

MARTIN BUBER: A CENTENARY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF DIALOGUE

The current issue of *Filozofia* is dedicated to Martin Buber (1878 – 1965), an important Jewish philosopher and religious thinker, indeed polymath, of the 20th century, on the occasion of the centenary of the first publication of his most famous and popular book, *I and Thou (Ich und Du)*, on his philosophy of dialogue. This small yet powerful book bears the date 1923, although it was in fact published in December 1922. This year, the appearance of this seminal book is being commemorated in various ways around the world, not only by scholars but by the general public as well: there are scholarly conferences, popular lectures, and a number of publications rediscovering the legacy and relevance of Buber's dialogical thought for today's world from a variety of perspectives. There are also special centennial editions of this major work by Buber. In this context, I must also mention the forthcoming first Slovak translation of *I and Thou*. All this indicates that the dialogue between Buber and his readers, which began in 1923 with the publication of *I and Thou*, is still very much in evidence today, in 2023. Now, as then, it is above all about giving impetus to the realisation of interpersonal relationships based on mutual trust.

At this point I would like to thank the two editorial offices of the journal *Filozofia*, the former headed by František Gáher and the current one under Jon Stewart, for their friendly, helpful and professional approach throughout the process of preparing this monothematic issue.

I am delighted that Paul Mendes-Flohr, Professor Emeritus of Modern Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago, not to mention leading scholar and respected worldwide authority on Buber's life and work, accepted the invitation to contribute to this issue. In his insightful essay, he traces the way in which Buber's philosophy of dialogue evolved and crystallised before culminating in his book *I and Thou*, where he develops the thesis that authentic religious life is realised through the sanctification of the everyday through I-Thou relationships. In particular, he highlights Buber's reflections on epistemological and ontological issues relating to the *principium individuationis* as the ontological ground of being.

In his contribution, the renowned Slovak philosopher Professor Peter Šajda compares Buber's early reflections on existential-social processes during the period of the First World War with those of the well-known German writer Ernst Jünger. Based on an analysis of selected writings by both authors, he concludes that there are four interesting similarities in their descriptions of the individuals who fought in the conflict and their war experiences.

In my own paper I discuss Buber's concept of responsibility as a fundamental theme in his work from the dialogic period of his thought. I draw attention to two key moments in his biography that played a crucial role in his philosophical shift from ecstasy to responsibility, and I examine four ways in which individuals can avoid taking responsibility for their life.

In the next article, the Czech philosopher of art Jan Motal draws on the few existing studies of Buber's aesthetics. He attempts to explain Buber's philosophy of art in terms of both his early work and his philosophy of dialogue. This article is particularly interesting in revealing the political significance of artistic creation, whereby the author links Buber's philosophy of art with his later political project of "building the kingdom of God."

Environmental philosophy is one of the main topics of interest for the young philosopher Alžbeta Kuchtová, a fellow of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. It is also the theme of her review essay of *Martin Buber's Theopolitics*, a book by Samuel Hayim Brody, in which she analyzes the conflict between hierarchy in nature and human society and discusses the meaning of humanity in relation to humans and nature.

In conclusion, I would like to express the modest hope that this issue will appeal to readers and provide impetus for the life of dialogue, in addition to intellectual stimulation.

Michal Bizoň
Guest Editor