

across what is recognizably European and Indian terrain to end in the Himalayas. In the course of their encounters with various people, including representatives of the Peace Movement, war-refugees, academics, statesmen, and even rough-necks, they evolve a code or ethics of mutual abstention which governs their interactions amongst themselves and with their environment. This ethic does not provide an answer to their questions, but by deactivating the competing irrational beliefs that fuel contention, conflict, and warfare, it creates a neutral field for new insights. In a real sense the travelers form a *community*, not God-centered as in tradition, but united by a common bond of trust both in themselves and in a solution waiting to be discovered. In their self-confidence they are heirs to *modernity* and the Enlightenment; in their common faith in the Mystic's yogic insight they connect to the *Oneness* visions of Asia, which *do not question evidence* (i.e. do not conflict with fact and reason). Thus, they combine features of all three traditions, individuality, community and Oneness. Ultimately, they reach their destination and discover the answer to the three paradoxes which have been the subject of their debates and arguments. This knowledge is not retained as rational insight for posterity but disappears with the members of the group for, says Mallik, there cannot be a dogmatic proclamation of a new Truth. Truth has to be won and experienced anew by all individuals and peoples. In this respect, despite his metaphysical proclivities, Mallik resembles Buber in proclaiming a *method* of discovery and an existential goal rather than a new 'ism,' but unlike Buber's, his method incorporates debate and discussion as a preliminary to the final consummation which is more than just a conclusion.

There is no social counterpart here to Buber's existential 'immediacy' and 'intimacy' though there is a promise of "intimate contact' and 'warm relationship.' Mallik confined himself to providing a philosophic grounding for universal relatedness, echoing Buber's mistrust that mere philosophy or metaphysics in the classical mold cannot deliver its promised security, because "the question about man's being faces us as never before in all its grandeur and terror, no longer in philosophical attire, but in the nakedness of existence."<sup>64</sup> Concrete reality is the starting and ending point of philosophy. There is indeed a sharp distinction between bare categories and their concrete instances, but in action only the concrete is involved. For example, one never desires freedom in the abstract but always freedom for a particular person, community, or nation.

In this unusual book Mallik for once makes explicit his ideas on the relationship between academic disciplines especially history and philosophy, with the perceptiveness and intuition ascribed to practicing mystics. Mastery of yoga does not simply benefit the practitioner alone, but is relevant for the common human life. Yogic insight can provide faith, a promise for future understanding, but it does not trivialize or negate the necessity of intellectual and rational comprehension. This goes hand in hand with his logical rejection of conventional

notions of the absolute, whether Brahman, *Nirvana*, or whatever: indeed he shifts the meaning of illusion from mistaking the contingent world for the real to attributing absoluteness to the non-absolute. Since 'absolutes' are intimately tied to opposing philosophico-societal values which lead to conflict, illusions are ultimately about history as well. Mallik proffers an insight into history that can help discern these traps and dissolve the miasma that obscures clarity of thought regarding the human condition. The truth promised by the mystic, therefore, is not within the strict traditions of either Jerusalem, Kailash, or Athens, but a fulfillment of all three, in that the mystery of the common ground behind all of them, which would reveal the common purpose of mankind, is the grail that is waiting to be, and can be, discovered.<sup>65</sup>

The movement toward this truth through debate and discussion on various aspects of fact and value emphasizes that it is only through honest dialogue that one may reaffirm what the nightmares have shattered, 'a home in the universe.' Indeed, in the "Epilogue" referred to above, Mallik ends on a visionary note:

The civilized man of the future need no longer be afraid of his environment, whatever its appearance; he should be in a position instead to look for intimate contact or warm relationship, whether in the midst of a desert or the depth of a forest or in the heart of the animal world, just as much as he hopes to do in the society or company of men...

*And the home of civilized man after this can be built only in the heart of the universe rather than on the mere shores of a lake or the peak of a mountain, or the arboreal shelter of green-flowing meadows. And the vision that will lead him on from moment to moment or age to age, or from one birth to another, will spring from his undying faith in immortality — his divine attribute — to keep on moving till all the shores of the limitless oceans of profound mystery have been reached.*<sup>66</sup>  
(italics added)

The 'home' or security of which all are in search, therefore, can no longer be found in a particular civilizational or external manifestation. It has to rest securely on faith in the possibility of understanding the reality underlying the universal predicament. The constitution of the group of seekers and their interactions with the surrounding human and non-human environment demonstrate the essential relatedness of all beings and their essential inner equality or lack of inequality.



