5 Martin Buber

Bearing Witness to an Experience

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I must philosophize; there is no other way to my goal, but my goal itself cannot be grasped philosophically. […] To bear witness to an experience is my basic intention, but I am not primarily concerned with exhorting men; rather, with showing that experience to be one accessible to all in some measure, in some form.

—Martin Buber

Martin Buber was one of the leading philosophers of communication of the twentieth century, although he denied the label philosopher. The great Russian literary and cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin even called Buber “the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century.” Buber was not, however, a systematic, mainstream, or “normal” philosopher. As Laurence Silberstein has argued, Buber is better regarded as what Richard Rorty called an “edifying philosopher,” who seeks to critique the normal philosophy of the day and is more interested in entering into conversation than in creating a new, more accurate representation of some eternal essence. Sidestepping systematization, Buber insisted, “I witnessed for experience and appealed to experience.” He spoke from his experience and to the experience of others, trying to “point a way beyond the perennial alienation that characterizes modern life” (106):

I have no teaching. I only point to something. I point to reality, I point to something in reality that had not or had too little been seen. I take him who listens to me by the hand and lead him to the window. I open the window and point to what is outside.

I have no teaching, but I carry on a conversation. (693)
His concerns, as Silberstein points out, were more pragmatic than theoretical; he sought to “change ways of thinking in order to change ways of living.”

Some have called Buber an existentialist. Although Buber suspected all isms, including existentialism, he reluctantly accepted the label after a question from the existential psychotherapist Rollo May:

If those be called existentialists who transpose human existence itself into the center of rational contemplation, then one could call me that. Only one thing must not remain unnoticed: everything else may be discussed purely speculatively, but not our own existence. The genuine existentialist must himself “exist.” An existentialism that contents itself with theory is a contradiction; existence is not one philosophical theme among others. Here witness is made.7

Philosopher Walter Kaufmann, translator of one edition of I and Thou and an occasional critic of Buber, explained such concrete witness:

If we find the heart of existentialism in the protest against systems, concepts, and abstractions, coupled with a resolve to remain faithful to concrete experience and above all to the challenge of human existence […] one might well conclude that in reality there is only one existentialist, and he is no existentialist but Martin Buber.8

Although not in the philosophical mainstream and not easily categorized, Buber is surely among the better known of the philosophers considered in this book. Buber was nominated for Nobel Prizes in Literature and Peace. A volume in the prestigious Library of Living Philosophers series was devoted to his thought. His classic work, Ich und Du (in English, I and Thou) has been translated into numerous languages9 and has sold probably hundreds of thousands of copies worldwide.10 Further, scholarship on Buber in the communication field is not a recent addition to the literature, dating at least to the early 1970s.11 In one recent survey of approaches to dialogue in communication, Buber was listed first among six leading thinkers in dialogue theory.12 Work related to Buber has continued to the present.13

Given Buber’s international renown and the four decades of work in communication, it may be surprising that we suggest that Buber remains both underappreciated and misunderstood by communication scholars. Although most are probably familiar with the terms “I-Thou” and “dialogue,” we suspect that far fewer have studied their foundations and that other aspects of his work are even less well known. Even some noteworthy critics of Buber’s basic work frequently evidence considerable misunderstanding of it. Thus, we seek to resuscitate Buber’s views of communication and to describe fresh directions in which his ideas about communication could be extended.
In the first half of the chapter, we describe Buber as a philosopher of communication, beginning with his biography. We then link his foundational concepts to human communication, consider his impact on human studies worldwide, and characterize the reception he has received within the communication field. In the second half, we reconsider the conventional wisdom about Buber within the field and describe how Buber’s concepts could provide new texture for additional areas of communication studies.

**Biography**

Martin Buber was born in Vienna, Austria in February 1878. Three years later, his mother shattered their home, leaving abruptly without goodbyes (later, it was learned that she had gone to Russia with an army officer and remarried). His father took Martin to his own parents’ home, where he was raised until the age of 14. His mother’s departure was a key episode that, he said, “had a decisive influence on the nature and direction of my thinking.”

His biographer Maurice Friedman called it one of the three most important events in Buber’s life. In an “autobiographical fragment,” Buber recalled a conversation with an older neighbor girl a year after his mother had left. He still expected his mother to return, though he had not until then voiced that expectation to anyone. Standing on the balcony of his grandparents’ home, the girl said “No, she will never come back.” Buber never doubted the truth of those words, later recalling the incident to illustrate his concept of “mismeeiting” (“Vergegnung”; the failure of meeting between persons). He concluded that “all that I have learned about genuine meeting in the course of my life had its first origin in that hour on the balcony,” recognizing both the failure of meeting with his mother and the genuine meeting with the older girl.

His childhood was marked also by a deep connection—meeting—with his grandparents, especially his grandmother. From her he learned to love language, particularly German. His early education from his grandparents and private tutors consisted primarily of languages—Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and French, as well as his native German. His grandfather, a learned businessman, ignited his love of scholarship and desire to translate the Bible and other historical texts from Hebrew.

Buber began formal schooling at the age of 10, one of a few Jewish students in an Austrian gymnasium where Polish was the language of instruction. His university education began at the University of Vienna, where he spent two semesters studying literature, art history, and philosophy. What impressed him most from his studies, he wrote in Meetings, was not so much
the lectures as the seminars, in which he found a “regulated and yet free intercourse between teacher and students, the common interpretations of texts, in which the master at times took part with a rare humility, as if he too were learning something new, and the free exchange of question and answer,” which, he continued, disclosed to him “the true actuality of the spirit, as a ‘between.’” The “between” became one of the crucial concepts in his philosophical anthropology and philosophy of communication. He continued his studies at the University of Leipzig and the University of Zurich, and received his PhD in 1904 from the University of Vienna.

Buber lived in Germany for much of his adult life. He worked as a writer and editor, established himself in the intellectual landscape of the early twentieth century, and was active in various political causes, including Zionism. The end of an early mystical phase of his thinking was marked by what he called “A Conversion.” In 1914, shortly before the First World War began, a young man had come to speak with Buber, as young people especially did throughout his life. Although Buber spent the morning in “religious enthusiasm,” he was friendly and attentive to the man but failed to “guess the questions which he had not put.” Later, Buber learned that the visitor had come “not casually, but borne by destiny, not for a chat but for a decision” and that he had “died at the front out of a despair that did not oppose his own death.” Buber understood this as a judgment on his own life. The issue was not that he had failed to prevent the man’s death—he couldn’t be assured of doing that regardless of what he said or did—but rather that he had withheld himself, failing to respond as a whole person and with his real presence. He later called this existential guilt. The conversion, then, involved giving up the usual sense of “religious” in favor of a commitment to the messiness of human meeting, the power of immediate presence, an awareness of others in their uniqueness, and a recognition of concrete lived reality.

