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# *Despite Everything*

Buber's eviction from his residence in Talbiya initially proved to be a happy turn of fortune, for the apartment he and Paula found in Abu-Tor, a picturesque largely Arab neighborhood, brought them great joy. From their apartment, situated just above the Valley of Hinnom, they had a marvelous view of the Old City, Mount Zion, and the golden Dome of the Rock. And whereas their residence in Talbiya had been the only structure in the immediate vicinity of the relatively new neighborhood and thus socially isolated, Abu-Tor was a vibrant, friendly area, and a model of good relations between Jews and Arabs. Paula was particularly pleased that the wife of their landlord, Jussuf Wahab Dajani, spoke fluent German. The convivial spirit that reigned in Abu-Tor also delighted Martin. One of his Jewish neighbors often and admiringly observed him "in his conversations with members of his family, with his Arab servant Jalil, with Jewish students and Arab neighbors, with notables, scholars, and clergy from many countries and of many creeds, and even—especially—with children. In observing his phenomenal gift of communicating, I cannot recall one instance when Buber would have withheld himself."[1] At his home in Abu-Tor, Buber would host several study circles: one on the Hebrew Bible, another dedicated to the poetry of Hölderin, and yet another on contemporary political issues.[2]

Alas, this congenial and intellectually engaging setting was shattered in November 1947 by the outbreak of hostilities between the Jews and Arabs of Palestine. As troops of the Arab Liberation Army marched on Jerusalem, threatening to occupy Abu-Tor, friends prevailed on Paula and Martin to flee to safer quarters in Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem—especially after thirteen bullets were shot through their previously tranquil apartment, piercing, among other things, a portrait of Buber by the renowned painter Emil Robert Weiss.[3] The Anglican archdeacon Graham Brown picked them up in his car bearing the flag of the church. They left behind virtually all their possessions, including Buber's vast library and their beloved nine cats.

The Jewish defense forces, the Haganah, subsequently set up a position in the Abu-Tor apartment, barricading themselves with some of Martin's books. Although the Haganah soon retreated, and a contingent of Iraqi volunteer troops occupied Abu-Tor, Buber's library and possessions otherwise remained untouched; his Palestinian landlord had placed them in a locked room for safekeeping. In the meantime, Paula and Martin had taken up residence at Pension Grete Asher in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Rehavia, where they soon, on February 8, 1948, celebrated Buber's seventieth birthday.

To mark the occasion, Magnes published in the Ichud's journal reminiscences of his and Buber's friendship, which extended back to when they were both students at the University of Berlin. Magnes left to others to discuss Buber's achievements, but for his own part wrote, “I cannot help but devote my words to the tragic events that have transpired during these days when you are entering the ‘club’ of the hoary septuagenarians,” with Buber now “witnessing the failure of almost all the things that have been dear to you. In *Eretz Yisrael*, the house of Israel has turned into a nation like all nations [an allusion to 1 Samuel 8:5], and does not believe in the religious and ethical mission of the people of Israel. . . . You see how all your efforts to instill into the people a spirit of mutual understanding with its neighbors is coming to naught.” Magnes then raised the cardinal question of Buber’s life work: “You combine within yourself two spiritual qualities that, viewed superficially, are in conflict with each other: you are capable of seeing reality as it is, but also the spiritual reality as it is. Can these two realities be reconciled?” He concluded his birthday greetings by wishing for Buber the courage to continue, “despite everything, your struggle against the prevailing reality, as you always have, that you may be vouchsafed a long life until you are permitted to witness God’s return to Zion and to compassion.”[4]

Buber would, indeed, continue his struggle “despite everything.” He had long resisted the despair that had gripped some of his contemporaries, who had withdrawn from the struggle for Arab-Jewish understanding, abandoning what they regarded as a hopelessly sinking ship. In 1929, one of Buber’s closest disciples, Hans Kohn (a devoted Zionist since 1909), had left the Zionist movement to which he had devoted twenty years of his life, having concluded that the Zionist project would by its very nature lead to a ceaseless conflict with the Arabs—an unacceptable prospect. As he explained in a letter he wrote to a friend on November 21, 1929: “I am not concerned with Ishmael, only about Isaac, that is, our aims, our life, our actions. I am afraid we [Zionists] support actions for which we cannot vouch. And because of a false solidarity we shall sink deeper into quagmire. . . . Zionism is not Judaism.”[5]

Kohn was especially close to Buber, and would soon complete an authoritative biography, first published in 1930: *Martin Buber: Sein Werk und seine Zeit.* In this still unsurpassed study, which traces Buber's intellectual development through the first three decades of the twentieth century, Kohn presented Buber's struggle to shape Zionist policy as the practical expression of his evolving philosophical and religious teachings. Kohn's letter suggested by implication that his critique of and break with Zionism was consonant with those teachings, and, indeed, that they demanded it. But Buber, although he appreciated Kohn's predicament, found his decision to abandon ship, as he wrote Paula, to suffer from a doctrinaire moral idealism; he felt that to withdraw from what one views as an ethically untenable political reality is the very opposite of his understanding of political responsibility.[6] Kohn and others who were similarly troubled by the moral ambiguities of the Zionist project, he felt, proved more committed to the purity of their moral ideals than to the task of redeeming the world. To take refuge above the fray in the purity of moral ideals is to betray one's vocation as an intellectual (in both German and Hebrew, the intellectual is referred to as a person or custodian of the spirit). "If work is to be done in public life, it must be accomplished not above the fray, but in it."[7] The real world, while invariably compromising the purity of our moral principles, provides the only possibility for their actualization.

Hence, "despite everything"—the profound grief that Zion would be "built in blood"—Buber continued the struggle for a "politics born of faith" under new circumstances with the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948. His resolve is captured in an anecdote told by Schalom Ben-Chorin, who at the height of the siege of Jerusalem, with the city near starvation conditions, happened to meet Buber on a walk, and asked him why he didn't avail himself of the opportunity to flee to Tel Aviv, where conditions were hardly so dire. Buber matter-of-factly replied, “Even if they were to send an airplane to my doorstep, I would still not leave this Jerusalem in which what I wanted to avoid is happening.”[8] With a “trembling heart,” he exclaimed:

> I have accepted as mine the State of Israel, the form of the new Jewish community that has arisen from the war. I have nothing in common with those Jews who imagine that they may contest the factual shape that Jewish independence has taken. The command to serve the spirit is to be fulfilled by us in this state, by starting from it. But he who will truly serve the spirit must seek to make good all that was once missed: he must seek to free once again the blocked path to an understanding with the Arab peoples. . . . There can be no peace between Jews and Arabs that is merely a cessation of war; there can only be a peace of genuine cooperation. Today, under such manifoldly aggravated circumstances, the command of the spirit is still to prepare the way for the cooperation of peoples.[9]

Although history had declared a victory for the idea of a sovereign Jewish state, and the defeat of binationalism, the goal of fostering positive relations between Jew and Arab remained as urgent as ever; the strategy for its attainment would have to be adjusted to the new situation.

On a personal level, Buber and his family would also have to make their own considerable adjustments. They needed, first and foremost, to find permanent housing. After their precipitous flight from embattled Abu-Tor, they resided in Pension Asher for more than a year; Martin’s library and their other possessions were still in their former Abu-Tor residence, placed in a sealed room and guarded vigilantly by the Dajani family, who also cared for Martin’s and Paula’s beloved cats. The books were later stuffed into hundreds of sacks, and over the course of six weeks clandestinely transported (with Buber’s other possessions) across the battle lines to Jewish-controlled Jerusalem, and stored in various locations until Buber was able to arrange for permanent living quarters. That opportunity came with the Armistice of March 1949 and the cessation of hostilities, at which time a committee was formed and charged with administering dwellings in Jerusalem that had been abandoned by Arabs fleeing Jewish armed forces. The committee proceeded to assign these properties to Jewish refugees from parts of the city that had fallen to Arab troops.

Buber was assigned a rather large house on an upscale street again in Talbiya—its Arab owners had taken refuge in Turkey—on the condition that he would share it with another family. He immediately asked his granddaughter Barbara and her husband to join him and Paula. Although quite spacious, the home was not large enough to accommodate all of his more than fifteen thousand books, but he was able to rent two rooms in the home of a neighbor to house the overflow. Shortly after moving into her grandparents' home, in 1950, Barbara gave birth to Tamar; Gideon followed in 1952. The house on Hovevei Tzion Street was next door to a grocery store, whose proprietor was one Mr. Rosenzweig; when anyone asked for directions to Buber's house, they would be told, "Next to Rosenzweig."

Although relieved to have found a relatively spacious and comfortable home, Buber was uneasy about living in the former residence of an Arab family. With his encouragement, Barbara managed to contact the family in Turkey, and at its request sent them the belongings they had left behind. Rent was paid to the Custodian of Absentee Property (established by an emergency ordinance of December 1948), which was to keep the proceeds in escrow until the legal status of the property of Arab refugees was adjudicated. But in time, it became clear that the intent was to confiscate their property. Buber's response was to conduct a determined campaign to allow the refugees to return to their homes or receive proper compensation, which led to a clash with David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of the State of Israel. Buber would soon have the occasion to challenge Ben-Gurion directly about the moral and political imperative of the proper treatment of Arab refugees. Shortly after Ben-Gurion was installed in early March 1949 as the first elected prime minister of the State of Israel, he convened at his home in Tel Aviv a meeting with some twenty of the country's leading intellectuals—distinguished authors, poets, and academics—to confer about the moral and spiritual direction of the fledgling state. Buber, who was one of the first to address the meeting, questioned Ben-Gurion's assertion that the government per se had no direct role in shaping the moral character of the state, insisting instead that the government's policies concerning any issues with an ethical dimension could not but bear on the infant state's guiding ethos. He thus appealed to Ben-Gurion to consider the ethical implications of the government's policies toward the Arabs, and initiate a just and expeditious solution to the Arab refugee problem:

> I admit that when the government [makes a policy decision out of ethical considerations], it is apparently doing something unnecessary from the point of view of "raison d'être." However, it is just those "unnecessary" acts, acts with no apparent explanation, that serve the true good of the state, the true good of the nation and of all nations. For example, take the question of the Arab refugees. The possibility existed for the government, and perhaps it still does now, of doing a great moral act, which could bring about the moral awakening of the public, and its influence on the world would certainly not be bad.[10]