### Part III: Relatedness and Individuals

Individuals and their relationships formed the fulcrum for the thought of both philosophers. If Buber emphasized relationship as in a sense even prior to individuality as "the radii before the points," Mallik saw the historical universe as one in which related individuals or "related multiplicity" are an indissoluble given, regardless of the psychological processes of individual growth and perception. As pointed out, Buber aimed to restore relationship and community in a universe seemingly reduced to atomized individuals or abstract collectives. Mallik used related individuality as a central building-block for a new kind of society different from received individual, community, or group-centered types.

Buber was heir to a philosophical tradition in which individuality had always been a central element, despite the widely differing circumstances pertaining in the classical city-states and Judeo-Christian communitarian history. In Mallik's background, at the other extreme, lies the radical monistic statement of Vedānta, that Reality is One, and even when this monism is modified to include some differentiation and accommodation for individuals, they are never central to the discourse. With the onset of the modern age, individuals have emerged out of the shadow of divine containment and eschatology into a more self-conscious light. They are viewed as the sole repositories of reality and value, despite the philosophical problems relating to epistemology and communication. Indeed, individualism has become almost the common sense of the modern age, a common sense so 'obvious' that proof for its certainties is assumed and not always demanded. At the same time, the burden of individualism has come to assume critical proportions.

Buber was at pains to establish the priority and apriority of relation. Relationship is primary: "In the beginning is relation — as category of being, readiness, grasping form, molds for the soul; it is the *a priori* of relation, the *inborn Thou*." Relation, which Buber describes as 'lived' relation or 'whole' relation, is the true original *unity*. "There is no *I* taken in itself, but only the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* and the *I* of the primary word *I-It*." Unity is not undifferentiated oneness, but a relational gestalt, an experience in which there is, in primitive societies for example, no clear dualistic distinction between self and others or self and the natural world, but all are closely involved with and interacting upon one another. In this condition of relational density, there is no clear sense of 'I' separate from others and the world. All experience is relational, and through the constant experience of being impacted by a perceived '*Thou*,' a separation of *I* and *Thou* is effected, which opens the possibility of the second primary perception *I-It*. The natural world also enters into relational experience, but passively in contrast to the mutuality of relationships between humans; both animal and plant worlds participate in some kind of *I-Thou* mutuality.



There is a parallel evolution in the new born baby's sense of weak '*I-ness*' coupled with strong '*Thou-ness*,' which gradually evolves and is trained into a bi-focal vision based on a strong *I*. "It is simply not the case that that the child first perceives an object, then, as it were, puts himself in relation with it. But the effort to establish relation comes first.... second is the actual relation, a saying of *Thou* without words in the state preceding the word-form; the thing, like the *I*, is produced late, arising after the original experiences have been split asunder and the connected partners separated." From this situation to the post-Cartesian world of scientific objectivity is a long and seemingly inevitable journey. Buber has no essential quarrel with the epistemology of science. But it has reached critical proportions in that in the current predicament the *I-It* appears to have almost extinguished the possibility of the emergence of *I-Thou*, and that is the hallmark of alienation.

To combat this Buber sought, through the Kantian structure of the *apriori*, to establish relationship as a fundamental mode of being. His adoption was a modification of both the 'categories.' The relational *apriori* is not an epistemological category like space and time, a universal dimension of perception and knowledge, but it is *apriori* in so far as it structures human relationships within the world. The relational *apriori* also resembles to some extent the categorical imperative, in so far as it is attitudinal and volitional, and gives rise to immediacy. It is grounded in a primal reality but it operates freely without necessity. So when Buber speaks of the *apriori* of relation, he describes a process which emerges from a largely undifferentiated containing "cosmic" gestalt of universe and child. Although he also tries to speculatively recreate the weakly differentiated world of the primitive, he speaks more confidently about child-development as an observable phenomenon.