Shortly thereafter, Buber began work on what would become his most famous work, I and Thou, “to which everything written before moves and from which everything written after stems.” I and Thou was published in December 1922,19 and the next year, he accepted a professorship at the University of Frankfurt, which he resigned a decade later shortly after Hitler came to power. Buber stayed in Germany another five years, organizing and teaching adult education courses for other German Jews. Only in 1938, after long negotiations to leave the country, which had become too dangerous for Jews, did he emigrate to Palestine and a position in social philosophy at the newly created Hebrew University, which he had helped found. He retired from the university in 1951 to do more traveling. In the next decade, he made three trips to the United States to present lectures and seminars. He died in June 1965.
Worldwide Influence

Even as a young man, Buber was a significant and well-known intellectual. As early as 1913, a German publication devoted a special issue to him.20 His early work as an editor brought him into contact with other writers and intellectuals, and his wife, Paula (Winkler) Buber, a publishing novelist (using the pen name Georg Munk), also helped widen his literary circle. His fame grew enormously following the publication of I and Thou and even further with its translation to English in 1937. Among the many celebrated intellectuals who knew and corresponded with Buber were S. Y. Agnon, Albert Camus, Albert Einstein, T. S. Eliot, Dag Hammarskjöld, Hermann Hesse, Robert Maynard Hutchins, Franz Kafka, François Mauriac, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bertrand Russell, and Albert Schweitzer.21 Considering the range and depth of Buber’s intellectual interlocutors, it is not surprising that his work influenced a dozen or more disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, education, psychotherapy, theology, theatre, political science, literature, and, as we show, communication, a young upstart field that did not exist in its present form during his lifetime.

Although he received many of the most prestigious literary and cultural honors of his time, one important award escaped him. On several occasions friends and supporters nominated Buber for a Nobel Prize. He was nominated first for the literature award by the German novelist Hermann Hesse, a Nobel winner himself, who cited especially Buber’s Tales of the Hasidim. In 1956, a German university professor nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize, and in 1959, he was again nominated for the Prize in Literature. Later that year, Buber was nominated yet again, this time by Swedish diplomat and United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, who himself received a Nobel Peace Prize after his death in 1961.

Hammarskjöld had written to Buber in April 1958, stressing “how strongly I have responded to what you write” and saying that his and Buber’s general philosophies were a case of “parallel ways.”22 This is remarkable testament for the pragmatic import of Buber’s dialogic philosophy from a man experienced in resolving dangerous international conflicts. Hammarskjöld’s Nobel recommendation for Buber received “distinguished support” from others and was forwarded to the parliament of Norway, which decides the winner of the Peace Prize. What follows was somewhat unusual. Apparently, the Norwegian parliament thought the prize could not be given singly to an Israeli or an Arab, but could be given jointly to representatives of both sides in the Middle East dispute, even though Buber could hardly be said to have advocated the positions being advanced by Israel’s government.23 Eventually, Aubrey Hodes reports, unwilling to give the Peace
Prize to a Jew from Israel and unable to identify an Arab counterpart of Buber’s stature with whom to share it, the committee selected another recipient.24

Hammarskjöld also expressed his esteem for Buber through his plan to translate I and Thou into Swedish, a project that died with the diplomat in a tragic plane crash on a mission to the Congo. In honor of Hammarskjöld, his publisher secured other translators and produced a Swedish translation the next year.25 Before he died, Hammarskjöld had also renominated Buber for a Nobel Prize in Literature.

In 1962, Buber was nominated a final time. Maurice Friedman and the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr had written privately to a number of influential world thinkers seeking support for another nomination of Buber for the Literature Prize. Having written to such luminaries as W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot, Albrecht Goes, Gabriel Marcel, and Hermann Hesse, Friedman described the response as “immediate and wholehearted.” Although some newspapers even reported that Buber was the favorite, once again he was overlooked, perhaps again on political grounds. A friend of Buber’s, Ernst Simon, reportedly said that the Swedish ambassador to Israel had told him that because of the murder of the president of the Swedish Red Cross by Jewish terrorists more than two decades earlier, it was “still impossible” for an Israeli, even Buber, to receive the Nobel Prize.26

Robert Maynard Hutchins, who for many years led the University of Chicago, was another internationally famous intellectual who shared Buber’s concern for dialogue. They met in 1952 during Buber’s first trip to the United States and evidently had corresponded previously.27 Hutchins knew Buber’s books quite well, and Buber even quoted Hutchins in a talk he gave at a parting celebration of his first U.S. tour, held in Carnegie Hall: “The essence of the Civilization of the Dialogue is communication. The Civilization of the Dialogue presupposes mutual respect and understanding, it does not presuppose agreement.” Buber then commented, “As a means to this, Hutchins recommends showing interest and understanding for what the other has to say.”28

Hutchins proposed a global dialogue to be held in the United States that would bring together spiritual leaders from around the world to discuss issues facing the international community. This would produce great value, he thought, through the publicity and press coverage it would receive. However much Buber would have supported a real international dialogue of the sort proposed, he said he “opposed rather strongly the introducing of an atmosphere of publicity into such talks, one drop of publicity being sufficient to poison the whole undertaking.”29 Friedman speculated that Buber’s response
to Hutchins’s proposal might have been reflected in a paragraph Buber later wrote for “Elements of the Interhuman.” The success of his 1957 public—and publicized—dialogue with Carl Rogers, however, led Buber to ask that it be dropped when the essay was reprinted in The Knowledge of Man. The deleted paragraph read:

In our time when the understanding of the essence of genuine dialogue has become so rare, its presuppositions are so fundamentally misunderstood by the false sense of public life that it is imagined that such a dialogue can be carried on before a public of interested listeners, with the help of appropriate publicity. But a public debate, no matter how “high level,” cannot be spontaneous, or immediate, or unreserved; a radio discussion put on to be listened to is separated by a chasm from genuine dialogue.30

Buber and Hutchins met again at least twice during Buber’s second trip to the United States in 1957, before and after his dialogue with Rogers, and Hutchins later participated in the “philosophical interrogation” of Buber.31

Buber’s concern for the quality of communication, therefore, was reflected in his personal history and his relationships. It blended with his style of valuing, and emerged as a philosophical anthropology. In exploring problems of communication, he emphasized both the depth of persons’ unique commitments to stand their own ground and also, as he demonstrated with Rogers, the willingness to be surprised in ways that lead to authentic relational change. We should examine this philosophical blend more specifically.