Buber was persistent in calling on both the State of Israel's political leadership and its general public to have the moral courage to confront "the bitter reality" of the country's policies toward the Arabs of Palestine: to examine the facts of "the robbery and plunder, anti-Arab discrimination, the destruction of their villages"—"as painful as this will be"—and "together [to] search for a way out, if such a way exists. 'Redemption' of an external kind," he continued, "can be paid for with the blood of our sons. Internal redemption can only be brought about by gazing directly at the brutal face of truth."[11]

Further, he insisted, ethicists and politicians should avoid demonizing one another. Those concerned with ethics too easily perceive politicians as "despot[s], drunk with power, who [know] no direction above [their] own will. Politicians, in turn, see [ethicists] as ideologues enslaved to high-flown talk, living in the clouds, and not on an earth full of contradictions." When confronted by seemingly unyielding practical realities, politicians often do have at heart "the true interest of [their] nation." But Buber called on them, and specifically on Ben-Gurion, to adhere to a "greater realism," or a "sense of proportion of what can and should be done at any given time," and thus a sober realization that "all true responsibility is two-fold: directed towards heaven and the earth."[12]

> Such dual responsibility is not to be unified by means of principles, but rather through an examination [of factual realities] and restraint [determined by ethical conscience] constantly renewed. Individuals, in that they are human, cannot be entirely without sin, and the same is true of a nation that is a nation. How then will individuals and nations act in accordance with their conscience? The main point is to examine oneself at all times to ascertain whether one's guilt is not greater than the amount necessary to carry on living. . . . This is not simply the commandment of pure morality. Great statesmanship, which is directed to the true interest of the coming generation [of one's nation], is a policy by virtue of which the nation does not heap upon itself an excessive degree of guilt. Clearly one does not administer such a policy by generalizations and pure principles. We must take upon

> ourselves repeatedly and continuously the hardest task: responding to both demands at the same time, the demand of the moment [the given earthly reality] and the demand of [ethical] truth.[13]

In short, for the Zionist state, "the hardest task" involved the responsibility to be both attentive to the political and quotidian needs of "the natural Jew," and mindful of the spiritual and ethical imperatives of "the supernatural Jew."[14]

The other dual responsibility that Buber had noted, toward heaven and earth, carried with it the risk of a pull toward political theology—that is, theology in the service of politics—that he knew had to be resisted. Buber was particularly wary of political messianism: "We cannot prepare the messianic world; we can only be prepared for it. There is no legitimately messianic-intended politics."[15] No doubt in part because of his own sobering experience in the context of World War I, when he passionately embraced German nationalism as an elevated spiritual mission to secure the promise of genuine community, and then firmly rejected that expression of nationalism, he was acutely attentive to the destructive potential of messianic political fantasies. Indeed, his monograph on the *Kingship of God* and his novel *Gog and Magog* may both be traced back to his own struggle to overcome the emotional lure of messianic politics. He was therefore alarmed by Ben-Gurion's view of Zionism as the fulfillment of the prophets' messianic vision.

In his opening address at the "First World [Zionist] Ideological Conference," which he convened in Jerusalem in August 1957, Ben-Gurion told the gathering that Zionism had been inspired and sustained by three primordial (albeit secularized) components of Jewish identity: the people's attachment to its ancient homeland, the Hebrew language, and the messianic promise of redemption. At the height of his address, he affirmed his conviction that the restoration of Jewish life in the land of

Israel and the creation of a model society will herald universal redemption. Buber, who had been invited to the conference at the behest of Ben-Gurion, was aghast, and requested to speak:

> [Ben-Gurion] is one of the proponents of that kind of secularization which cultivated its "thought" and "visions" so diligently that it keeps people from hearing the voice of the living God. . . . This phenomenon has very old roots. Even some of the kings in [biblical] Israel are said to have gone so far as to employ false prophets whose prophesying was wholly a function of state policy.[16]

One cannot say whether Ben-Gurion believed that Buber was suggesting that he was a false prophet, but he seems to have very much wanted Buber's approval, and was manifestly disappointed and even hurt by this criticism. Nonetheless, he continued to hold Buber in esteem, as is evident in a letter he sent Buber in February 1963:

> On your eighty-fifth birthday I send you my sincere blessings, the good wishes of a friend, admirer, and opponent. Your profound and original philosophy, your fruitful devotion to the work of Israel's rebirth from your youth to the present time, your profound ideational and existential relationship to the vision that the prophets of Israel had of a national and universal redemption as well as the rule of justice, peace, and fraternity in the world, the complete congruence between your endeavors and the demand and the conduct of your life—for all this you deserve praise and glory in the history of our people and our time.[17]

He closed the letter, "With love and veneration."

In his acknowledgment of Ben-Gurion's birthday greetings, Buber noted that despite their political differences, "I could characterize my attitude toward you with words similar to those you were kind enough to use in writing to me"—then proceeded to ask Ben-Gurion if he might find it possible "within the framework of your authority, to secure a pardon for the ailing Aharon Cohen, and his release from prison. That would make me very happy."[18]

Cohen had been sentenced to prison in January 1962, convicted of espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union. He and Buber had been friends and colleagues since the early 1940s, when both had been members of the League for Arab-Jewish Rapprochement and Cooperation. Cohen was arrested in 1958, but his trial didn't begin until three-and-a-half years later. The ailing eighty-two-year-old Buber asked to testify on Cohen's behalf, and made the then-arduous journey to Haifa by public transportation. He commenced his testimony with an autobiographical note, mentioning that he had befriended Cohen in 1941 when he, Buber, had joined with the likes of Jehuda Magnes and Henrietta Szold the League for Arab-Jewish Rapprochement, of which at the time Cohen served as general secretary. "These people" (the members of the League) implicitly including himself, "were not the kind commonly called idealists, in other words, people who believe and do not perceive the reality around them. All those who founded the League saw very clearly the reality of the situation and out of the reality they saw came to the conclusion that there was only one way for the people of Israel to enjoy a great future in this country."[19]

Buber proclaimed Cohen's innocence in an autobiographical vein:

> Since my youth, I have been studying human beings; my entire philosophical thinking is based on a knowledge of their nature. Knowing human nature means knowing people, and this is the only way to learn something about humanity as a whole. I mention this in order to indicate that I have some experience in knowing people, and I was extremely impressed by Aharon Cohen, his sincerity, his intellectual and moral integrity.[20]

The presiding judges, however, gained another impression from the evidence presented by the state's prosecutor, and sentenced Cohen to five years in prison. Ben-Gurion likewise rejected Buber's appeal to pardon him, though when Buber's longtime friend Zalman Shazar became Israel's third president in May 1963, his very first act was to pardon Aharon Cohen, and he personally informed Buber of his decision.

When Buber was on the stand as a character witness for his friend and colleague, the presiding judge asked him to identify his profession. Buber replied, "philosophical anthropology"—an understanding of his calling that had crystallized while he was preparing his first lecture course at the Hebrew University. Working on the lectures, as he related to Ernst Simon, "took me to the fundamentals of an anthropological system (the I-Thou anthropology, as it were) that I have evaded for such a long time."[21] The lectures (later published with the appropriate title *What Is Man?*), in addition to articulating a vision of building genuine community (as we saw in Chapter 9) would thus seek to show, through "the [philosophical] unfolding of the question about the essence of man, that it is by beginning neither with the individual nor with the collectivity, but only with the reality of the mutual relation between man and man, that this essence can be grasped."[22] As an elaboration of his philosophy of dialogue, he addressed the question of what essentially constitutes the human person, from the perspective of his fundamental thesis that "the world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude," each attitude establishing a distinctive way of situating oneself and living in the world: I-It and I-Thou.[23]

The human person, Buber believed, achieves the fullness of being by experiencing both modes of existence. Through the I-It mode, one enters the objective world, conditioned by the laws of nature. Modern epistemology and science account for the complex physical, historical, and sociological factors that structure objective reality; the knowledge and insights these disciplines provide help us navigate through the labyrinthine It-world we often call "reality." But to attain the fullness of life, we must through I-Thou relationships relate to much of the world, chiefly our fellow human beings, not as It (an object) but as Thou, each an autonomous subject with a distinctive inner reality. The I-It and I-Thou modes represent two aspects of being. It is our "sublime melancholy" that we are always dwelling in both the realm of necessity (the I-It world) and that of freedom (the realm of I-Thou relations): "I may not try to escape from the paradox I have to live by relegating the irreconcilable propositions to two separate realms; neither may I seek the aid of some theological artifice to attain some conceptual reconciliation: I must take it upon myself to live both in one, and so lived, both are one."[24] This insight, which Buber characterized as having crystallized over the course of a series of encounters and mismeetings he had experienced over many years, was at the core of his philosophical anthropology.

A brief lecture "On the Situation of Philosophy," presented at the summer of 1948 International Congress of Philosophy in Amsterdam, provided the occasion for Buber to outline for the first time what would become his postwar "contribution to a philosophical anthropology." He decried the "prevailing functionalizing of the concept of truth" by assigning it to epistemology and pragmatic disciplines—in other words, the world of It. The loss of faith in metaphysical truth—which illuminates the existential and religious significance of life—"threatens to disintegrate the human spirit." It was thus urgent, he said, to propose a new understanding of "truth" that would take as its point of departure the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, who argued that we should proceed not from a view of truth as "the agreement of the representation with the object, but from truth as an inherent property of Being."[25] Alas, Buber argued, "the fruits of this insight slip from our hands if, as Heidegger did, we relate the 'unconcealment' [of truth] simply to man and his essence[,] as though Being sent man forth in order to attain adequate openness [to ontological truth] through him." This understanding of truth reflected a "hopelessly illusory" view of humanity as an utterly detached, unconditioned subject set apart from the rest of the world, unconditioned by social, political, and psychological reality. In contrast to Heidegger, Buber argued, "the future competence of the philosophizing man depends upon his knowing the conditionality and the unconditionality of his thinking *in one* and in such encompassing to fulfill the personal devotion of the undivided knowing creature to the Being of existing being" (*das Sein des Seienden*).[26]

Buber's philosophical anthropology may be viewed, in fact, as an extended debate with Heidegger. Despite his awareness that Heidegger was an unrepentant Nazi, Buber would later avail himself of the opportunity to meet him. But in the years immediately following World War II, he was reluctant to set foot again in Germany. In early April 1947, he left for Europe to deliver lectures at universities in Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Holland, and Sweden, deliberately omitting Germany from his itinerary. In a reply to a letter he received in September 1946 inviting him to lecture at the University of Bonn, Buber explained why he felt obliged to decline. Although the question he was asked to address—"what will now become of man?"—strongly engaged him, he no longer felt himself "commissioned" to speak to Germans, for, as he put it in this understatement (the scare quotes are original), "Something has happened." He asked his correspondent not to misread this laconic explanation as a lack of interest in sharing his thoughts on this and related issues. "It is thoroughly desirable that what I have thought and put into words during the more than one hundred months since I left [Germany] should be available to Germans, [but] I can no longer speak to them collectively." It was otherwise with individuals, "as I am now speaking to you."[27] But to enter into a dialogue with the German people and culture as a whole was no longer possible for Buber.

