‘selector’ stands in contradiction to the ‘old’ teacher characterized by a passive acceptance of tradition poured from above (symbolized by ‘a funnel’), as well as the ‘new’ education (represented by ‘a pump’) which pictures education as drawing forth the static powers of the self.

When all other directions fail, there arises the one true direction of man—the way toward the creative spirit of God. Buber postulates that mankind can only keep the image of God by walking in His ways—by *Imitatio Dei* (the imitation of God). In our world of confusion and unease the only way left for a human being is attachment to the attributes of the hidden but not unknown God as described in the Hebrew Bible: ‘The Lord is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in greatness’ (Ex. 44:6). Unlike the Christian, who is capable of imitating the life of Jesus, the Jew is confronted with the paradoxical task of imitating the imageless God in his venture to maintain the element of the divine entrusted to him by God. In the final chapter of his essay ‘Education’, Buber writes: ‘Man, the creature, who forms and transforms the Creation, cannot himself create; but every person can expose himself and others to the creative spirit. And he can summon the Creator to save and perfect his image’.

Buber views the modern educator as threatened by the ‘passions of the soul’: the

Nietzschean ‘will of power’ and the ‘Socratic Eros’. The will of power becomes dominant when the traditional authority of the educator begins to decay; Eros appears when supremacy cannot be exercised. While Eros desires to enjoy the other, the will of power is the inclination to control men.

Both drives are precisely what education is not: Eros chooses its favourites, while the modern educator finds his pupils before him in a chaotic and non-erotic reality. Also, the will of power of the modern educator cannot be fulfilled, since he has lost his social role as an ambassador of his society who conveys ‘the magical validity of tradition’.

Education is conditioned by love rather than by Eros: ‘For if God forms the light and creates the darkness, man is able to love both—to love light in itself, and darkness towards the light’. Buber points to the ascetic character of the true educator, who must control his desires for the sake of his pupils. He has the lofty vocation of influencing his pupils through sharing, but not of interfering in their lives—either by the will of power or by Eros. In education, the will of power must be transformed into communion, and the Eros refined into concern for the pupil. The constructive forces of the world the child needs for building up its personality can be transferred only through I-Thou relations.

The child, according to Buber, is dominated by two autonomous instincts—the ‘originator instinct’ and the ‘instinct of communion’. These two (and not the ‘libido’ or the ‘will of power’) are the keys to education. The Buberian originator instinct is the intrinsic drive of the child to form and shape the world. This positive instinct can never become greed, since it is not aimed at ‘having’ but merely at ‘doing’. The originator instinct is not sufficient, since it does not lead to mutuality and sharing.

The originator is solitary until somebody takes his hand—not just as a ‘creator’, but as a creature lost in the world. The task of the genuine educator is to channel the creative forces of the child in the right direction—toward communion.

The ‘instinct of communion’ is the ‘longing for the world to become present to us’. Buber illustrates this desire by describing a child lying with half-closed eyes in the darkness, waiting restively to experience its mother’s communion in the face of the frightening night. He comments that a harmonious person can only be formed through trust in communion. Hence, the task of the educator is to channel the child’s presence into his own life, into communion.

Buber maintains that ‘true freedom is communion’, rather than the over-permissive modern education, which came as a reaction to traditional compulsion. He opposes compulsion as expressed in the biblical saying: ‘He who spares his rod, hates his son’; yet he also rejects the ‘laissez-faire’ attitude of modern education. Instead, he recommends the exercise of a modified form of authority and criticism—by ‘the raising of a finger’, or by ‘a questioning glance’. ‘Freedom’, which serves as a key to modern education, is just a means and not a goal in itself. The antithesis of compulsion is communion, rather than the unlimited freedom of contemporary education. In contrast to modern egocentric self fulfillment, Buber points at self-realization as a commitment to social responsibility. Self-oriented freedom, which leaves no space for another human being condemns the human being to splendid isolation.

Education by and for peace

Buber does not view himself as the bearer of a universal mission to humanity nor as a spiritual guide to his own people. He states that he has no message to deliver; he can only carry on a conversation. Those who expect to receive from him a firm doctrine will be disappointed. In the darkness of the desert one cannot show the way, but only advise people to wait until dawn, when the right path will unexpectedly appear.