**Conceptual Foundations of Communication**

Buber’s significant contributions to communication theory began with his classic, I and Thou. Silverstein thought that its conceptual framework “established the basic premises for all of his later writings.”32 Indeed, Buber believed that the second half of his life was largely devoted to a working out of the themes and implications of that volume.

The opening sentence of I and Thou announces Buber’s radical departure from at least two centuries of philosophy: “To man,” he begins, “the world is twofold in accordance with his twofold attitude.” These two folds, he explains, are related to the two “primary words” that humans speak, “I-Thou” and “I-It.” Rather than relating to the world solely in a subject-object way (which he called “I-It”), Buber claimed that humans are also capable of another, more direct mode of encountering and knowing the world, which he called the “I-Thou.” The I-It is the orientation humans have to people and things when relating to them as objects of use. Of course, such an orientation is essential in people’s lives—“without It,” Buber said, “man cannot live.”
But, he continued, “he who lives with It alone is not a man.” Buber later termed the I-Thou relation the \textit{interhuman} or the \textit{dialogical}. In these opening sentences, Buber makes a second revolutionary epistemological claim: “Primary words do not describe something that might exist independently of them, but being spoken they bring about existence.”\textsuperscript{33} Thus, Buber was one of the first to argue that speech functions constitutively, that we construct our worlds through our talk.\textsuperscript{34}

Communication is central not only to Buber’s epistemological claim but also to his ontology. Consider two key sentences from \textit{I and Thou}: “In the beginning is relation” and “All real living is meeting.”\textsuperscript{35} What was most real for Buber was neither the individual person, much less his or her inner life, nor the group. Rather, Buber’s ontology is grounded in “the between,” which can be created by no person alone. This is the realm of the “interhuman,” the concern for an elemental human “with.” Much later in his life, in the essay “What Is Man?” Buber wrote that “the fundamental fact of human existence is man with man.”\textsuperscript{36}

Buber’s scholarly career continued another 40 years after the publication of \textit{I and Thou}. Many of his most important works from that period, especially as they relate to his philosophy of communication, were collected in two volumes, \textit{Between Man and Man} and \textit{The Knowledge of Man}, both published in the year of his death. In them, his vocabulary tended to shift from I-Thou and I-It to “dialogue.” Ken Kramer defines Buber’s term \textit{dialogue} as involving “open, direct, mutual, present communication (spoken or silent) between persons who speak spontaneously without withholding or promoting an agenda.”\textsuperscript{37}

Buber distinguished among three kinds of dialogue. \textit{Genuine dialogue} or real dialogue, whether spoken or silent, occurs when “each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them.” This is rare. \textit{Technical dialogue} occurs because of the need for transitory reciprocity or a degree of objective understanding between persons, whether between coworkers puzzling over a task, strangers seeking and giving directions, or family members planning the evening meal. In these, and a thousand other cases, however, Buber allowed that genuine dialogue is “continually hidden in all kinds of odd corners”\textsuperscript{38} and occasionally breaks to the surface in surprising and even inopportune ways. \textit{Monologue disguised as dialogue} involves people speaking “in strangely tortuous and circuitous ways.” Buber provided several examples of this, including a debate in which ideas are expressed so they “strike home in the sharpest way” and without the speakers really being present to each other as persons;
a conversation in which someone seeks only to make a particular impression on the other; and a friendly chat or the talk of lovers, if the focus is more on the self than on one’s partner. Buber used a vivid metaphor to describe such examples—the “underworld of faceless specters of dialogue.” Dialogue should also not be confused with engaging in mere “social activity.” Dialogue is not accomplished by social immersion or maintaining multiple friendships, nor are relative solitude or talkativeness necessarily associated with monologue. As Buber explained, “The life of dialogue is not one in which you have much to do with men, but one in which you really have to do with those with whom you have to do” (20).

Conceiving of dialogue spatially, Buber thought that the “basic movement of the life of dialogue is the turning towards the other” (22). Of course, this happens every day and even in such nonmetaphorical ways as turning to face the other to speak or listen. But when people turn not merely with their bodies but with their essential being, with openness and responsiveness, listening to the other, a dialogic partnership may flourish. By contrast, monologue is characterized not by turning away, but by reflexion, a bending back upon the self, where, rather than meet the other in his or her particularity, the other exists only as part of one’s self. This, Buber says, makes dialogue a fiction and the possibilities for real interpersonal relationship only a game.

Three problems impede the life of dialogue, according to Buber: the invasion of seeming, the inadequacy of interpersonal perception, and the tendency to influence others through attempting to impose one’s views.39 For Buber, the duality of being and seeming is the “essential problem of the sphere of the interhuman”; being “proceeds from what one really is” and seeming “from what one wishes to seem” (75–6). Of course, no person lives entirely in one or the other, but often one or the other predominates:

Whatever the meaning of the word “truth” may be in other realms, in the interhuman realm it means that men communicate themselves to one another as what they are. It does not depend on one saying to the other everything that occurs to him, but only on his letting no seeming creep in between himself and the other. It does not depend on one letting himself go before another, but on his granting to the man to whom he communicates himself a share in his being. (77)

The second impediment to a life of dialogue concerns the difficulty of perceiving persons as they are: “The chief presupposition for the rise of genuine dialogue is that each should regard his partner as the very one he is” (79). To be aware of an other in this way requires perceiving and understanding the other as a whole person, and yet in full concreteness—to imagine the “dynamic centre” that characterizes the other’s every utterance, action, and
attitude. Buber sometimes called this personal making present, and at other times imagining the real, inclusion, or experiencing the other side—a “bold swinging [...] into the life of the other” (81). Of course, the other may not respond similarly, in which case “the dialogue can die in seed. But if mutual-
ity stirs, then the interhuman blossoms into genuine dialogue” (ibid.).