In declining yet another invitation to visit postwar Germany, he was even more emphatic: "I cannot bring myself to take part in the activity of German public institutions; for this demands a degree of intimate connection of which I do not feel myself capable."[28] In a lecture he gave a few weeks after Kristallnacht, Buber had already mournfully proclaimed "the end of the German-Jewish symbiosis." The fruitful collaboration of "the German and Jewish spirit as I experienced it in the four decades I spent in Germany has been terminated through the intervention of the 'host nation' (or more accurately, of the 'host state')." If the collaboration of the German and Jewish spirit "is ever resumed again," he said, "it will of necessity reestablish the ties with those values which supported the symbiosis, and with those works which resulted from it. But the symbiosis itself is terminated and cannot return."[29]

Nevertheless, Buber was eager to resume his publications in German. In the seven years from when he left Germany until the end of World War II, he had written no fewer than seven books in German, four of which had been published in Hebrew translation. In the quest to find a German-language publisher, he had written to several friends in Switzerland with a request for assistance in interesting a Swiss publisher in his writings. Due to a shortage of paper in the aftermath of the war, the publishers he contacted were reluctant to undertake the publication of writings they were uncertain would find a significant readership. Buber had better luck with a German publisher. Lambert Schneider had in November 1945 reestablished his publishing house in Heidelberg, which he inaugurated with the monthly journal *Die Wandlung*—beginning its publication immediately after liberation from the twelve years of Nazi rule as a way of fostering the spiritual and moral renewal of Germany. Toward this end, Schneider was determined to reintroduce Buber's work to the German public, for he was convinced, as he told Buber, that "the readiness [to receive your word] is today perhaps greater than it was twenty years ago."[30]

They resolved to meet in Europe before Buber returned home to Jerusalem after a European lecture tour. After giving more than sixty lectures in six different countries, Buber and his wife went to Switzerland for a vacation. Since as a German citizen Schneider was barred at the time from entering Switzerland, and Buber was reluctant to set foot in Germany, an influential friend of Buber's arranged for them to rendezvous in a no-man's-land near Basel where the German, French, and Swiss borders converge. In the midst of a nasty snowstorm, Buber and Paula waited for Schneider in a narrow sentry's house. Schneider recalled their reunion after close to ten years as "moving and near wordless." Buber came to their rendezvous with the manuscript of *Das Problem des Menschen* (The problem of humanity), which Schneider would publish in 1948.[31] The publication of other titles by Schneider was soon to follow.

Likely sharing with Schneider the hope of renewing the German-Jewish symbiosis, along with other motivations, German intellectuals repeatedly invited Buber to Germany. One of the most persistent was Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, who since 1948 had been a professor of New Testament and Jewish history and literature at the University of Münster. On the basis of a warm prewar personal relationship with Buber, Rengstorf was the first well-known Protestant theologian to reach out to him. Addressing Buber as "my esteemed colleague," Rengstorf urged him to resume the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. "I have the impression that Germany would very much welcome it, were you to complete your translation of the Hebrew Bible. Unfortunately, it is still but a torso."[32] In his reply, Buber candidly acknowledged that Rengstorf's appeal touched upon a sensitive issue, for it was due to Nazi persecution and the war that he had had to put the translation on hold. “I have not forgotten the task, which had been ripped from my hands, but never will there be as a consequence inscribed in my heart’s memory a ‘perhaps.’ ”[33] He thus implied that he would eventually return to the translation—failing to add that the community for whom he and Rosenzweig had principally undertaken the project no longer existed.

A few months later, Rengstorf informed Buber that two prominent leaders of prewar German Jewry, Rabbi Leo Baeck and Alfred Wiener, had agreed to come to Germany to participate in a student conference on “The Church and Judaism.” He therefore hoped that Buber would accept an invitation to take part in the next conference, which would be devoted to theological reflections on “the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine.”[34] Notwithstanding that Baeck and Wiener, two prominent German Jews, had accepted Rengstorf’s invitations, Buber remained firm in his refusal to follow suit.

Eventually, however, Buber accepted an invitation by Schneider to come to Heidelberg in December 1950 and speak to a small, select group of discussants. He told Rengstorf that under similar conditions he would be happy to come to Münster.

Although he carefully sought to maintain a low profile during his first postwar visit to Germany, an interview he imprudently (and inadvertently) gave to a Munich newspaper threatened to cause a scandal back in Jerusalem. The *Neue Zeitung* of Munich reported Buber as relating in the interview: “The Arabs occupied his apartment [in Abu-Tor], but treated him with exemplary politeness, [and] guarded the 17,000 books of his library, which were later used by the Jews as a barricade during the battle for Jerusalem.” When the text of the interview reached Jerusalem, his friend Hugo Bergmann remarked, “How could Buber be so dumb to speak in such a fatuous manner?” In a letter he dashed off to Buber, Bergmann told him that his “disciples and friends here [in Jerusalem] are deeply shocked by the publication of this interview.”[35]

Buber wrote Bergmann that he and his friends were rightly disturbed by the “absurd” distortion of what was said, in what he believed was a private conversation and later published without his consent as an interview. In fact, upon the publication of the “interview,” he wrote the newspaper with the request that it publish “A Postscript to a Conversation,” in which he declared that “nothing that I said was for publication.” Moreover, he pointed out, “it was not *the* Arabs but the Arab landlord who safeguarded my belongings in the house” and “upon their capture of the house, Jewish soldiers found it necessary to use of a small number of my books for a barricade.”[36] With this near-scandal in mind, Buber requested that, in all his private talks with small, select groups, he “not be questioned about political matters, the religious situation in Israel, and the like.”[37]

The small colloquia he would give in Germany were thus restricted to academic and theological topics, and the initial colloquium in Heidelberg set the tone of those that would follow. It was scheduled for the winter of 1950 in conjunction with the founding of the Heidelberg School for Adult Education, whose mission was to renew the spirit informing *Die Kreatur*, the “trans-confessional” journal that Buber had co-edited in the last years of the Weimar Republic (and that Lambert Schneider had published). A group of former contributors to the journal were invited to participate in the seminar with Buber at Schneider’s home as a sort of reunion. Seated, Buber read slowly from a written text of a lecture on “Primal Distance and Relation,” in which he articulated the premises of his philosophical anthropology. Alfred Weber, the younger brother of sociologist Max Weber, was palpably engaged, continuously interrupting Buber to offer comments, until at one point, Buber rose from his chair and walked over to Weber, where he placed his hand on his shoulder and gently said, “Herr

Weber, please wait until I have finished reading the lecture, and then we can discuss it."[38]

Buber returned to his chair and finished his lecture. Weber listened attentively, and was the first to hold forth in the question and answer period, addressing the theme at length and in great but incisive detail.[39] His interventions proved to be atypical, for Buber's lectures at the subsequent colloquia elsewhere in Germany, to his great disappointment, generally failed to inspire discussion. It would seem that he had never fully mastered the skills of pedagogy; as was often noted, his lectures tended to be too complex to follow easily. One recalls here Bergmann's amusing comment to Buber that he should not feel too concerned about lecturing in Hebrew, reassuring him that his elementary Hebrew would allow his audience finally to understand what he had to say.

Not surprisingly, though, Buber's transition to Hebrew did not seem to enhance his pedagogical effectiveness. His lectures at the Hebrew University attracted "fewer and fewer" students.[40] Yet the seminars in which he did not read his lecture, and merely conducted a conversation about a given text, were highly regarded.[41] He was also more engaging as a public speaker, especially in German, although his reception was mixed. His student in Frankfurt, Nahum Glatzer, observed that as an orator Buber would style his lectures in a way that gave the audience the feeling that they were participating in the formulation of his thoughts. Glatzer and his fellow students would joke to each other that before his public lectures, Buber would stand in the mirror and practice being spontaneous.[42] Indeed, while Buber enthralled many, others found his public lectures to be theatrical and affected. These foibles, however, if noted at all, were overlooked in postwar Germany, where as Buber himself noted he was celebrated as an "arch-Jew," a representative of the surviving remnant of European Jewry.

Buber was also, and undoubtedly just as significantly and sincerely, hailed as embodying the humanistic ethos that repentant Germans were seeking to restore. In December 1951, he received a letter from Professor Bruno Snell, rector of the University of Hamburg, informing him that he had been awarded the second annual Goethe Prize, intended to support "the promotion of supranational thinking and humanitarian endeavors in the spirit of Goethe." Snell further underscored that "the University of Hamburg and the prize committee wish to honor your scholarly achievements and above all your exemplary cultural activities in the service of mutual understanding among peoples and the preservation and continuation of a great intellectual tradition."

