

REVIEWS

Dialogical philosophy in Martin BUBER's *Ich und Du* and the recent work of Jurgen HABERMAS, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns**.

It would be superfluous to write at the present moment a review of Martin Buber's "Ich und du", the ninth edition of which appeared in Heidelberg (1977). (Verlag Lambert Schneider), while its first printing brings us back to 1923 and the last edition contains a "nachwort" written in October 1957. Buber's work has been widely analysed, and nobody who ignores him can be said to be fully aware of twentieth century philosophy. However, the theme of the work is still living; in French speaking countries, one could only wish that the many who admire and use the beautiful but difficult contributions of Emmanuel Levinas would return sometimes to this simply written treatise by Buber. They would find the essential themata of Levinas already present, in the poetical, quasi Nietzschean style of Buber. We, as human beings are the center of two basic relations: the relation "I and you" and the relation "I and it". But — this is essential — these relations are by no means exclusive of each other: the "You" is necessarily always becoming partially an "It" because the different "Yous" can only be related to each other in the space and time of the "It" and on the other side, the "Its", stone plant, animal and universe can also enter with us into a relationship that has many properties in common with the "I-You" relationship. In fact, Buber's God is nothing else than the "You" being the universe that either appears or is absent, as the "You" of another human being, of a work of art, of a landscape appears or is absent. Martin Buber is not mentioned in the encyclopedic work of Jurgen Habermas "Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns" (2 volumes; Suhrkamp 1981). Yet if Habermas divides thought essentially in two types "the instrumental" and "the communicative" (the third type, the emancipatory one is in a sense a mixture of both) then he follows, (applying his immense empirical erudition and taking into account the sociological contributions of Durkheim, Parsons, Marx, Piaget, Schutz, Weber, Luhman and so many others) essentially the bipartition (without exclusiveness, it is to be hoped, though this point is — paradoxically — more clearly made by Buber than by Habermas) between the two radical relationships between the "I and the You", the "I and the It". This short note is not meant to be a review — evidently — neither of Buber nor of Habermas. It is only the expression of an astonished reader. Neither Buber nor Levinas are quoted by Habermas, and neither of them is present in the list of readings at the end of Habermas' treatise. To be sure: these two philosopher-poets, and sociologists-philosophers of religion stand far away from the social science atmosphere that constitutes the richness of Habermas' contribution. Still it is worth while to give tradition its due place: the essential tension of Habermas's work (between instrumental and communicative knowledge) is strongly analogous to the essential tension of Buber's one "I-You" and "I-it". Even politically Buber is close to Habermas; we know that Buber was an utopian socialist (and wanted to be called by that name); we also know that Habermas's life work is an attempt to restate Marx's "essential" contribution on foundations. Both however believe in the possibility of the

internal and the external revolution, because (this is taken over from Hölderlin by Buber in 1923, long before Heidegger ever made the sentence famous) "Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst das rettende auch". (*Ich und Du*, p. 68), when I encounter You I am aware of the fact that another universe than mine is possible and equally worthy, yours, and that I should (instrumentally) organise society in such a way that this truth can be known by all. Let us, at the present moment (1984), when dialogical philosophy knows wide recognition, not forget its origins.

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*BUBER, M., *Ich und Du*. Heidelberg, Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1977, 9. Auflage).

Habermas, J., *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*, 2 vols., Suhrkamp, 1981.