The third impediment concerns two distinct ways of influencing another person, imposing and unfolding. Buber associated imposing with the propagandist, who has no real interest in the other as a person, is oblivious to the reality of the other, and seeks only to impose his or her way on the other. The genuine educator, however, functions to facilitate the unfolding of the forces in the other that are already present and need only to be realized. Both are interested in influencing or affecting the other, but the true educator takes into account the other in his or her wholeness and uniqueness, and seeks to help unfold the other’s potential.

A final element of Buber’s conception of communication, confirmation, is both a relational quality of the interhuman and a consequence of all genu-
ine human dialogue:

In human society at all its levels persons confirm one another in a practical way to some extent or other in their personal qualities and capacities, and a society may be termed human in the measure to which its members confirm one another. (67)

“Actual humanity,” Buber insisted, “exists only where this capacity unfolds” (68). Confirmation involves accepting and acknowledging the other, as he or she is and can become. Of course, it can also involve conflict, in which someone stands his or her ground and attempts to hear the real other person with whom he or she is relating. In so doing, they confirm one another as persons, as, in Buber’s poetical metaphor, it is “from one man to another that the heavenly bread of self-being is passed” (71).

In summary, we note three hallmarks of Buber’s concept of dialogic communication. First, his philosophy of communication encourages a genuineness or authenticity that, although not requiring full disclosure, nevertheless discourages or limits pretense, self-oriented personae, and interpersonal abdication. This open spirit was manifest not just in Buber’s work but also in how he lived his life—with intensity, enthusiasm, and commitment, if not with universal popularity. Second, Buber stressed an awareness of others as unique and whole persons, an attitude that encourages turning toward the other, imagining the reality of the other, receiving the other as a partner, and hence confirming the other as a person. Third, in an authentic relationship, one might struggle hard to affect the other, but never to the exclusion of be-
ing open to self-change in the process. Dialogue is no calculus for manipula-
tion, although persuasion often happens within its sphere. It depends on a respect and a willingness to allow a mutual reality and possibility to unfold, rather than on the imposition of ideas monologically. The human experience is to seek both unity and individuation.

Thus, Buber’s philosophical conception of communication is marked by his appreciation for polarities in tension, as Avraham Shapira understood:

The existential duality that characterized Buber was embodied in ways of conceiving and thinking based principally on polarity. For him this meant the refusal to view opposing (and even contradictory) realms as dichotomies, that is, as mutually exclusive; instead, he saw them as conditioned upon each other. For him polarity is primarily a living, existential experience, from which are derived his hermeneutic methods and philosophical discourse. As this polarity developed within him, he consolidated on its basis an approach to creation, to man, to nature, and to history. […] His writings always embody tensions between ways of thinking that are difficult to reconcile with each other. He seeks to relate them to each other and to deduce “the unity of the life of the spirit” from them.41

Buber’s dualities are not simplistic Manichean dualisms, much less distinct dichotomies, but robust polarities, which Friedman called ideal types.42 Buber does not ask people to choose either I-Thou or I-It, being or seeming, person or individual, distance or relation, imposing or unfolding, or even good and evil. Rather, Buber would have persons live in the tension between these polarities or dualities, and recognize how the poles interdefine one another, as do the yin and the yang, and to see both their connection and their distinctiveness.43 The concept of the “between” is inherently dual, as it cannot exist without the active participation of two parties, and even dialogue itself is a tensional practice: “Buber’s philosophical anthropology was neither simply monologic nor simply dialogic but dualistic or polar, highlighting human reality as the continuous management of the tension between monologue and dialogue.”44

Reception within the Communication Discipline

Although renowned internationally, Buber was not well known in the communication field until well after his death. He was, however, the first dialogically oriented theorist to interest communication scholars, perhaps because he was featured in Floyd Matson and Ashley Montagu’s pivotal collection, The Human Dialogue: Perspectives on Communication, which located a variety of dialogically inclined thinkers within a communication perspective. Among the earliest persistent advocates of Buber and his dialogue in the communication field were Richard Johannesen and John
Stewart, each of whom wrote key articles featuring Buber in one of the communication discipline’s leading journals, the Quarterly Journal of Speech. This and other early work consisted primarily of describing dialogue and probing its intellectual roots.

Researchers then began exploring the similarities and differences between various conceptions of dialogue, almost always with Buber as a central focus. Ron Arnett took exception to work that linked Buber and Carl Rogers within a single concept of dialogue, which led to an exchange with Anderson on this issue. Shortly thereafter, Arnett published a book on Buber’s dialogue and an article arguing for multiple approaches to dialogue.\(^5\) Ken Cissna and Rob Anderson wrote an article exploring Rogers’s concept of dialogue, and began our study of the 1957 dialogue between Buber and Rogers.\(^6\) By the early 1990s, we, along with Arnett, were coediting the first collection on dialogue theory in the field; The Reach of Dialogue attempted to define the central concept of dialogue, to extend its relevance to electronic media and the development of the self, and to suggest the importance of trust in contemporary culture.\(^7\)

These and other works helped establish a dialogic orientation to communication and an awareness of Buber as a philosopher of dialogue. They did not, and did not seek to, create a major movement toward dialogue studies as an area of communication scholarship; rather, this work helped normalize dialogue as a theme within communication studies, encouraged creative approaches for investigating communication, and offered a fresh topical vocabulary for researchers. Communication scholars began turning to other dialogic theorists to inform their studies, especially Mikhail Bakhtin, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Jürgen Habermas.

In 2000, Cissna edited a special double issue of the Southern Communication Journal that contained eleven studies in dialogue. Although one of the articles noted that only “a few scholars of communication social science have grounded their study of dialogue in the philosophy of Martin Buber,” over half of them drew on Buber, some significantly so.\(^8\) Another journal, Communication Theory, recently devoted a special issue to dialogue. As the focus of this issue was on “fresh perspectives” in dialogue theory, only three of the eight articles drew significantly on Buber.\(^9\) The situation was similar with Dialogue, another edited volume to which leading dialogically oriented communication scholars were invited to contribute chapters, with only four of the fourteen chapters applying Buber substantively.\(^10\)

Clearly, Buber’s contribution is somewhat familiar to communication scholars. Yet what is the depth and quality of that familiarity? Is Buber’s philosophy as textured and consequential as it could be? Do communication
scholars underestimate or misapply Buber’s concepts? Aside from obvious applications in relational communication theory, are there other productive arenas for Buber’s philosophy? We attempt to address such questions in the next section.