The unborn baby's experience in the antenatal period, he avers, has a "cosmic quality" through an organic "knowledge of the universe." This primal human world is one of organicity and containment where the cognizing or relational '*I*' is not manifest. Once the body of an individual is delivered into the world, it can grow into full being only through relating. As the child gradually separates from the mother, each act of physical and psychic distancing reinforces experience of the world as for itself, not for the yet unformed *I*. But this separation is at the same time compensated by a spiritual reconnection with the *mother* through relation, which evolves into what Buber describes as not *experience* of the mother, because experience always appropriates the other into oneself, but "*correspondence with what is alive and effective against him*," a *Thou*. This *Thou* is projected onto all that is "bodied over against him," and gradually self-consciousness, consciousness of an *I* over against the various *Thous*, comes into existence through this alternating separation and relation. Only after the *I* and *Thou* are established, does the possibility of the *I-It* appear.



### The Threshold of Speech

Paradoxically Buber's conceptualization of primal antenatal organic existence, as both a cosmic and metacosmic state of knowledge, has no 'I' as knower or cognizer. Given his logic of evolution, one is tempted to trace the continuance of this state into the differentiated world, as the supporting environment out of which relations emerge and from which the Thou and I gradually separate.

Buber would not be comfortable with a spatial metaphor however; primary relations not only alter but create environment — indeed, relation supersedes the preceding environment. Again, the 'Between' might almost suggest primal being or the residuum of the metacosmic state of knowledge. But it is a creation, for it is created by the address of the primary word, and Buber clearly distinguishes primary undifferentiatedness from the Between. Conversely he suggests that the experience of undifferentiatedness in meditation is a regression to this primary state of being. The *Between*, which Buber also calls God or Spirit, is an element of a *differentiated* situation, and 'hallows' the meeting of the I and Thou which has summoned it into presence. Again, he also says that "spirit is the word," in seeming contrast to his pronouncement that the two primary words *create* relation and experience through the *silent address*. In relating to nature or 'spiritual beings,' the former "hovers on the threshold of speech" and the latter though silent, *begets* speech.

It is only in the archetypal human relationship that spirit is manifest as speech: yet again, the word as speech is not within man, but *man takes his stand in speech* "and talks from there," a difficult yet compelling metaphor. The linkage between spirit and language has, apart from Biblical and Cabbalistic overtones (though admittedly, Cabbala has more of an alphabetic-syllabic orientation), suggestions of the Upanishadic *sabdabrahman*, if not Tantric *nadabrahman* with its distinctions between *vaikhari*, spoken speech and *anahata*, 'unstruck' or unuttered pre-spoken sound.

Buber implicitly emphasizes the primacy of the word, which is Spirit, which is metacosmic knowledge, which again suggests the conflation of being and knowledge. Thus the ontology of the Between is multilayered, exhibiting polarities between mysticism (a step short of *nirguna brahman*) and dialogue, showing that Buber's intended bouleversement of 'mysticism' is far from complete. But as the bridge between two subjects, it equally emphasizes the presence of the Other as person, whether human or Eternal. Silence, adds Buber, is the ultimate relationship, where the spirit is present but leaves the Thou free. Once the spirit manifests in uttered speech, the Thou can, but need not immediately be, pulled into the world of the It, which he describes as "the melancholy of man and his greatness. For that is how knowledge comes about, a work is achieved, and image and symbol made, in the midst of living beings."<sup>67</sup>



### Becoming I and Thou

The evolution into a full-fledged I-consciousness and It-world is a gradual but not passive process. Experience does not flow into the senses from outside, but the individual engages in actions and is acted upon by that which Buber describes as being "over against" him, so that the emergence of the I entails constant wrestling with the environment. Indeed, the *effort* to establish relation precedes its realization as instinctively the child stretches out its hand towards its mother, followed by a silent address to her as Thou. Buber would like to say that before the child knows the mother as such, or any other person or object in his surroundings, he wants to relate to something, anything "over against him," an interpretation of the apparently aimless clutchings of infant hands. Initially relation, therefore, is perhaps *toward* rather than *with* a Thou (for the instinct of the child is to view every person or thing as Thou), "as category of being, readiness, grasping form, mold for the soul; it is the *a priori* of relation, the *inborn* Thou."<sup>68</sup> The Thou gradually becomes accessible across the distance of separation, until such time as the individual can reach the stage of almost viewing itself as another Thou. These are the beginnings of self-consciousness, of entering into "relations of consciousness of itself."<sup>VI</sup> Only after this does it become possible to experience the world as an It for the I. The It as mode of perception exists before things as logically implied by the primary cosmic world. Prior to self-consciousness the It was, so to speak, an It in Itself, a neutral environment 'out there.' But post discovery of the Thou and the I, the distancing experiences push back the frontiers of the Thou again and again, till the subject shrinks to a functional point, and appropriates the It existing 'in and for itself' to form the I-It 'word.' In fact primal distance is the basic presupposition of all human relations.

