

Instinct and circumstance



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Buber believes, that then “ I” of the human is double, and relative to the relationships into which it enters. The “ I” that replies to “ Thou” is vastly different from the “ I” that replies to “ It”. Every act of saying I is an act of being I in one of these ways. I-It is any being as experience, analytic, I-Thou is the being as a relationship, synthetic. There is nothing in particular to be known about the Thou, it can only be understood in its wholeness and not known. We see it clearly and yet cannot tell the details.

I-Thou comes before I-It, it is the basic “ main word”. It is the first comprehension of the Other. But I-Thou is doomed to be come I-It as we familiarize ourselves with it and find a utilitarian approach to the Other. And yet I-It may become I-Thou if the scrutinizing man chooses to further the relationship and not look at the details of the one with who he is interacting, but at its essence. Still, it is impossible to live in the I-Thou mode constantly, for it is being only in the present and paying attention only to the present.

Deep and essential it may be, and yet fickle and does not bode well for survival. As Buber puts it, “ The human being cannot live without the It. But the one who lives only with the It is not a human being”, as these few fickle moments are the most direct manifestation of what makes us human - our ability to dialog directly. A growing civilization means a growing world of It, because each new civilization gathers within itself the “ It” of the previous culture.

It is usually falsely called a growth of spiritual life, but this is not true: spiritual life is the domain of the I-Thou, a response to the Absolute, while the growth of cognitive capacity generally diminishes the capability for having a true Relationship. The I-It word is nothing bad, unless it attempts to

take the place of its rightful counterpart, as one is useless without the other. If one divides the "spheres of interest" of the Thou and It, he will get communities with nothing in common on one hand and feelings without substance on the other, a divided and sad existence.

Buber speaks of two opposite pairs: of freedom and destiny and of necessity and fate. The first belong to I-Thou, the second to I-It. Destiny is a measure of self-actualization: only the person who has achieved freedom and understood what he is and what he truly desires can find his destiny. On the other hand, he who gives in to the laws of necessity and causality and does not act from the very depths of his being discounting causality meets the jaws of fate as his form of existence.

He is the toy of the forces beyond him, while the man who follows his destiny rides the waves. Any culture generally starts on the impulse of I-Thou and declines on I-It, as does the human being. Buber differentiates between the Will and the self-will. The first is the grand impulse to meet with one's destiny, to participate in the dialog. The second is merely the fickle desires of the limited human being, the lesser will controlled by instinct and circumstance. It is up to every human to choose what path he will take.

This is the difference between individuality and personality, between learning one's boundaries by creating more of them or by destroying them - the result, in the end, is one and the same, but how different the experience! It is the choice between living in a mortal world or of mingling - even but momentarily - with Eternity itself. By relating the boundaries of the I-Thou one shapes them, as well, and creates them in a living response to outside circumstance, in dialog with it.

By putting up walls in the I-It relationship, one distances oneself from the world, and is unable to react to any situation at hand, he may merely remember and try to act according to experience. There is no external difference between how the men in I-Thou and in I-It live. Both interact with the outside world, the man in I-Thou does not stop seeing the differences between things, lost in dialog. The difference is internal. For the man in I-Thou it is all a part of one living dialog. For the man in I-It, things are separate and only vaguely related.

The man in I-Thou is interdependent on his dialog with the Absolute, but the Absolute is dependent on him, as well. The man in I-It thinks himself free but is dependent upon a thousand things. These two states are strangely interrelated. The stronger the It takes its hold on the I, the stronger the epiphanies the personal relationship of the I-Thou variety brings. Only through the greatest darkness will there be the greatest light, only through the loss of the word - dialog, only by going to the edges of fate can we know freedom, and through causality we learn the ways of destiny. Such are the cycles of the world in its eternal revolution.