**Reconstituting Buber’s Dimension as Communication Scholar**

Buber’s reputation as a philosopher of communication is not exactly insecure. In fact, when a communication journal article discusses dialogue theory, Buber is likely to be mentioned immediately, as he was in Broome’s recent entry on “Dialogue Theories” in the *Sage Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*. However, in another volume, an article on “Communication as Dialogue” considered only Mikhail Bakhtin, and a recent summary of communication philosophies overlooked Buber entirely. What, then, is the basis for our suggestion that we should reconstitute Buber’s dialogue work for communication studies?

Although Buber’s name is well known, his intellectual legacy can seem surprisingly thin. In fact, one picture of Buber that emerges is that of the proverbial one-trick pony—a thinker with a single basic idea that others reiterate almost ritualistically. His work, typically associated with the I-Thou concept, appears briefly in some theory textbooks, but is more often omitted entirely. Further, scholars quicker to cite his work than to study it have, we believe, inadvertently flattened his reputation by distorting even that one idea. Too often the field neglects a wider range of his concepts that illuminate and complicate communicating in both personal and public spheres. At times it appears that an obligatory mention of Buber and I-Thou in a literature review is enough to establish a credential. We cannot explore all such issues in this limited space, but we can at least chart the difficulties so that interested readers can travel farther with this profoundly seminal twentieth-century mind. To do so, we examine two assumptions that seem to restrict the discipline’s appreciation for, and application of, Buber’s philosophy. Although some authors directly illustrate these assumptions, more often they appear to be implicit. We do not suggest that scholarship guided by such assumptions is automatically unhelpful, or that writers who produce it are incompetent. We simply want to offer a fuller picture of Buber’s work.

**Assumption 1. Interpersonal focus:** Communication scholars often assume that Buber is relevant to interpersonal communica-
tion scholarship but is not germane to other areas of communication studies.

A wide range of communication theorists stress Buber’s relevance and importance, although almost all of their examples and explanations apply primarily to interpersonal communication research and curricula. This observation is neither an expression of surprise nor an indictment. Buber’s own examples tend to cluster in the context of an elemental “between” of relation—the moments of mutuality in meetings characterized by presence and the speaking of Thou: a conversation with an opponent, the interdefinition of self and other, the importance of listening, and the responsibility to imagine the reality of another while not imposing one’s own experience. Teachers discussing Buber in the classroom, too, probably gravitate toward such obvious examples as roommate conflicts, family interaction, friendship development, and similar practical problems. When Buber is mentioned in communication books, it is usually in the context of interpersonal communication, rather than in terms of broader theoretical contributions.

For example, in Communication As..., a recent eclectic collection of twenty-eight original essays on state-of-the-art theory across a range of sub-disciplines, Buber is mentioned only once—disapprovingly, as offering a dialogue that “counsels perfection” but is “less humane” than an apparently competing perspective. Buber is not mentioned at all in the insightful Bakhtin-oriented chapter titled rather generally “Communication as Dialogue.”52 Another collection of recent work, Media and Cultural Theory, is similar; Buber is nowhere to be found in the twenty essays except for a single somewhat dismissive comment in one chapter about “soul flights [...] of Buberian dialogue.”53 Finally, when Buber is cited in scholarly communication sources that are not specifically focused on him, it is usually to appeal to a generalized interpersonal ethic or to announce an author’s scholarly preparation, rather than to build on Buber’s theoretical concepts such as confirmation, the narrow ridge, polar duality, or imagining the real.54

Buber’s thought might also be assumed to apply to an interpersonal context because his writings on social policy and governing, theater, education, international politics, and intercultural conflict are not well known in the world of communication scholarship. Ron Gordon agrees that Buber’s reputation in communication has been most influential among interpersonal scholars but allows that Buber has probably “been burdened with too much of the dialogical load.” Gordon urges communication scholars to diversify this kind of focal reliance on one thinker.55 Whether this diversification is forthcoming,56 communication studies should refuse to settle for a one-dimensional Martin Buber.57
Assumption 2. The imperialistic intimacy of I-Thou: Communication scholars often assume that intimacy and openness are the primary criteria for I-Thou relationships, which should supplant relationships relying on I-It.

Of prominent philosophers, Buber is among the most vulnerable to reductionist readings, as two prominent examples from first-rank communication scholars might indicate. First, consider Mac Parks’s older but still well-known critique of the “ideology of intimacy” in interpersonal communication. Supported, he said, in part by Buber’s I-Thou reasoning, Parks claimed that “most texts continue to define interpersonal communication as communication based on the unique personal qualities of the participants. [...] It is something people work up to as they shed impersonal social roles.” The “ideological commitments” he associated with Buber raise two problems:

First, equating interpersonal communication with the unique personal features of the individual implies that our shared qualities and shared roles are not very informative about us as individuals—they are merely part of the “herd experience.” [...] Second, it is clear in most texts that interpersonal communication is the only good or true communication. It is where we are most likely to learn, to relate, to influence, to play, and to give and receive help. [...] I cannot help wondering if impersonal relationships do not also make a significant contribution.\(^58\)

The issue here is not with Parks’s basic indictment of ideology in interpersonal studies, which may or may not ring true for readers, but with his familiarity with Buber’s work.

Buber does not claim that communicators should focus on idiosyncrasies within people to the exclusion of shared roles, but instead, as we have seen, on the “between” of meeting. He did not advocate “shedding” impersonal roles or other I-It norms.\(^59\) With his narrow ridge concept, Buber himself renounced the “herd” tendencies of human behavior. If Parks “cannot help wondering” whether impersonal relationships might make significant contributions to communication, he should know that Buber beat him to this insight. In aligning Buber with the scholars he opposes, Parks brands a complex thinker as simplistic.

Associating Buber with an unfortunate ideology of communication does not belong to a distant historical moment. John Durham Peters’s *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* is as close to an iconic book as contemporary communication scholarship offers, and this stimulating and wide-ranging work often introduces our discipline’s intellectual landscape to graduate students. It might be the most widely read and praised
scholarly book in the field over the past decade. It synthesizes many trends remarkably well, but most relevant for our purposes here, Peters argues for a "countervision" to dialogue called "dissemination" that avoids the same "dialogic ideology" that Parks feared. He associates this alternative with what he describes as Jesus’s communication approach of scattering seeds (messages) without prejudice or discrimination. Further, he claims, his countervision—framed as a substitute, not a complementary account—"avoids the moral privilege of dialogue," and counteracts the supposedly dominant scholarly emphasis on dialogue. He connects dialogue early on specifically with Buber, suggesting that it interferes with a clearheaded appreciation of disseminative processes, including much of the media environment. Buber’s complex explorations of dialogue’s contribution to the ontology and epistemology of human existence are ignored (e.g., What are the dangers of a psychologism that reduces the world to inner experience? How is truth socially constructed? How does shared speech constitute people’s moral world?). Although a full analysis of Peters’s conception of dialogue is beyond our scope here, his characterization of Buber and dialogue theory is revealing.