Thus, a generally projected Thou consciousness is followed by an 'I' consciousness, and a reconnection established through the relational I-Thou. This process exemplifies the *a priori* of relationship. Last of all, the 'It' world of objects separates from the Thou, and appropriation of the world as experience can begin. The instinct toward the Thou relation and, derivatively, toward the It relation, is *a priori* in so far as it is inborn and self-developing, preceding all discursive knowledge; however, although the Thou and It are alternative ways of relating to Reality, and the Thou in fact, precedes the It, the individual may choose to abandon the Thou relationship altogether, but as an *a priori* it is always recoverable.

Buber differentiated between individuality and personhood. There is no I taken in itself, but only the I of the primary relational words. The I of the I-It expresses individuality when it differentiates itself from other individualities, appropriating them as part of its own experience, or experiencing the world with the aim of using it. By contrast the I-Thou puts the 'I' into the mode of becoming a person, through the relational mutuality which engenders subjectivity in both participants, and the "personal actualized being" gradually emerges. Thus the 'I'

in both cases is not the same.<sup>69</sup> However, Buber allows that the same 'individual' may relate to another as Thou and/or It, i.e., an enduring center alternates between the modes of relation and experience, almost implying three entities, two I's and the bodily individual.

On the relationship between 'body and self,' Buber disconnects the 'I' of the Thou word from the instinctual drive for self-preservation or any other bodily instinct. The body is cousin to the I of the I-It as a world-appropriating, manipulative and exploitative center and not its opposite. One might oppose body with 'person,' a combination of the I's of Thou and It. Again, given his theory of the development of the I's during infancy and childhood, preceded by a non-subject-object antenatal cosmic containment, the enduring individual is more than just a bodily center, which, from the beginning, is host to a larger-than-physical awareness; and thereafter to the primary words.

Both words of address are primary. The world appropriated as It is the perceived law-governed universe ruled by causality which the scientist investigates and puts to technological use. So long as it is counterbalanced by a world where genuine meeting is possible and remains in creative polar tension with it, the purposes of both individual and true community can be served. However historically the world of manipulation has exhibited a tendency, not always uniform, to expand and overtake the other. When the capacity for encountering the Thou is lost a kind of dichotomous or schizophrenic existence ensues. A man (Buber used 'man' for humankind and 'person' for an evolved-into-relationship human being) is divided between the external meretricious institutions of the public world, where no real public life can be conducted, ("an animated clod without a soul") and the meretricious private world of feelings (an "uneasily fluttering soul-bird") incapable of supporting real personal life.<sup>70</sup> Should the individual lose the capacity to return to the Thou world, personhood is lost, and community degenerates into a de-humanized mechanically-ordered society.

And in all the seriousness of truth, hear this: without It man  
cannot live. But he who lives with It alone is not a man.<sup>71</sup>

Buber has been faulted for failing to provide a philosophical grounding for the I-Thou.<sup>72</sup> The I-It is clearly a subject-object experience, both intentional and cognitive, whereas Buber affirms awareness of the total otherness of the Thou without analyzing how this is possible without loss of subjectivity, and fails to produce a theory of cognition for the subject-subject relationship. Buber was, of course, dissatisfied with the subject-object theories of received philosophy and strove to describe an apperception which is not one of normal cognition or pure emotion (purely subjective), or even volition (it comes as "grace"). It hovers at the critical edge between philosophy, poetry and/or mysticism, and explains the



exasperation of several philosophers with his writing, and the difficulties earlier alluded to of classifying Buber's work. However as metaphor, as an attempt to expand the meaning of both secular and Jewish life for the modern individual, to integrate different elements of mysticism and relationship into a community framework, it is imbued with cultural significance.