In his 1938 essay "The End of the German-Jewish Symbiosis," Buber reaffirmed the humanistic values of that tradition which had supported the symbiosis, even though the symbiosis itself—through which Jews had played a seminal role in German intellectual life—had been brutally terminated with the advent of the Third Reich.[43] In an address at a Goethe Bicentennial Convocation that took place just after the World War in Aspen, Colorado, which was read on his behalf by Ernst Simon because he could not attend, Buber identified Goethe's envisioned "triumph of the purely human" as a "message, both exhorting and encouraging . . . to our time, although, or precisely because, it is [now] so evidently remote from humankind."[44] It was in the spirit of that message that Buber accepted the Goethe prize. "I should like to regard it," he said in his letter of acceptance, "as one of the signs, still rare at present, of a new humanitarianism arising from the anti-human chaos of our time." He felt that the prize marked an engagement with the ethical obligation of every nation to purge itself of the pernicious impulses that deprive others of their humanity. "Unlike the old kind, this new humanitarianism will be able to prove itself adequately not in the great vision of individuals, particularly scholars and philosophers, but only in the struggle of every nation with itself." In establishing the Goethe Prize, he believed, the University of Hamburg was manifestly dedicated to meeting the challenge of the new humanism. "Permit me, therefore, to welcome [the prize] the way one welcomes a symbol."[45]

Back in Israel, the prize "symbolized" for many a call to exonerate Germany for the extermination of six million Jews. The announcement of the prize came at a particularly sensitive juncture in Germany's relationship with the State of Israel. Just three months earlier, West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer had proposed to pay restitution to the Jewish people and the State of Israel in order to facilitate the absorption of a half million survivors of the Holocaust. A fierce public debate ensued, with impassioned voices arguing that the acceptance of restitution would be tantamount to forgiving the Germans for their crimes. The award to Buber of the Goethe Prize was viewed similarly. Upon reading in the Tel Aviv daily *Haaretz* a particularly mean-spirited attack on Buber for not immediately declining the prize, Ernst Simon hastily consulted with three of Buber's closest Jerusalem friends: Gershom Scholem, Hugo Bergmann, and Bergmann's wife, Escha. They appointed Simon to write on their behalf to Buber, who was at the time in the United States, in order to bring to his attention the offending article, and ask him whether he planned to accept the prize.[46] Whatever his decision, Simon assured Buber, they would rally to his defense, although as he noted in a subsequent letter, "you have not made it any easier for us who share your struggle for a Jewish humanism."[47]

In his reply, Buber indicated that he would himself explain to the Israeli public why he had decided to accept the prize. In an article published on the first page of *Haaretz*, he explained that the prize presented him with a dilemma: Were he to reject it, he would undercut the commendable efforts of those Germans "fighting for humanism" and thereby play into the hands of their enemies, even to those guilty of mass murder. Despite the delicate situation in which the acceptance of the prize would place him, then, as a Jew and an Israeli citizen he felt it was his duty to acknowledge (and thus encourage) the German advocates of a rededication to the humanistic tradition associated with Goethe. He concluded the defense of his decision by announcing that he would donate the prize money to a project that served to further in Israel a "new, supra-national humanism"—namely, to *Ner* (Light), a journal promoting Arab-Jewish understanding.[48]

When he was notified that he had been awarded the Goethe Prize, Buber was in New York City en route to California, where he was going to teach for a few months. Hence, he informed Snell, he would not be able to attend the award ceremony. Snell pressed Buber by suggesting an alternative date. Buber then confessed to Snell that what actually prevented him from accepting the invitation to come to Hamburg for the ceremony was existential, not circumstantial. "Ever since the events of 1938 and those that followed," he apologetically explained, he feared he would not be able to stand before "a faceless German public," perhaps one of the most difficult burdens that "the history of the age has laid on me."[49]

The metaphor of the "faceless" other had emerged in Buber's earlier exchange of letters with Rengstorf, where it came to denote the blurring of the humanity of the other. "I share the anguish in your heart," the Evangelical theologian wrote Buber, "as you behold your former compatriots (*Landsleute*): there are people who no longer have a face"—indeed, there are Germans who have lost their humanity. "And yet, and for this very reason, I venture to repeat my invitation [to address us in Münster]. I venture it because I am struggling with all my heart and all my strength to help people here to regain their faces. I do so all the more because I know that the loss of a face is bound up with what has been done to you and yours. But this is why people here can regain their faces or find new ones only if they encounter you again [as a Jew and fellow human being]."[50] Only through interpersonal exchange or dialogue could the face of the other emerge from behind the veil of ideological prejudices, stereotypes, and even, as Rengstorf put it, "painful memories." In was in response to this appeal that Buber agreed to come to Münster and to hold "a discussion with a small group of specifically invited people." In a reply to a letter, now lost, in which Buber apparently discussed the difficulty of achieving a mutual understanding that would allow Jews and Germans to surmount the barrier of viewing each other as a faceless other, Rengstorf had protested: "What can help in these matters is not understanding but love. Therein reside the failings of the past as well as the roots of German guilt and the ultimate reasons why we have lost our faces."[51]

Writing from Jerusalem, Buber again confirmed his agreement to speak to a small group of Rengstorf's colleagues and students, adding, "It is as you say: man cannot live without love—not truly, not as a human being. But more than ever before, love seems to be grace today—felt and received by virtue of grace. Thank God I recognize it wherever I encounter it."[52]

It may have been such a graced moment that led Buber to reverse his policy not to lecture before a "faceless" German audience (as opposed to meeting with a small group of individually selected Germans). In November 1952 the Italian-born German Catholic priest and scholar Romano Guardini sent Buber a forty-four-page booklet of a lecture he had recently delivered at the University of Tübingen, "Responsibility: Thoughts on the Jewish Question."[53] Gratefully acknowledging receipt of the booklet, Buber wrote Guardini a brief three-sentence letter signaling a dramatic volte-face: "While reading it I noticed that something had changed for me: It was once again possible for me to speak publicly in Germany."[54] Buber did not expand on this declaration. It was surely not only the content of Guardini's lecture but also the person who penned it that had moved Buber to reverse his position. Guardini was already widely regarded as one of the most eminent Catholic theologians of the twentieth century; his many intellectual disciples would include Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) and Jorge Mario Bergoglio (later Pope Francis).

Buber had known Guardini before he had attained preeminence in Catholic intellectual life. Upon reading Guardini's first published monograph, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (published in 1918), Buber wrote him to express his admiration of his phenomenological analysis of liturgical worship.[55] The correspondence that followed continued throughout the years of the Weimar Republic, and resumed after World War II when Guardini sent Buber a copy of his lecture on the Jewish Question.[56] With a clarion, unambiguous voice, Guardini made an impassioned plea for Germans to acknowledge the evil perpetuated in their name at Auschwitz and other death camps, and to repent by accepting moral responsibility for the decimation of European Jewry. It is not, he emphasized, a question simply of admission of guilt, but also of an ethical responsibility incumbent on each and every German to "make amends" for the Holocaust in "whatever way it is possible and appropriate. Wrong can only be overcome in this way." Hence, the ethical responsibility of which Guardini spoke could not be discharged by the political act of the state or public institutions. Genuine ethical responsibility had to be assumed by each individual; indeed, what Hitler sought was to obliterate "the basis and beginning of every ethical judgement, namely the person."[57] What was at stake was the restoration of not only the personal dignity of the Jews, but also that of the Germans themselves; in Buber's (and Rengstorf's) terms, doing so would restore the face of both the Jew and the German.

A month after he had written to Guardini, Buber informed Snell that he would be honored to attend the Goethe Prize award ceremony in Hamburg and to deliver a lecture.[58] He did not, however, write a lecture especially for the occasion, which took place on June 24, 1953. Rather, he read a lecture on "The Validity and Limitations of the Political Principle" that he had actually written in 1947 and had presented in the summer of 1953 at various German universities.[59] He regarded the lecture as a "radical critique" of the German concept of "the political principle"—the centralization of power in governmental institutions at the expense of human fellowship—which he believed had abetted the horror from which Europe had just emerged. He was therefore surprised at how well his lecture was received, not only at the Goethe Prize ceremony but also, with the exception of Bonn, at the universities where he delivered it.[60]

In the lecture, Buber took as his point of departure a critique of what he deemed to be a grievous misreading of Matthew 22:21 ("Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's") as sanctioning the unfettered independence of the political principle. He traced in philosophy the mistaken and ultimately pernicious tendency, inaugurated by Hegel, to assign to history an ontological autonomy—that is, to regard the dialectical unfolding of history as an ethically self-validating process. The consequent understanding of historical time and its political manifestations, Buber argued, leaves no "room for a suprahistorical [divine] reality that sees history and judges it."[61] In a parenthetical remark, Buber alluded to his own relationship with Zionism: "I believe that it is possible to serve God and the group to which one belongs if one is courageously intent on serving God in the sphere of the group as much as one can."[62]

A week before the ceremony in Hamburg, Buber was notified that he was to be awarded the fourth annual Peace Prize of the German Book Trade.[63] The previous recipient was no less than Guardini (who had been preceded by Albert Schweitzer and the German-Jewish writer Max Tau). Buber happily accepted the award in person. On this occasion, he delivered an original paper appropriate to the theme of the prize: “Genuine Dialogue and the Possibility of Peace.” The award ceremony took place on September 27, 1953, at Saint Paul’s Church (Paulskirche) in Frankfurt am Main; ever since 1848, when the church served as the seat of the Frankfurt Parliament, the first freely elected German legislative body, it had symbolized the birth of German democracy. Destroyed in 1944 in an Allied bombing of Frankfurt, it was the first public structure to be rebuilt after the war, as a symbolic tribute to Germany’s rededication to democracy. Reopened on the centennial of the Frankfurt Parliament, the imposing building served no longer as a church, but as a venue for cultural events of a decidedly humanistic bent—a fact that was ignored by or unknown to some of Buber’s Israeli critics, who excoriated him for speaking in a church.