To be fair, it is possible that Peters is less concerned with analyzing the theory of dialogue than with its vernacular reception. Still, he relies on a particular version of dialogue theory that he himself constructs and yokes to his particular version of Buber’s philosophy. Implying that proponents of dialogue have virtually colonized the discipline (a great surprise to us as writers in this area), Peters then advances his alternative of dissemination, a preferred metaphor for communication because he claims it is more basic and ethical. In our opinion, this reasoning resembles a classic straw man argument. Peters declares a summary winner in the bout between dissemination and dialogue early in the book, misstating and trivializing dialogue theory in the process:

> The marriage of true minds via dialogue is not the only option. [...] Dialogue still reigns supreme in the imagination of many as to what good communication might be, but dissemination presents a saner choice for our fundamental term. Dissemination is far friendlier to the weirdly diverse practices we signifying animals engage in and to our bumbling attempts to meet others with some fairness and kindness. Open scatter is more fundamental than coupled sharing; it is the stuff from which, on rare, splendid occasions, dialogue may arise. Dissemination is not wreckage; it is our lot. (62)

Of course, no one has said that disseminating ideas is intellectual "wreckage," nor have dialogue theorists suggested dialogue should be "elevated to sole or supreme status" (34). As portrayed by Peters, Buber and other dialogue philosophers seem to be naive purveyors of nicey-nice pop
psychology. Specifically, in this account Buber presumably wants married minds and open intimacy as the prime criteria of communication. Communication in Buber’s *I and Thou*, Peters writes, “is about the constitution of relationships, the revelation of otherness, or the breaking of the shells that encase the self, not about the sharing of private mental property” (16–17) Depicting Buber as advocating self-disclosure as a relational guide is caricature at best. Buber actually claimed that the I-Thou relation was ontologically prior to the notion of “I” itself. Conceptualizing self as a thing (“Breaking the shells that encase the self”) would be a jarring image to Buber. Equally jarring would be the interpretation that he “wanted to replace I-It relationships with I-Thou ones” (19). Instead, he famously affirmed the value of I-It relationships in science, politics, economics, and a wide variety of everyday exchanges, believing they are necessary and should be maintained.

Other examples are equally obvious. The “fantasy that all is well in dialogue” (135) might be a dream of some naïve communicators, but it ignores Buber’s philosophical anthropology, which stressed the normative limits of the dialogical process. If dialogue is a “moral tyranny” (159), one could expect that a historic “brief shining moment of dissemination” identified by Peters could be “washed over by a flood of dialogism,” as Peters breathlessly warns (211). Buber’s dialogue is no such thing. Dialogue has been “forwarded as a cure” for modernity’s “abysses,” Peters says, but “it is as often the virus itself” (227). Always one to appreciate an apt metaphor, Buber would be baffled to read scholarly analyses likening the power of dialogical thinking to authoritarian rule, natural disaster, or infectious disease.

Peters’s characterization remains influential, and other scholars evidently use it as a touchstone. Some accept Peters’s notion that I-Thou and I-It exist in a “versus” relationship, whereas others reiterate Peters’s assumption that Buber calls for a happy psychic cohesion or that dialogic philosophy is imperialistic and morally suspect. But if critics are suspicious of artificial consensus, want to protect individual and cultural difference, and believe that other communicative forms are also important, then Buber should be their intellectual ally rather than foil or foe.

Where Buber and Peters would indeed part ways—and Buber discussed such a phenomenon extensively—is the tendency to entrench either/or separations between approaches like dialogue and dissemination, or conversation and persuasion. Buber, for example, conceptualized the relation between unity and separation as a polar tension that must be held in order to understand either, or their outcomes. If both are important, as Buber definitely claimed and Peters seems to believe, why must one be seen as enemy to the other?
Integrating Buber More Thoroughly into Communication Studies

Buber’s obvious relevance to interpersonal life should not brand him as a niche thinker. Instead of marginalizing his work by assuming that he had only one basic point, or trivializing it as ideology, communication scholars could instead investigate what his work can offer to other sectors of the discipline that do not always foreground interpersonal relationships or communication ethics. Here we highlight briefly three potential areas for expansion.

Buber and Research Methods

Mari Lee Mifsud and Scott Johnson noted that dialogue scholars increasingly support “methodological eclecticism,” and this trend bodes well for the discipline.63 In a sense, communication has always been an interdisciplinary, a scholarly general store at the crossroads of many other traditions. Dialogue scholars deal in content and process in relationally sensitive ways, and model communication as complex and shifting flow. They developed the trajectory of their methods, qualitative or quantitative, with an eye to constant flexibility, better to adjust to momentary flashes of meaning making. Separating phenomena into discrete packages is not their style; the world will not hold still. But there is, as Buber said, the potential for a unity. Rhetorical methodologies, critical and narrative, are well suited to such study, once scholars move past the assumption that “rhetoric” involves communication that is entirely preplanned. Dialogue involves intentionality as well, such as opening up a space more likely to lead to successful conversation. But it is an intention blended with a healthy respect for the unexpected.64

In our own work on dialogue, we have tried to describe the Buber-influenced choices that led us to emphasize both close reading65 and coauthorship.66 Our coauthorship orientation to method involves two moves consistent with Buber’s thought. First, we assume that any social text can be approached as a weave of contingent messages that are essentially coauthored; they emerge rhetorically from multiple influences. To discover the dynamic of the present text through close—not closed—reading and to establish a critical questioning relation to it and its intertextual relations with other phenomena (contextualizing the communication) is a dialogic move. At another conceptual level, we have discovered that this choice is best made metadialogically; that is, we ourselves try to investigate dialogue, or its absence, conversationally and performatively—articulating and testing multiple interpretations, thus becoming interpretive participants ourselves. Treating
communication as essentially an interplay of coauthored texts, allied with research coauthorship as well, is probably not a method everyone would endorse, but we are convinced that this has been the only way to access the information necessary to write a kind of intellectual biography of a dialogic occasion, the historic 1957 Buber–Carl Rogers dialogue.\footnote{67}