Education, writes Buber, means change—change toward the right and desirable direction. Inasmuch as the immature person has not yet achieved his final inner shape he is subjected to accept order and form. However, Buber warns against the teacher's tendency to impose himself upon his pupils, which threatens to paralyze their integral growth. He suggests that the direction of the child's development should not be forced upon it, but carried out in conformity with its own direction. Buber states that God is the God of liberty, who is capable of constraining man but refraining from doing so, even sharing with him His exalted freedom. By surrendering to compulsion one proves unfaithful to the autonomy granted to him.

Buber points to the image of man reflected in Hasidism as an exemplary pattern for Jewish education. The Buberian *Hasid* is distinguished by ingenuous religiosity—reaching God through love for mankind. The visionary *Hasid* is endowed with joy of life, naiveté and simplicity, as opposed to the traditional Jewish scholar, remote from the real world. Along with the *Hasid*, Buber respected highly the ascetic *Halutz*—the Jewish pioneer, who devotes his life to the upbuilding of Zion. Buber describes the *Halutz* as a 'new type of man', motivated by a national and social vocation.

Nevertheless, Buber came to realize that neither *Halutz* nor *Hasid* could be perceived as normative examples for Jewish modern education. The mission of the *Halutz* in the building up of the land for the homeless people ended with the foundation of the State of Israel, and with the strengthening of the particularistic components at the expense of the universal elements. The same can be said about established Hasidism, which according to Buber, degenerated in the course of time. The main challenge for education remained 'Hebrew' or 'Biblical humanism'.

'Hebrew humanism'—within which Buber sought to anchor Zionism—the movement for Jewish renaissance—is viewed by him as the highest educational value. He envisaged Zionism as 'the path of holiness', as opposed to 'sacro-egoism' of the world. He warned against Jewish chauvinism, maintaining that Israel's behaviour toward its Arab neighbours is not only a political issue, but also an integral part of Judaism itself. Buber claimed that just as anti-semitism challenges the credibility of Christian principles, thus becoming a Christian problem, so does the Jewish attitude toward the Arabs challenge Judaism—thus becoming a Jewish problem. He appealed time and again to the Israeli Jews to strive to live in peaceful co-existence with their Arab neighbours.

The classical Jewish heritage—'the strength of living memory'—serves for Buber as the main source for Judaism. He based his message mainly on the universal values of the Bible, the great document of Jewish antiquity. He stated: 'What the Bible teaches with such simplicity and strength, and what cannot be learned from any other book, is that there is truth and falsehood, and that human existence inexorably stands at the side of truth; that there is justice and injustice, and the salvation of mankind lies in opting for justice and rejecting injustice'.

Buber stresses the paramount importance of ethical education: the formation of the 'great character'—a person committed to social responsibility. He taught that the knowledge of 'good' and 'evil' cannot be imparted through the instruction of ethics; it can only be transferred indirectly—through the involvement of the teacher with his class. The formation of the ethical personality must be based on the pupil's belief that his teacher is not trying to manipulate him, but is truly taking part in his life. Moral education—which Buber defines as 'a battle for the truth'—inevitably bears elements of conflict, which can be dealt with when there is basic trust between the teacher and his pupils.

The Buberian concept of the 'demarcation-line' was one of his most important inputs to moral education. He was aware of the fact that life is, by its very nature, inextricably bound with injustice—particularly in matters of communal affairs. In the face of this tragic reality the human being is forced to distinguish constantly between the minimum amount of wrong

his/her very survival demands, and the maximum good he/she must perform in order to preserve a human image. In regard to the tension between the desirable and the actual the human being is asked repeatedly to draw a demarcation-line between the imperative demands, and the relative possibilities of its fulfilment in daily life. Buber demands that in every hour of fateful decision we should consider how much wrong must be committed to preserve the community, and accept just so much and no more.

Israel's desperate struggle for survival in the Biblical land makes the concept of the demarcation-line particularly apt. Buber realized that the achievement of the Zionist cause would inevitably lead to a certain amount of injustice toward the Palestinian Arab; yet he advocated that this evil should be limited to the absolute minimum. Buber was caught in the dilemma of the need to rescue the Holocaust survivors, and the moral imperative to avoid doing injustice to the Palestinian Arabs. Hence, he called for minimizing the potential evil by living with the local Arabs and not in place of them. Buber stated: 'We do not aspire to return to our ancient homeland in order to dispossess another people or to dominate it'.