Doubts have also been cast on the narrow polarization of the I-Thou and I-It, which excludes other forms of relatedness. Buber suggested that any third experience is basically confused, although he stressed that the I-Thou experience fundamentally alters the quality of relationship with the one who alternates between Thou and It. One may add that in any society or community, individuals do not necessarily exploit or objectify one another, but as often display a basic decency and respect for one another which are not necessarily the results of experiences of immediacy, but attitudes stemming from beliefs, nurturance, conducive social environments, education or whatever.

### **Non-Relational and Relational**

Buber analyzes both mystical concepts of absorption into unity/Brahman or nullity/*nirvana*, as constituents of the world of It. The It world is governed by causality, essentially experienced by the I through use and appropriation. Neither Brahman nor *nirvana* fit this description, but that is not Buber's main point. The crux of the matter for him is the role of I in mystical experience, and its divorce from "lived reality." Experience is a paradoxical concept in the mystical context; as Buber says, experience is always experience of something, of an object, and the object is appropriated into, is part of, the individual's experience. In mystical 'experience,' however, the object disappears, and Buber presumes that what remains is an ego which claims to embrace the universe. However the ultimate mystical experience is non-relational and cannot by definition be I-anything. As he says in other contexts, it rather resembles antenatal pre-relational metacosmic knowledge.

Despite the absence of subject object experience, Indic practitioners, when seeking a linguistic description, often, for want of appropriate terminology, use either category in a meta-formulation, the subjective Self or objective Thatness, sometimes personalized as Thou. The different stages of meditation take the practicant through treating the whole of the body-mind complex as an object as described in the *Katha Upanishad* chariot metaphor. What objectively looks at this I object can be named the 'Self,' but it has no individual particularities. Through cultivated detachment, the relational I and its objects of concentration finally drop away, even the formal dualism of the Aham Brahmasmi, and what remains, is non-relational or trans-relational being (Vedanta) or non-being (Buddhism), the bliss of sheer consciousness or awareness, different from simple unconsciousness or lack of consciousness.



Being a practical exercise, it is better judged by its effects on the personality than its necessarily paradoxical theory (though it is not a deliberate celebration of paradox). The ultimate state cannot be maintained on a continuing basis, and alternates with ordinary but improved mental, emotional, and physical activity, somewhat echoing the effect of the I-Thou on the I-It. The 'ordinary' world of relation is not belittled: several interpreters find the non-relational and relational to be two aspects of reality; the experienced/relational world is illusory only when and in so far as it exhibits exclusive claims to reality.

When Buber discarded both the experience and theory of mysticism, he discarded his own understanding of mysticism as rejection of relationship and society. What could never leave him, however, was the experience of immediacy (which he insisted did not diminish the reality of the I-Thou), of timelessness (if one uses the Bergsonian concept of duration as opposed to measured linear time), of the 'word' that cannot be uttered (including the pre-articulated word), and of the richly colored Between. All these bore strong evidence of an enduring mysticity now arising in the space between self and other instead of in pure self-direction.

### Individual Centers of Reality

In turning to Mallik's account of individuals, we step back into a metaphysical world, where the philosopher perceives his task as one of providing *evidence* for what is.<sup>73</sup> He sees the basic stuff of the historical universe as multiple centers in "deep and intimate relationship with one another" across all space and all time. An unrelated individual is absurd. Obviously all, or perhaps most, centers are not aware of this universal connectedness. One can extend Mallik's doctrine of illusion to account for the ignorance of individuals regarding their true proportion and relatedness to one another. The independence and uniqueness of an individual center is not diminished by its capacity to enter into relationship: an individual cannot be defined without it. As an existent, and with the onus of "keeping out the negative or non-existence," it has to co-exist along with the discontinuous universe, i.e., it has to be present from its beginning to its end. Ergo, the different beginnings and endings within the discontinuous universe are links in a chain — all entities are continuously present, though changing their individual and communal histories.

Individuals are *centers of reality* in the contingent historical world of beginning and ending known as the Discontinuous universe. The Discontinuous results from the interplay of the dual possibilities of non-absolute being and non-absolute non-being. Mallik argues that since this world is non-monistic, it must contain multiple instances of all possibilities (where there is not one, there can only be many). Commonly one *experiences* multiplicity and *derives* the concept of unity through reflection, but to avoid the two-world theory of