Stewart highlights how Buber has influenced his understanding of research validity, an insight that could further support interpretivist communication researchers. The problem is daunting:

Buber’s writings […] offer the contemporary human scientist a fresh approach to a problem that has traditionally vexed scholars of the *Geisteswissenschaften*: the problem of validity. Even lay people concur that validity is something which good advice, sound organizational policies, and worthwhile research findings should “have,” but there is no universal agreement among scholars or laypeople about what it “is” or how one “gets it.” The research literature, for example, includes dozens of discussions of validity as a construct, and almost as many definitions as definers.\footnote{68}

One kind of definition, based on scientific and social scientific thinking, asserts that validity is a matter of accuracy; a valid result comes from empirically grounded definitions that “get at” phenomena in ways that accurately reflect the facts of the situation. A second approach to defining validity, writes Stewart, complicates the concept, suggesting that there are plural ways to approach any problem, often keyed to different research stages or goals, but always dependent on contextual valuing. Validity of this sort refers to how the researcher respects the object of inquiry or to the generalizability of findings. A third approach, however, focuses on trustworthiness: “On this view, validity is a rhetorical outcome which is established when one is *persuaded* that a social theory or set of research findings or interpretations is trustworthy.”\footnote{69} It is this third view that Buber extends, offering a form of validity Stewart terms “resonance.” It is established through a kind of personal scholarship where phenomena are not simply reported as if objects for knowledge or as triggers for personal subjectivity. Instead, the scholar’s participation with the phenomena can be acknowledged and recorded in such a way that it engages others’ experiences. In the analogy of the tuning fork, it resonates. This “proves” nothing in the scientific sense, but if constantly tested “ever anew” it “points to” and opens different worlds to resonate with readers or listeners. An important part of this concept is the *invitation* in lieu of a supposedly factual report of how things “really” are: “I say to him who listens to me: ‘It is your experience. Recollect it, and what you cannot recollect, dare to attain it as experience.’”\footnote{71} Consistent with contributions from other edifying philosophers, Buber invites us to resonate with research or account for why we cannot.
Buber and Intercultural Communication

Many have noticed that the recent resurgence of dialogue studies has tended to sidestep intercultural applications. Of course, this can be seen as a serious failing, and probably should be. Excluding the often specialized literature in organizational consulting, dialogue scholars have been surprisingly aloof about theorizing concrete problems of interracial and intercultural conflict. If scholars are alert, this too functions as an urgent invitation to an emerging agenda, one that can now grow from a stronger base.

If we have put off cultural studies of dialogue theory and practice for too long, whether for mysterious or understandable reasons, Buber offers us no cover.

Situating Buber as a foundational source for intercultural philosophy is surely a topic for more expansive treatment elsewhere. Here we can only scratch the surface, pointing to potential contributions that have been curiously absent from the public conversation on, for example, race relations: confirmation/particularity, experiencing the other side (inclusion), standing one’s own ground, and respecting distance. To illustrate the difference between Buber and other theorists, we concentrate here primarily on the first concept in our list, with allusions to the others.

Most basically, Buber would offer his concept of confirmation as a starting point for concrete intercultural reaction. He refused to counsel blanket agreement, comprehensive cultural knowledge, insincere politeness, acquiescence, conformity, or chameleon-like adaptation when communicators meet across their differences. Neither did he stress unconditional love or a recognition of the spiritual unity of humankind. His philosophy offers a simpler and more profound interactional move than these approaches would suggest.

Confirmation involves the willingness of a communicator to acknowledge who the other really seems to be, in all of his or her particularity, but with as little overlying of stereotyping as possible. “I like you” might be confirming, but so is “I have to say no to you” if that no is grounded in full consideration of the concrete details of existence. Some people nervously approach intercultural interaction by telling themselves that “we are all the same.” Buber’s confirmation is a blunt denial of this: We are not the same, and we are different in so many ways that no one can predict the full range of our differentness. Each of us will be misunderstood somehow, but each can assure the other that we remain attentive to the differences and how they matter.

Seymour Cain, a friend of Buber’s, once compared Buber’s view on intercultural conflict with Edward Said’s. Although Said had valuable insights about cultural misunderstanding in the Middle East, the difference between Cain’s take on Said and Buber’s teaching is clear:
Said wants us to see the other as same, not as other, in his generality as a human being, to see her in a sense as “one of us.” Buber wants us to confirm the other in his particularity, in his difference […] not in his partaking in a general, abstract, humanity.  

Cain captures Buber’s willingness to engage conflict:

As opposed to the “We” versus “They” stance, which Said sees as the dominant response of Euro-American culture to the non-European peoples, the way of dialogue points to the meeting of two realities—two selves or two communities—each in its ownness, its concrete particularity.

Far from being unrealistic, as some anti-Buberians allege, this is the height of realism, insisting that we address real beings in their actual concrete situations, not treat them as ethnic stereotypes or remote abstractions—which are outside the realm of address and response. The dialogical stance does not foreclose the possibility of conflict or division. In fact, it includes it as real possibility, that which we can see actualized almost every day. But it steers us away from the demonization of […] those who differ with us.  

**Buber and Mediated Public Communication**

Buber’s antipathy toward mediated and public attempts at dialogue is well known, and it arose from his distaste for unnecessary division. On a prominent tour of the United States east coast, he declined to have his lectures filmed, even though the organizer of one seminar had arranged a grant specifically for that purpose. At the University of Michigan, Buber again resisted having a public event tape-recorded despite the occasion—his dialogue with Carl Rogers—favoring in some respects his recommendations for spontaneity, surprise, and genuine questioning. He believed that public occasions made genuine dialogue essentially impossible because the principals tend to talk less with each other and more for an audience, which risks turning the occasion into more of a performance than an authentic conversation guided by listening and the unfolding topics and interests of the participants. Eventually, he acceded to assurances that the dialogue with Rogers was important enough to capture electronically and that Rogers was experienced in conducting taped interviews unintrusively.