Adult education

In the years 1909-11 Buber delivered in Prague his famous lectures on Judaism, to the Jewish student organization *Bar Kochba*, whose members wished to rediscover their forgotten heritage. Even in the printed text one can sense his immense rhetorical force in presenting Judaism as an ever-renewed cultural reality of universal significance. This conception of Judaism stood in sharp contrast to Orthodox Judaism that is founded on the strict observance of the *Halacha*—the Rabbinic Law. Buber's greatest educational achievement was perhaps in motivating two or three generations of entirely assimilated Jews to return to Judaism and to Zion in the context of Biblical humanism.

Buber's outlook of Jewish spiritual regeneration had a great impact on his approach to adult education. Already in 1902, Buber designed the blueprint of a folk-high school for Jewish adult education, based on Biblical humanism. Later he prepared a written recommendation to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to grant adult education a central role in its curriculum. Buber was also involved in The Free Jewish House of Learning, (*Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus*) founded by Franz Rosenzweig in Frankfurt in 1920. Through the lectures presented within the *Lehrhaus* on 'Religion as Presence' and 'The World of Hasidism', Buber exerted a powerful influence on German Jewish life during the pre-Nazi twilight, reinforcing Jewish identity and community coherence.

The Nazi rise to power brought a major change in the Jewish community life in Germany. Long before the extermination of European Jewry, the German Jews were removed from economic and public positions and completely segregated from the cultural life of the country. Their spiritual isolation demanded a radical reorganization of Jewish life. To this end, Buber founded in 1933 the Centre for Jewish Adult Education—serving as its director until 1938, when he emigrated to Palestine. The centre aimed to reinforce Jewish self-awareness and group solidarity by providing the resources for spiritual resistance to Nazi tyranny. Buber's educational message was not directed toward a return to Orthodox Judaism. He encouraged the German Jews to return to the biblical land, for the fulfilment of the great mission—to be 'a light unto the nations'.

From his own experience in Germany (as well as the Danish experience during the Schleswig-Holstein conflict in the nineteenth century) Buber learned that times of crisis offer a golden opportunity for adult education. Buber's greatest educational influence was, indeed, exerted during the dark period of Nazi Germany. He illustrated in practice and theory that adult education can present sustenance in times of despair. Following Jewish basic optimism *vis-à-vis* its torturous history, Buber taught Jews to face disaster without self-deception—

holding on to their faith in the *Rock of Israel*.

After Buber immigrated to Palestine he was active mainly in adult education, along with university duties and political work. His educational work focused on the Jewish collective settlements (the *Kibbutz* and the *Moshav*) whose members, engaged as they were in agricultural work, wished to maintain contact with the intellectual world. A number of outstanding scholars from the Hebrew University, headed by Buber, offered extra-mural seminars to farmers in different parts of the State of Israel. In order to ensure the continuity of this venture, the Institute for Adult Education was established at the Hebrew University (named, after Buber's death in 1965, in his honour).

With the achievement of his physical return and the foundation of the Jewish State, Buber called for a Jewish spiritual revival. He linked the concept of 'Zion' with the idea of justice as envisioned by the Hebrew Prophets: 'Zion shall be redeemed with justice and they that return to her with righteousness' (Isiah, 1:27). He applied this exalted idea especially to the Jewish relationship to the Palestinian Arabs. In his lectures he warned against Jewish ethnocentrism, recalling the 'Golden Rule' of Rabbi Hillel the Elder: 'Do not do unto thy neighbor what is hateful to thee'. He also discussed at length the significance of the verse 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', explaining that through love of mankind we meet God.

The establishment in Jerusalem of the School for Adult Educators in 1949 was undoubtedly Buber's most important venture in the field of adult education in Israel. This school trained adult educators who would cope with the cultural integration of the masses of immigrants flowing into the country after the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. With the establishment of this school, Israel became one of the first countries to offer specialized training for adult educators. The school was influenced by the ideology of the folk high school founded by the great Danish educator N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872). Buber was impressed by Grundtvig's concept of 'the living word', which corresponded to his own principle of dialogue in education. He also adopted the Danish pattern of the boarding school—a living, and learning union—consistent with the Buberian concept of a 'spiritual community'.