The ceremony had great symbolic significance, and not only in its setting in the cradle of German democracy, whose first vice-president, Gabriel Riesser, had been an indomitable advocate of Jewish emancipation. Among the more than one thousand individuals who attended the event was the president of the Federal Republic of Germany, Theodor Heuss. Buber was introduced by Albrecht Goes, a Lutheran theologian who had served as a chaplain in Hitler’s Wehrmacht (the united Nazi armed forces). With poetic pathos, Goes spoke of “Martin Buber as our support”—the support not of “a dictator and his preceptors,” but of “the concern of an I for its Thou,” and “for bringing together what is falling apart. . . . But concern is trust. And this trust includes the readiness to be sad with others and to keep silent for a long time, because we are united by the insight that it is hard really to love one’s fellow men, because, in the words of Sasov Rabbi, frequently enough we do not know what ails the other fellow.”[64]

In his address Buber did not hide his pain as "a surviving arch-Jew" (*Erzjude*).[65] A decade before, he solemnly noted, "a considerable number of Germans—there must have been thousands of them—under the indirect command of the German government and the direct command of its representatives, killed millions of my people in a systematically prepared and executed procedure whose organized cruelty cannot be compared with any other historical event." These henchmen of Hitler's diabolic madness "have so radically removed themselves from the human sphere, have so transposed themselves into a sphere of monstrous inhumanity inaccessible to my comprehension that not even hatred, much less an overcoming of hatred, was able to arise in me.—And who am I that I could here presume to 'forgive'!"[66]

And yet—as perhaps Guardini's essay brought home to him—there were other Germans. One cannot allow "the concrete multiplicity" of a people "to be obscured by the leveling of a totality constituted and acting in just such a way and no other." It is precisely this invidious leveling that blurs the face of the other. There were Germans and there were Germans; they did not act monolithically. To be sure, many knew of Auschwitz and Treblinka, and despite whatever feelings they had, did not oppose "the monstrous event." But, Buber exclaimed, at the same time, "my heart, which is acquainted with the weakness of men, refuses to condemn my neighbor for not prevailing upon himself to become a martyr." There were certainly the masses that consciously chose to remain ignorant of the horror perpetrated in their name. "When I have these men in mind, I am gripped by the thought of the anxiety, likewise known to me, of the human creature before a truth which he fears he cannot face." And yet, Buber noted—reportedly in a voice trembling with emotion—there "appears before me those who refused to carry out the orders and suffered death, and those who learned what was taking place and because they could do nothing to stop it killed themselves. Reverence and love for these Germans now fills my heart."[67]

Turning to the generation of Germans who came of age after the war. Buber called upon them to join with him in the struggle of "*homo humanus* against *contrahumanus.*" As a "Jew chosen as a symbol I must obey this call of duty even there, indeed precisely there when the never-to-be effaced memory of what has happened stands in opposition to it." It was thus incumbent upon Jews and Germans to express the solidarity "of all separate groups in the flaming battle for the rise of a true humanity." That solidarity was not a matter of reconciliation or a pretense to cauterize the wounds of memory, but the duty mandated by that very memory for "peoples to engage in dialogue with one another if the great peace is to emerge and the devastated life of the earth to renew itself."[68] As a testament to his understanding of this calling, Buber contributed the monetary award attached to the Peace Prize (as he had done with the earlier Goethe Prize) to an organization in Israel promoting Arab-Jewish coexistence.

Some six months after the ceremony at the Paulskirche, Buber received an invitation from the president of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts to deliver a lecture at the prestigious forum on art on "the problem of man."[69] Buber gratefully accepted, and in November 1954 gave a lecture at the academy on "Man and His Image." The visit to Munich also occasioned a lively discussion on language with Clemens Count Podewils, the general secretary of the Bavarian Academy. Buber and Count Podewils subsequently conducted an intense correspondence between Jerusalem and Munich on the nature of the German language and the problem of language in general. At one point in their exchange, Buber broached the idea of a conference on language, and suggested that, should Podewils be amenable to the proposal, he should consider inviting Martin

Heidegger to participate. (One can only conjecture why Buber was eager to include Heidegger, the unrepentant Nazi, in the conference. Since the 1930s, in his philosophical writings he had recurrently "debated" with Heidegger, questioning his exclusion of anthropological and hence ethical considerations from his ontological existentialism. As we shall see, he was bent on engaging Heidegger in a dialogue on these issues, especially as they pertained to his endorsement of National Socialism.) The count responded enthusiastically to the proposal and immediately wrote Heidegger, who was "very impressed by [Buber's] readiness to collaborate with him."[70] A preliminary organizational meeting was arranged.

Buber and Heidegger would meet in the late spring of 1957 in the township of Altreuthe, on the pastoral grounds of a castle that belonged to Prince Albrecht of Schaumburg-Lippe, the brother-in-law of Count Podewils.[71] The two septuagenarian philosophers strolled for hours in animated conversation. Years later, recalling their meeting, Buber would humorously muse that they must have appeared "à la Rumpelstiltskin like two dwarfs, gnomes with disproportionate large heads"—neither stood more than five foot two inches in height—Heidegger setting the cadence of the conversation, fervidly gesticulating with both hands.[72] They were joined by Carl von Weizsäcker, a physicist and philosopher of science, and Count Podewils, in order to confer on the organization of the proposed conference on language.

Between their meetings, Buber and Heidegger would take long, rambling walks on the nearby Island of Mainau. "We were able," Buber relates, "to laugh about ourselves, two elderly, contentious men, full of prejudices and resentment, less about our own than about the prejudices and resentments of our environment—here against the Jews, and there against the Nazi Rector"—that is, against Heideigger, who had joined the Nazi Party ten days after being elected rector of the University of Freiburg.

Buber parenthetically added, "many are offended that I mention [in my writings] in one and the same breath Kant, Hegel and Heidegger. But since this meeting [with Heidegger], I know that [my critics] are inane or baseless to have contested placing Heidegger on the same rung as these other thinkers."[73] These reminiscences were solicited by a young theologian, Hans A. Fischer-Barnicol, who had learned that Buber's "friendly, indeed [allegedly] conciliatory meeting with Heidegger" had led to a "very vehement debate" among Buber's circle of "friends in Jerusalem."[74] When Fischer-Barnicol queried Buber about the controversy, however, Buber dismissed any suggestion that the meeting with Heidegger was an expression of reconciliation:

> No, our discussion was purely matter of fact. The past remained un-mastered—God be praised, for we must also allow ourselves to speak bluntly about guilt, about forgiveness, also about the guilt of thought (*Schuld des Denkens*). We spoke fully impartially with one another, and without defensiveness. First we spoke for a long time about philosophical questions, then ever more openly about initially suppressed theological matters—which, as you know, is for me an alien language. I do not know whether Heidegger had confused this exchange with a religious dialogue, which it was not. A religious dialogue must emerge from [concrete, historical] experience (*Erfahrung*) and be addressed out of experience—and not only out of the experience of thought (*Da muß aus Erfahrung gesprochen werden—und nicht nur aus Erfahrung des Denkens*).[75]

At the conclusion of their meeting, Heidegger extended to Buber an invitation to visit him at his *Hütte* (cabin retreat) in the Black Forest to continue their conversation, but Buber declined the invitation. "A struggle between two elderly men is not good. And we were in agreement that this struggle could not be avoided. . . . Because a religious dialogue cannot be avoided."[76] What constitutes a religious dialogue—and what kind of self could truly participate in such a dialogue, as opposed to another kind of philosophical or theological exchange—would, in fact, be the implicit theme of Buber's contribution to the envisioned conference on language. Crucial for Buber would be the distinction "the experience of thought—that is, the experience of the thinking 'I,'" which Heidegger sets apart from the apperceptive self that is conscious of itself in relation to a reality external to oneself. In Heidegger's terms, the apperceptive self (Buber's dialogical self) is defined by the experience of ontic entities (*Seiende*) as opposed to ontological meditations detached from the existential imperatives of concrete existence. The divide between Buber and Heidegger was precisely due to their divergent conceptions of the self that they deemed to be the proper focus of philosophical analysis. Indeed, for Buber, only a self in dialogical relationship with other persons could participate in genuine existential and religious dialogue.

Despite—but also perhaps because of—their studious avoidance of the difficult questions attendant to Heidegger's Nazi past, Buber recalled his meetings with Heidegger warmly, noting that in person Heidegger is "more to my taste than his writings."[77] In the interview with Fischer-Barnicol, Buber even took the opportunity to defend Heidegger from the widespread view that he lacked a sense of humor. He gleefully recounted that "one evening [at Prince Albrecht's castle] Heidegger read aloud" a selection of poems by the German satirical poet Johann Peter Hebel. It was, Buber recalled, "an enchanting, artful, indeed, enrapturing comic rendition."[78] Buber's defense of Heidegger's sense of humor was made in response to a comment by the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel (reported to him by Fischer-Barnicol) that neither Marcel nor Heidegger were suitable candidates to participate in a series of radio broadcasts on "great living philosophers" that Fischer-Barnicol was then preparing. Marcel concurred with Heidegger that popular publicity is not appropriate for a philosopher. "Even if it were," Marcel noted, “we would not have the slightest chance of competing with Brigitte Bardot for popularity.” Buber found the prospect of such popularity not particularly appealing, since, as he conceded, he had been somewhat of a “star” from early on, and found it to be a “nuisance.” With some amusement, he attributed his ambiguous status as a celebrity to his beard (which, as noted earlier, he had originally grown to cover a crooked lower lip). As the beard gained fullness, people took him for a prophet. “Believe me,” he told his interlocutor, “I would shave this wonderful beard off, but then I would destroy my image. Hmmm. So I am after all akin to Brigitte Bardot?!”[79]

Curiously, when Heidegger was interviewed by Fisher-Barnicol and asked about his acquaintance with Buber, he responded as if he knew of him by name only.[80] This feigned ignorance of Buber is quite confusing, given (among other things) the reported intensity of the two-and-a-half-day meeting at Lake Constance, which was followed by several organizational meetings toward the conference on language. Moreover, Heidegger was apparently an avid reader of Buber’s writings.[81] Upon his initial meeting with Buber at Prince Albrecht’s castle, he gave Buber a copy of his recently published *Hebel—Der Hausfreund* with the dedication, “For Martin Buber with sincere admiration, Martin Heidegger, Altreuthe, May 19 [19]57.”[82] With this copy of his book on the writer Johann Peter Hebel, which was a meditation on the debasement of language through modern “calculative” (I-It) thinking, Heidegger undoubtedly sought to signal that he shared some of Buber’s fundamental concerns.

Heidegger was also eager to solicit, if not Buber’s friendship, then at least his public acknowledgment. Toward the preparation of a Festschrift marking his seventieth birthday, Heidegger specifically requested that the publisher ask Buber for a contribution.[83] Buber declined, claiming that poor health would not allow him to meet the stipulated deadline—though he continued to publish apace until his death some six years later. On another occasion, in the summer of 1959, Heidegger wrote Wilhelm Hoffmann, director of the State Library in Stuttgart, requesting that he inform Buber, who was then visiting Germany, of a lecture on Hölderlin he was to deliver under the library's auspices.[84] His eagerness to court Buber's acknowledgment stands in sharp contrast with his distancing himself from Buber when asked by third parties about their relationship. At a discussion in 1964 with a small group of philosophers in Heidelberg, Heidegger was asked rather insistently by "a young American professor" how he regarded Buber's thought. Palpably perplexed by the question, Heidegger hesitantly replied: "Buber hardly dealt with [my] basic question," quickly adding that he "was however not sure."[85] It is not clear if Heidegger's hesitation to confirm publicly his relationship with Buber or familiarity with his writings was due to his reluctance to engage in the kind of dialogue demanded by Buber, or if, beyond that, he was confused, if not offended, by Buber's own resolute refusal to continue their conversation on terms other than those Buber deemed appropriate.