Many of the school's students were themselves new immigrants—mainly from Islamic countries. The academic staff was composed of outstanding humanists: Gideon Freudenberg (who served as Director), Ernst Simon, Gershom Scholem, Hugo Bergman, Avraham Halevy Fraenkel and Martin Buber himself. The teachers were most responsive to the pluralistic makeup of the student body—relating not only to Western values, but also to the traditional culture of the Middle East. The teaching was founded on genuine multi-cultural dialogue—along with academic courses on Judaism and humanities, and the imparting of professional skills. The study of the Hebrew language—not only as a means of communication but as a vehicle for Israeli culture—played a major role in the curriculum. Buber's instruction on 'The Hebrew Bible in the Shadow of the Holocaust' was a great source of inspiration to the students.

Buber taught that adult education—unlike children's education—is based on full mutuality between equal partners. Adult education is founded on 'real questions', rather than on Socratic challenges or on preparation for examinations. Buber argued that a genuine educator asks question but rarely offers solutions. Buber believed that adult education should focus on self-learning, and consequently the teacher should provide the student with guidance in educating himself. In the search for the 'truth' the educator contributes his scholastic knowledge, while the students bring to the classroom their collective wisdom gained through life experience. Moreover, the adult cannot be altered by manipulation: the duty of education is not to change the human being but to help him to be what he really is, only more perfectly and more faithfully so.

While the major element of adult education is the principle of dialogue, based on 'real questions', the first object of study is the 'clarification of concepts'. It is here that the Socratic

system begins to hold sway, aiming as it does to perfect man by perfecting his perception. Buber maintains that the clarification of concepts is of major importance, since: ‘Whenever the concepts are incorrect, the words used are not apt; and wherever the words are not apt, actions are not performed’. He points to the lack of clarity in the usage of concepts as the source of empty talk, resulting in confusion and misunderstandings.

Buber taught that Jewish adult education must be founded on reality—‘our social, cultural and political reality at this historical juncture’. At the same time he states that ‘our great national treasure is our prophetic universality’, and that ‘the kind of nationalism that sets apart, that isolates, is alien to the true essence of Israel’. He said that living Judaism can only be taught in such a manner as to restore trust in the meaning of the world and of life to those who have lost faith. To him, education was predicated on trust: trust in one’s fellow human being, who can only be redeemed through meeting a Thou. This Buberian predicament for trust—despite Auschwitz and Hiroshima—is a precondition for genuine humanistic education.

Buber’s educational message

Buber’s educational thought, founded on his philosophy of dialogue, gained him world-wide recognition—especially in the field of humanistic adult education. The Israeli adult education movement was also greatly influenced by his thought. Today, more than forty years after the founding of the Jerusalem School for Adult Educators, Buber’s educational impact is still felt. A number of educational institutions inspired by his teaching are still active in Israel today, among them *Ulpan Akiva* in Netanya and the Martin Buber Institute for Adult Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem—both devoted among other aims to Arab-Jewish rapprochement.

Buber’s theory of education is anchored in his anthropological philosophy. Although his pedagogical thought does not offer a systematic model for teaching, his inclusive message embraces the whole complex of human existence. His teachings on Hasidism are stimuli for moral and religious education; while his Hebrew Humanism is a living source for human solidarity and peace education. He saw education as a lifelong process, in which the main task of the teacher is to motivate the student to self-learning and self-perfection. The paramount task Buber sets for the educator is to guide his pupils from the teacher-pupil communion toward the universal communion.

Buber’s most original contribution to education is the application of his dialogical principle—and especially the element of inclusion—to the pedagogical realm. The same is true of his pragmatic concept of the demarcation-line which we are forced to draw between the ‘heavenly’ values and the ‘earthly’ realities—between the categorical imperatives and the definite possibility of fulfilling them in our unredeemed world.

Note

1. *Kalmon Yaron (Israel)*. Since 1965 director of the Martin Buber Institute for Adult Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Previously director of educational programmes for new immigrants on Israel Radio. Awarded the 1980 New Perspectives Prize for Peace Education and the 1990 Lord Ziev Prize intended to reward an outstanding contribution to Jewish-Arab relations. Author of numerous studies on the Bible, humanistic education, and education for dialogue. Also responsible for the publication of *Studies in Adult Education* (1989, in Hebrew), *The Role of Adult Education in Crisis Situations* (1991), and *Here and Now: Buber’s Message Today* (1992, in Hebrew).

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