In a conversation with Heidegger in the early winter of 1964, Fischer-Barnicol had the feeling that Heidegger was still deeply troubled by his failed relationship with Buber, and accordingly wrote Buber: "I am again and again moved to believe that it might, indeed, be correct and good were you to grant Heidegger's wish to have [another] talk with him. Perhaps it will help him?"[86] Buber seems not to have replied.[87] He was eighty-six when he received this last appeal to renew his "dialogue" with Heidegger. Frail and in poor health, he certainly was not in a position to visit Heidegger in Germany, and though he remained intellectually active, the pace and extent of his correspondence had also diminished in what was to be his last year of life. Buber's reluctance to sustain or renew a relationship with Heidegger may be traced back to the protracted organizational meetings for the conference on language, in which it became increasingly clear that Heidegger not only did not share his understanding of dialogue, but also adamantly refused to acknowledge that a dialogue between a Jew and a German (and unrepentant supporter of National Socialism), if it were to be existentially genuine, would perforce take place in the shadow of the Holocaust.

Heidegger, was, it seems, eager all along to engage Buber—as a representative of Jewry—in a dialogue, but a dialogue not burdened by discussion of ultimately irresolvable issues. As Heidegger himself said in the lecture he eventually gave at the conference on language, "one may speak endlessly, and all the time say nothing. Another person may remain silent, not speak at all and yet, without speaking, say a great deal."[88] To speak—and silence may be as resonant as the spoken word—is to say something, that is, to point to the "clearing" or the life-world in which one's being unfolds. Language, spoken or otherwise, is as the German Romantic author Jean Paul put it, potentially "the spiritual index finger."[89] Heidegger had clearly come to Prince Albrecht's castle with the expectation of engaging Buber in just such a dialogue beyond speech and confession. In August 1952, he had read an article by Buber, "Hope for This Hour."[90] As he wrote to his wife about it:

> The essay by M. Buber [in which he speaks of the exigent need of the postwar generation to reestablish existential trust] is excellent. . . . The diagnosis is farsighted and of great wisdom—but the healing must start even deeper than he [Buber] suggests. And there remains a question of whether we mortals address our eternal Thou (B. means God) *through* our mortal Saying-Thou to one another, or whether we aren't brought into correspondence to one another only through God's address. . . . The final sentence of [Buber's essay] is beautiful and essential: "Reconciliation effects reconciliation." [*Versöhnung wirkt Versöhnung*]. . . .
>
> Mere forgiving and asking for forgiveness are not

> enough. Reconciliation belongs with "atonement" & "to atone" really means: to be still—to bring one another the stillness of belonging to one another in essence. The genuine & fruitful & fundamentally ceaseless dialogue [*Gespräch*] is one where those conversing [although] *different* in kind intuitively recognize their *Wesenszugehörigkeit* [belonging to one another], and neither out of mere indifferent acceptance nor according to a single yardstick & its doctrine.[91]

In light of Heidegger's own reflections here on the existential ground of reconciliation, it would seem that the failure of the two men to achieve the dialogue that both manifestly sought was fundamentally due to their different conceptions of what Buber called a religious encounter. Buber likely had had similar expectations to the poet Paul Celan, who on a visit to Heidegger's cabin retreat in July 1966, described in the philosopher's guestbook his dashed "hope for a word coming from the heart."[92] Heidegger was disinclined to utter the "word" that Buber and Celan had hoped for, deeming it to be only a surface gesture, and believing that the genuine act of atonement is to be expressed and attained beyond words, in the stillness in which an existential bond is forged between individuals, even in the face of incommensurable, or conflicting, primordial and historical positions.

The seemingly insurmountable divide between Buber and Heidegger may have been specifically, even primarily, theological; more precisely, their divergent horizons of expectation reflected very different conceptions of grace and atonement. Heidegger, who in his youth initially had studied for the Catholic priesthood, articulated his own position in his letter to his wife: Divine address and its protection [*Geheißes und seines Schutzes*] are the ontological ground of any possible human reconciliation; God's word bears within it a protective grace that empowers one to trust in the promise of reconciliation—independent, it would seem, of any specific conciliatory words or actions.[93] His eagerness to engage Buber in dialogue may have been prompted by a desire (that Buber may have in turn intuited) to receive exculpation from him (however implicitly)—or as Celan bitterly put it when he first heard of Buber's meeting with Heidegger, a *Persilschein*, a clean bill of health, a whitewash for his Nazi past.[94] Buber's (and conceivably also Celan's) opposing vision of reconciliation was undoubtedly shaped by a Jewish theological sensibility that there can be no divine pardon for offenses against others until one has turned to one's fellow human beings whom one has offended, and not only asked their forgiveness, but also adequately repented for the wrongs done to them.

To be sure, the failure of Buber and Heideigger to engage in a genuine dialogue was surely also due to what Buber called a Vergegnung—a mismeeting—born of divergent expectations of what constitutes dialogical reconciliation. Although surely disappointed, Buber had met with Heidegger with duly guarded expectations, and for him, mismeetings inhere in the very quest for dialogue, which thus entails an existential risk. Buber's faith in the importance of dialogue was paradoxically born precisely of the painful realization that life is invariably punctuated by such mismeetings. The autobiographical fragments he recorded toward the end of his life, and others scattered throughout his writings and correspondence, attest to his painful appreciation of the human vulnerability to mismeetings in the quest for dialogue.

Buber had found in Paula, with whom he had bonded in his twenty-first year, a buffer from the many mismeetings that he would experience over a lifetime. As he poignantly expressed in one of the many poems he addressed to her:

> To Paula
> The Abyss and the Light of the World,
> The Pressure of Time and the Yearning of Eternity,

Vision, Event and Poem:
Dialogue it was and is with you.[95]

Their dialogue was to come to an abrupt end in August 1958. On the first of that month, Paula and Martin boarded a ship in Venice that was to take them back to Israel after a lecture tour in America and a vacation in Europe. Upon occupying their cabin, the robust eighty-one-year-old Paula suddenly collapsed and was rushed by gondola to the hospital on the Lido di Venezia, where she was diagnosed with a blood clot. She died, on August 11, with her husband and their two children (who had rushed to Venice to be with their mother) at her side.

The following day, Paula was buried in the thirteenth-century Jewish cemetery on the Lido. Accompanied by Eva and Rafael, a profoundly bereaved Buber returned to Jerusalem, uncertain how he would proceed after the loss of his wife and most intimate partner of nearly sixty years. “The structure of my life,” he bemoaned, “has been broken up so thoroughly” that he could not contemplate giving lectures or writing.[96] Yet he gradually returned to his writing desk, affirming that “one must continue to live; one learns obediently to accept if not to understand.”[97] He found solace in work, although he regarded it is as “walking against the wind.” The outpouring of sympathy helped sustain him, as he put it, “in the darkest hour of my life.”[98] Writing from New York City, Hans Jonas, who had been close to Buber and his wife when he taught in the 1940s at the Hebrew University, told Buber that he and Paula exemplified in his eyes a life of dialogue:

> I have never seen a more perfect community of two who remained what they were while affirming the other. That youthful choice can prove itself in this way and become ever truer in the course of time—such a success is the highest tribute to those to whom this possibility was entrusted by the *tuche* [Greek: chance] of the original encounter. . . . It was

> always beautiful every time to see you together. The blessing of that infinite community has to extend into your present, finite loneliness.[99]

Thanks to such comforting words, Buber felt that "though alone," he was "not abandoned."[100]

It was especially his family in Jerusalem who served to sustain his spirits. With the passing of Paula, their granddaughter Barbara took charge of the home that she and her family had been sharing with *Nonna* Paula and *Vater* Martin. Under Barbara's stewardship, the dynamic of the household changed perceptibly. While Paula had shielded her husband from all that might disturb his "peace and quiet," and accordingly had organized the living space and even eating schedule to guard his autonomy (she and Martin generally ate alone), Barbara sought to integrate her grandfather into the life of her family. She did this not only by reconfiguring the bedroom assignments, but also by insisting that Buber eat together with her and the rest of the family, her husband, Zeev, and their two children, Tamar, then eight, and Gideon, who was six. Vater Martin seemed to enjoy the new arrangement, especially the more intimate contact with Tamar and Gideon. Schalom Ben-Chorin recalled visiting Buber as a guest on the holiday of Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) and found him patiently helping Tamar and Gideon decorate a *sukkah.* Buber greeted his guest by observing, "One does not understand one's children, and one's grandchildren a bit better. But one understands one's great-grandchildren undoubtedly best."[101]

When Buber resumed lecturing abroad, his granddaughter Barbara accompanied him, assuming Paula's role as a traveling companion. It was, however, his daughter Eva who went with him on the first trip abroad after Paula's death. In July 1960, he participated in a small symposium intended as a follow-up to the conference on "The Word and Reality," which had taken place in January 1959—with Heidegger, but without Buber. Count Podewils sent Buber a copy of the handwritten text of Heidegger's address, and Buber had evidently studied the text carefully in preparing his lecture the following year. Delivered on July 11, 1960, at the University of Munich, the lecture—"The Word That Is Spoken"—was for the eighty-two-year-old Buber not just another occasional lecture or intellectual exercise. Although written with a controlled cadence, and articulating a fastidiously crafted conceptual dialectic, it was animated by a palpable existential earnestness.

To Buber's mind, Heidegger's understanding of the ontological structure of language ignored the intersubjective dimension of the spoken word—the fact that language is used when real and specific human beings talk to and meet one another. The ontological character of language-qua-speech act "would be completely missed," Buber averred, "if one regards [it] as existing outside of [the] personal texture of language or speech. . . . Every attempt to understand and to explain [the ontological structure] of language as accessible only when detached from the context of its actual speakers must lead us astray."[102] For the "ontological presupposition of conversation" is "the otherness of one's partner in a conversation"—and that otherness is manifest "in the moment of surprise."[103] One can never anticipate, nor should one anticipate, what the other might say, for the other is a particular, autonomous subject. Thus "the human truth of which I speak opens itself only in one's existence as a person. This [other] concrete person—in the life-space allotted to him—answers with faithfulness to the word that is spoken by him."[104]

With this affirmation, Buber concluded his lecture and brought to a full crescendo his critique of Heidegger as betraying the humanistic tradition of German philosophy and letters; the essence of his critique was that Heidegger neglected the interpersonal responsibility of one individual to the other, even to a stranger who bears no name, allowing for the excessive celebration of "superpersonal" social and political institutions in our "disintegrating human world."[105] This was not only an indictment of Heidegger, but also consistent with Buber's long-standing critique of the modern ethos that had detached the spiritual realm from the quotidian everyday world—a process in Western thought that had come to a head in Weimar Germany, with its attendant radical separation of the political from the ethical.

In his address upon receiving the Erasmus Prize in Amsterdam in July 1963, which would be his final lecture abroad, Buber spoke of the exigent need for a "believing humanism" to heal the breach between the spiritual and the everyday life of humanity. Before an audience that included Dutch royalty, he ascribed that breach to a mistaken conception of "the modern question of man concerning himself."[106] We have been led astray, he said, by "a powerful stream in German philosophy from Hegel to Heidegger, [which] sees in man the being (*das Wesen*) in whom Being (*Sein*) attains consciousness of itself."[107] According to this worldview, one should chiefly turn inward and reflect on oneself in order to attain "self-consciousness." But that focus on "the relation of the human person to himself," in effect, severs the question of the human, the life of the spirit, from "the lived life of the human person, in the life lived by each of us between birth and death."[108] In contrast, the "believing humanism" that Buber offered recentered the question of the human and the life of the spirit in the lived life of the person.

> Here humanity and faith do not appear as two separate realms each of which stands under its own signs and under its special laws: they penetrate each other, they work together, indeed, they are so centrally related to each other that we

> may say our faith has humanity as its foundation, and our humanity has our faith as its foundation.[109]

The Erasmus Prize lecture concluded a career of lecturing and teaching in Europe and Israel that had spanned nearly six decades—a career that toward the end also included many lectures and other significant teaching stints in the United States. Buber first came to the United States in 1951. Accepting an invitation to deliver the annual Israel Goldstein Lectures at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, he boarded a flight (accompanied by Paula) on October 31, 1951, from Tel Aviv to London, where he stayed for five days (meeting, among others, the poet T. S. Eliot, who years later recalled "the strong impression that I was in the company of a great man") before continuing his journey to New York. Along with the talks at the Jewish Theological Seminary, delivered between November 8 and December 21, Buber lectured to Jewish communities in Cleveland, Chicago, and Detroit, and at Dartmouth College, Haverford College, Brandeis University, Yale University, Columbia University, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Chicago. At each venue he drew enormous audiences. At the University of Chicago, more than two thousand people filled the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel to hear him lecture on Heidegger and Sartre.

Learning of the throngs that were assembling to greet Buber, Gershom Scholem, writing from Jerusalem, related to Hannah Arendt that he was told that "since Pepsi-Cola hit America there was nothing like Buber!" Scholem also asked Arendt "whether Buber already succeeded in making himself incomprehensible."[110] In fact, many did have difficulty following him, not only because of his heavily accented English—he consistently pronounced "Thou" as "Vow"—but also due to what they found to be his overly academic, ponderous exposition. The arcane Germanic inflection of his lectures, however, did not diminish the aura that surrounded his visit, but paradoxically seemed to enhance it. While in Chicago he arranged to meet with Gustav Landauer's grandson, the actor and Oscar-winning film director Mike Nichols, who at the time was a pre-med student at the University of Chicago.

In a preface to the published version of the three Israel Goldstein Lectures, which he gave in November and December 1951, Buber requested that "the reader bear in mind, that a Jew speaks here [in these lectures] to Jews, in the center of the Diaspora, in the hour when the deciding crisis begins to become manifest."[111] Held at Columbia University's capacious Horace Mann Auditorium in order to accommodate an overflowing audience, the first of the seminary lectures, "Judaism and Civilization," delineated what Buber held to be the crisis faced by Jewry both in the Diaspora and the State of Israel. Contrary to prevailing popular opinion, for Buber the crisis was not that of a conflict between civilization and religion—rather, it was the retreat from the founding principle of Judaism "to actualize the divine truth in the fullness of everyday life," and, hence, "the whole life of a people—economy, society, and state."[112] Accordingly, civilization "must incorporate the whole of the individual, his life at home and in the market place, in the temple and in the popular assembly. That is to say, it means the wholeness and unity of civilization."[113] In the long years of the Diaspora, Jewry understandably had tended to shield itself from the torments of history by withdrawing to "purer spheres" of inner spirituality.[114] But "when at last we stepped out of the ghetto into the world, worse befell us from within than had ever befallen us from without: the foundation, the unique unity of people and religion, developed a deep rift, which has since become deeper and deeper."[115]

The establishment of the State of Israel and the return of the Jews as a nation to history had not healed the rift; the political culture of the fledgling state resisted "fulfilling the demand for the integral fulfillment of divine truth and justice." But while for the infant Jewish state, confronted as it was by an imminent danger to its very existence, urgent pragmatic concerns would seem to demand immediate attention, in the Diaspora "the question of the survival of the principle of Jewish being" confronts us in its "nakedness."[116] Nowhere in the Diaspora, Buber lamented, "as far as one can see, is there a powerful striving to heal the rift and to hallow our communal life." He concluded his inaugural address to American Jewry with a challenging question: "Are we still truly Jews? Jews in our lives? Is Judaism still alive?"[117]

In the second Goldstein lecture, "The Silent Question," Buber argued that given its failure to affirm the founding principle of its divine calling, contemporary Judaism was bound to fail to satisfy those Jews who seek a spiritually and ethically meaningful existence. In the third, "The Dialogue between Heaven and Earth," he discussed the communal and political significance of the biblical injunction for Israel to regard itself as addressed by God and accountable to Her in "the totality of its life." Ideally, he said, Jewry should then be in the position to resist the modern ethos that allowed for a distinction between private and public morality, lamenting that "what is thought reprehensible in the relations between persons is [often] thought commendable in the relations between peoples."[118] Yet, Buber conceded, there are times in which "it is difficult for the individual, and [all] the more [so] for the people, to understand themselves as addressed by God; the experience of concrete answerability recedes more and more . . . in a seemingly God-forsaken space of history."[119]

The imponderability of God's apparent retreat from history is described "in a picture of startling cruelty" in Psalm 82, with its vision of God as impotent Judge—an image that so haunted Kafka while writing *The Trial* that he impulsively boarded a train from Prague to Berlin to discuss the psalm with

Buber.[120] "In our own time," Buber comments, the psalmist's cry is ours:

> How is a Jewish life with God still possible in a time in which there is an Oswiecim [Auschwitz]? The estrangement has become too cruel, the hiddenness [of God] too deep. One can still "believe" in Him who allowed these things to happen, but can one speak to Him? Can one still hear His words? Can one as an individual and as a people, enter at all in a dialogic relationship with Him? Dare we recommend to the survivors of Oswiecim, the Job of the gas chambers: "Call to Him, for He is kind, for His mercy endureth forever?"[121]

For the survivors of Auschwitz—indeed, presumably all Jews—the harrowing mystery of God's hiddenness remained inscrutable. But distinguishing them from "the tragic hero of the Greeks before a faceless fate," Buber counseled his American audience to continue "despite everything" the struggle to redeem the world, appealing for God's help. And should God's voice be heard again, it would "resemble no earlier one," but "we shall recognize it" as that of "our cruel and merciful God."[122]

Shortly after delivering this lecture, which may have been the first to broach the question of faith after Auschwitz, Buber flew to Los Angeles to assume a visiting professorship for the spring semester 1952 at the University of Judaism, the West Coast institution of Conservative Judaism and sister institution to the Jewish Theological Seminary. During this period he and Paula visited the Grand Canyon, the grandeur of which enthralled Paula in particular. Over the course of the next four months, he gave more than forty lectures (sixty in total since arriving in the United States).[123] Before returning to Israel in late April 1952, Martin and Paula visited Albert Einstein at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. Buber and Einstein had been friends since serving together on the committee overseeing the founding of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which they had both hoped would not become another "Diplomfabrik," a mere factory for the production of diplomas. Einstein's son-in-law reported to Buber that "Einstein gave me a very enthusiastic account of your visit."[124]

Buber's visits to the United States were in many ways an outgrowth of his relationship with Maurice S. Friedman, who was then a young assistant professor at Sarah Lawrence College. Friedman had written a doctoral dissertation on Buber, which he submitted to the University of Chicago in 1950.[125] In a letter he wrote to Buber, delivered personally by Friedman's mother who was at the time on a visit to Israel, Friedman asked Buber whether he would read the dissertation, which Friedman was preparing for possible publication.[126] Buber readily agreed to do so, and having learned about Friedman's personal problems from his mother, also offered his psychological counsel: "I will read [your dissertation] and send you my remarks. Another thing may prove more important yet. I want you to write down your life experience for me—not thoughts about your life, but the tale itself. It must be done of course in utter frankness, but without self-analysis. It will not be easy, but you must overcome the difficulties. I shall read it attentively; I shall not tell you about any impression of it, but the knowledge will show me what I may be able to do for you."[127] So began an exceedingly fruitful relationship. Inspired by Buber's counsel (which was shaped by Buber's long-standing interest in psychology and psychiatry), Friedman made seminal contributions to the development of dialogical psychotherapy. He also edited and translated a number of Buber's works into English, which together with the revised version of his dissertation served to promote Buber's thought in the English-speaking world, creating a demand for Buber as a speaker and teacher.

Through his growing interest in adapting Buber's principle of dialogue to psychotherapy, Friedman befriended Leslie Farber, director of the Washington School of Psychiatry, which promoted a non-Freudian "existential psychology." At the behest of Farber, Friedman wrote Buber to inquire whether he would accept an invitation to come to Washington, D.C., and address Farber and his colleagues. In his reply, Buber candidly noted that although he did not quite see himself "in such an institute," it would be an opportunity for him and his wife to visit America again: "But the fact is that a few days before receiving your letter my wife said to me: 'We did not see enough of the grand wild nature of America.' (We saw only the Great [*sic*] Canyon that impressed us very much, but the course of the Hudson [River] we saw only from the railway window), and I answered: 'Who knows—we may see more of it yet.'"[128] He thus indicated that he would accept Farber's invitation if the trip would "enable us to see the scenery more intensely"; and would not "renew the absorbing and tiring experience of the [previous] American lecture-tour."[129]

In May 1956, Buber received a formal invitation from Farber to give the William Alanson White Memorial lectures, centered on the contribution of "philosophical anthropology to psychiatry." In March 1957, a month after his seventy-ninth birthday, Buber and his wife arrived in the United States. Over the next month, he delivered four public lectures and concurrently led a seminar of seven sessions on dreams and the unconscious in which some thirty psychiatrists and a few philosophers participated. The lectures were later included in a 1965 volume *The Knowledge of Man*, comprising his essays on philosophical anthropology.[130]

Learning of Buber's lectures in Washington, D.C., the coordinator of religious affairs at the University of Michigan, the Reverend DeWitt C. Baldwin, invited Buber to Ann Arbor for a conference on his philosophy of dialogue. The high point of the three-day conference was on Thursday evening, April 18. Before an audience of four hundred, Buber engaged in an hour-and-a-half conversation with the American psychologist Carl

Rogers, who was among the founders of the "humanistic," or client-centered, approach to psychology. At the time a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago, Rogers initiated the unscripted conversation (which Buber reluctantly agreed to be tape recorded) with what he acknowledged might be construed as an impertinent question, but also an understandable one: "I have wondered: How have you lived so deeply in interpersonal relationships and gained such an understanding of the human individual, without being a psychotherapist? . . . And so, um, if it is not too personal, I would be interested in knowing what were the channels of knowing that enabled you to really learn so deeply of people and of relationships?"[131]

Though taken aback by Rogers's question, Buber replied with autobiographical candor. In a verbatim transcript of his reply, he gropes at times for the right words, occasionally pausing to collect his thoughts:

> It's rather a biographical question. Eh, eh, I think I must give instead of one answer, two. I am not entirely a stranger in, let me say, psychiatry, because when I was a student—it's long ago—I studied three terms psychiatry, and what they call in Germany "Psychiatrische-Klinique." I was just, eh I was most interested in the latter. You see, I have studied psychiatry not in order to become a psychotherapist . . . I studied it three terms . . . I was also very young, inexperienced, and not a very understanding young man. But I had the feeling that I wanted to know about man, and man in the so-called pathological state. . . .
>
> But what *mainly* constituted what you ask, was something else. It was a certain inclination to meet people, and as far as possible to, just to change if possible something in the other, *but also* to let me be changed by him. At any event, I had no resistance, I had no resistance—I put no resistance to it [to being changed by the other]. I already then as a young man—I felt I have not the right to want to change another

> [person] if I am not open to be changed by him as far as it is legitimate. Something is to be changed and his touch, his contact, is able to change me more or less.[132]

Buber then referred for the first time publicly, either orally or in print, to the impact that the “barbaric” assassination of a “great friend”—Gustav Landauer—had on him and his understanding of the encounter with the other: “Just when it [the war] was finished, it finished, eh, by a certain episode in uh May 1919 when a friend of mine, a great friend, a great man [Gustav Landauer], was killed by uh, anti-revolutionary soldiers in a very barbaric way, and I, now again once more—and this was the last time—I was compelled to imagine just this killing, but not in an optical way alone, but may I say so, just with my body.” (Rogers: “With your feelings.”) “And this was the decisive moment, after which, after some days and nights eh in this state, I eh felt, ‘Oh, something has been done to me.’ ”[133]

> And from then on, eh, eh, these meetings with people, particularly with young, young people um were the, eh—became in a somewhat different form. I had a decisive experience, experience of four years, a very concrete experience, and eh from now on, I had to give something eh more than just eh eh my inclination to exchange thoughts and feelings, and so on. Eh, I had to give the fruit of an experience. (Rogers: “M-hmmm, mhmmm. Sounds as though you’re saying the knowledge, perhaps, or some of it, came in the twenties, but then some of the wisdom you have about uh interpersonal relationships came from wanting to meet people without wanting to dominate. And then—I see this as kind of a threefold answer—and the third, from really living the World War, but living it in your own feelings and imagination.”)[134]

Responding to Rogers’s intervention, Buber replied: “Hmmm. Just so. Because this latter [experience] was really, I cannot eh-eh say it in another language, it was really living *with* those people. People wounded, killed in the war." (Roger: "You felt their wounds.") "Yes. But feeling is not sufficiently strong."[135]

Although Buber did not elaborate on the autobiographical significance of "the decisive experience" of the World War—of "imagining the real" of the wounds and brutal death of others as his own experience, it may be viewed as a seminal moment in the crystallization of his interest in dialogue, in attentive listening and a fully engaged response to the life-experience of others.

Immediately after the conference, Buber and his wife flew to New York City, where he would meet with two of his friends from Germany: the Protestant theologian and colleague at the University of Frankfurt Paul Tillich, and Abraham Joshua Heschel, who had taught for a while at the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus when it reopened in the 1930s under Buber's directorship. Buber also led a seminar on biblical faith, organized by Jacob Taubes, then a professor at Columbia University. The seminar was restricted to faculty from various universities in the New York City area; among the participants were the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, the scholar of mythology Joseph Campbell, and the philosopher Walter Kaufmann, who in 1970 would publish a new translation of *I and Thou.*

Buber and his wife returned to the United States less than a year later, as guests of the Institute for Advanced Study. They arrived several weeks after Martin had celebrated his eightieth birthday in Jerusalem, and in conveying his birthday greetings, one of Buber's admirers, writing from London, imagined "a vast procession of young (mainly young) and old people is on its way to Jerusalem—Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, heathens. Everyone has a letter addressed to Martin Buber in his hand, on which is written in large letters: Thanks, Health, Love, Peace, Humanity."[136] Buber, indeed, received many greetings. Theodor Heuss, president of the Federal Republic of Germany, prefaced his birthday wishes by recalling the speech Buber gave upon receiving the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade:

> I believe many of your fellow citizens in the State of Israel watched you embark on your journey from Jerusalem to Frankfurt with feelings of displeasure. You ignored these, for you have always been an inwardly independent person. You came and spoke. We were grateful that you were there, and when you, who have called yourself an "arch-Jew," spoke with clear, distinct definitions and without any inherently impossible attempt to gloss over anything but with the discrimination of a spiritually free nature about the tragedy of the Jewish fate and about [my people's] compliance with a brutality that will forever be connected with the darkest chapter of German history, all of us who listened to you were profoundly moved.[137]

The novelist Hermann Hesse, who in 1949 had nominated Buber for a Nobel Prize in literature, congratulated him on his "noble work and life," and expressed his wishes that he "continue to be a loving teacher and admonisher to your people and the world."[138] From his hospital in Lambaréné, French Equatorial Africa, Albert Schweitzer penned a rather somber birthday missive: "Actually, condolences are in order for an eightieth birthday, because from that time on everything becomes harder every year. One can only express one's wishes that in this situation the person celebrating an anniversary might fare as well as possible."[139]

In contrast to his lugubrious friend of five decades, Buber greeted his eightieth year with exultant gratitude. In a printed text in German and Hebrew, sent to each of his many well-wishers, he wrote:

> It is necessary time and again to thank one's fellow man, even when he has not done anything especially for one. For what, then? For the fact that when he met me, he had truly met

> me, that he opened his eyes, and did not confuse me with anyone else, that he opened his ears and reliably heard what I had to say to him, yes, that he opened what I addressed, his well-closed heart. This hour in which I write is an hour of great thanks; *before me*, in a beautiful huge box made by my granddaughter [Barbara], are all the greetings received on this milestone day of my life's path from people who have physically and spiritually met me on the way, and *in my memory* are all the greetings [said to me] directly. The gratitude that I express here to all is not directed to a totality but each individual.[140]

Buoyed by the cornucopia of birthday greetings, Buber would have surely applied to himself what he had admiringly said of a venerable colleague, "Old age is a glorious thing when one had not unlearned what it means to begin anew."[141] The three-month fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Study allowed the eighty-year-old Buber not only to complete projects, but also to begin several new ones. "Princeton means for me quiet and work with few and short interruptions."[142] One exception was a lecture he gave in New York City on April 30, 1958, to the American Friends of Ichud. A transcript of the lecture, "On Zionism and Modern Israel," was published in the organization's newsletter.[143] In this memorial lecture marking the tenth anniversary of the death of Judah Magnes, Buber reviewed the divergent paths to the realization of Zionism, those who pursued realpolitik as well as the advocates of Arab-Jewish cooperation. In the course of the lecture, he mentioned in passing that among the former there were those who had adopted the tactics of Hitler by putting their trust in power rather than in the spirit. Widely cited in the American Jewish and Israeli press, this comment was severely criticized. Initially stunned by the opprobrium, he soon acknowledged that he was at fault:

> I have seen now—too late, this is my own fault—that the text in the Newsletter is somehow misleading. . . . In my notes I find the following sentence: "In the days of Hitler the majority of the Jewish people saw that millions of Jews have been killed with impunity, and a certain part [of the Jewish people] made their own doctrine that history does not go the way of the spirit but the way of power."[144]

In a letter to the editor of the Tel Aviv daily, *Haaretz*, he asked that his clarification be published, and noted, "I must yet add that this part of the Jewish people has not after the defeat of Hitler changed its view. I now oppose as I did then with all my might those who uphold and act in accord with the doctrine that 'not through spirit but power.'"[145] He subsequently published in both the Hebrew and English press an elaboration of his position.[146] In a letter to Maurice Friedman, whom he asked to have the article translated into English and to find an appropriate forum in which to publish it, Buber apologized for "the confusion I have caused concerning the Hitler passage. I do not exactly understand how I did it. My heart cannot recover from it, because here, as far as I can see, is the first negative sign of my advanced age, of which I had hoped to be spared. I like being old. I like the strange experiences of old age. I like even its burden and difficulties, but I hate causing confusion."[147]

In early June 1958, at the end of his fellowship at the Institute, Martin and Paula left the United States for Europe in early June by ship for a relaxing voyage, followed by a vacation in Italy—which would come to a sad conclusion with Paula's death in Venice.