A number of times, Buber—who was in high demand as a public intellectual at midcentury—was asked to organize or convene meetings of public figures in response to international crises. When he agreed, it was on the stipulation that the meetings be kept secret. Public dialogue, for him, was unlikely, insignificant, dangerous, or exceedingly difficult—perhaps for the same reasons summarized by Escobar:
When political, economic or media elites participate in conversations in front of an audience, genuine communication is usually rendered to its dramatic functions: it is not about talking, it is about performing. [... Media programming] is hardly a model for deliberative practice, in terms of deep exploration of issues.²⁷

Technology, and its anticipated mediated effects, changes communicators’ goals and affects the vectors of speaking and listening, presence and absence. People in media situations often adopt representation strategies that would be unnatural in face-to-face direct speech, and they wind up speaking to and for unnamed and absent others. This reduces what Buber would recommend as immediacy, and encourages different forms of reserve, strategic ambiguity, or noncommitment in the talk. Such patterns will always be possible in public life, of course, but certain contexts exaggerate them, and thereby reduce trust. We can see this phenomenon directly in the political arena of the United States when presidents arrange to visit caucuses of the opposition party and in similar photo-op meetings purported to enhance dialogue.

If Buber was suspicious of media, the subdiscipline of media studies has returned the favor. Theorizing about public media could be bolstered by more work about why journalistic interviews, for example, tend to encourage only certain kinds of disclosures, such as “talking points,” while virtually eliminating others (e.g., uncertainties, concessions, precisely framed goals and hopes). It could also profit through more attention to various experiments to introduce dialogue into the public sphere. To this point, among dialogue theorists it is Habermas who seems to have been adopted by media theorists on the relatively rare occasions when dialogue concepts are invoked, along with some interest in Bakhtin.²⁸ Otherwise, dialogue theorists, including Buber, seem absent from the conversation; yet it is a thin conversation, indeed, given John Pauly’s account of the “ways in which media studies habitually resists dialogic approaches.”²⁹ The interest among media scholars in cultural studies—which often invokes a dialogic frame—would be one area of exception to this resistance, and the dialogic reasoning underlying the public/civic journalism movement would be another.³⁰ Nevertheless, without particularly foregrounding Buber, Pauly describes four ways media scholarship could gain from paying closer attention to dialogue studies.

First, “how the media represent the forms of human talk remains relatively unexplored.” Pauly mentions narrative content such as films and popular television portrayals of everyday speech, but Buber’s attention to the dynamics of human trust and its relation to how listeners use media to assist with public decision making is equally applicable. Second, “dialogic theory might usefully counterbalance the powerful bureaucratic routines and profes-

sional norms that govern media production.” This involves understandings of professional media routines and practices, including how otherwise-authority-based organizations might facilitate dialogic spaces for their own decision processes. Third, “dialogic theory offers an alternative conception of who human beings are.” Pauly’s seemingly abstract suggestion points to concrete media habits of “too easily cod[ing] and categoriz[ing] individuals in terms of social structure, group standpoint, and presumed position in hierarchies of power.” By contrast, “dialogue hopes for a more fluid, less structured space for human interaction. It imagines vulnerability and openness as virtues, a sign of our shared existential condition.” Finally, “dialogic theory offers perhaps our best grounding for the study of media ethics,” surely an emerging and important focus of controversy in the field.81 Pauly’s exemplar here, Clifford Christians, has developed singly and with colleagues a sophisticated and eclectic approach to media ethics that is based largely on the contributions of Buber, Paulo Freire, and other dialogue theorists.82

Pauly’s optimism about media dialogue sets the table for a future in which media practice and media theory can merge more seamlessly, with thinkers like Buber playing key roles. Scholars will still need to cope effectively with both Buber’s suspicions and institutional resistance, while researchers make new sense of media hegemony, power, and persuasion. The fresh potential of forms of online democracy and personalized social media undoubtedly will energize the field; almost every technical advance in cybersociety reflects Buber’s concern for dialogue somehow, perhaps by offering transformative opportunities for immediate presence, perhaps by expanding the reach of I-It.

**Summary**

Martin Buber’s philosophy, although grounded in twentieth-century problems, remains fresh for communication theory in the twenty-first. Far from advocating an ideology of intimacy or a goal of fused minds that would exclude roles, norms, or impersonal relations, Buber’s double-edged reminder is balanced, concrete, and clear: We should take seriously both dialogic opportunity and the reasons why it cannot bloom everywhere. The communication discipline needs to expand its awareness of Buber’s philosophy well beyond its implications for face-to-face interpersonal relationships. We have nominated three such areas for increased scrutiny—qualitative research methods, intercultural communication, and media studies—yet we have barely scratched the surface.
Notes

2 Buber was not a fan of specialized disciplines and he resisted most categorizations of himself and his work, as surely he would have “philosopher of communication.”
3 In Friedman, “Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin,” 25.
5 Buber, “Replies to my Critics,” 693.
9 Shapira reported that Buber’s work has been translated into 23 languages (see *Hope for Our Time*, 1). The reference staff at the University of South Florida Library used the WorldCat database to identify at least 19 languages in which *Ich und Du* had been published. They were unable to provide any information about sales.
10 For the period from October 2004 to July 2010, *I and Thou* sold 3,824 copies in the United Kingdom. Sales in the United States are significantly higher, but the data are more ambiguous and harder to interpret (based on proprietary data provided by BookScan UK, Nielson Book Services Limited, Surrey, England.) Over an almost 90-year life and publication in at least 19 languages (and significantly more countries), total sales for *I and Thou* of hundreds of thousands of copies seems a reasonable estimate.
12 Broome, “Dialogue Theories,” 302. The other leaders in dialogue theory mentioned by Broome include Carl Rogers, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Mikhail Bakhtin, David Bohm, and Paulo Freire.
13 This chapter is not the place for a thorough review of that scholarship, although we discuss it briefly later in the chapter. For this context, it is interesting that we were asked recently to contribute an entry on Buber’s *I and Thou* to the new *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*; initially we were invited to write only about Carl Rogers, and in accepting that invitation, we suggested that an entry on Buber might also be appropriate. See Anderson and Cissna, “I and Thou,” and Cissna and Anderson, “Rogerian Dialogue Theory.”
14 The best biographies of Buber are the three-volume *Martin Buber’s Life and Work* by Friedman—*The Early Years, The Middle Years, and The Later Years*—and Friedman’s one-volume condensation *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge*. Also see Grete Schaeder, *Hebrew Humanism of Martin Buber*, and Hodes, *Martin Buber*. Our chapter on Buber in Cissna and Anderson, *Moments of Meeting*, 35–58, discusses the major trajectories and influences on Buber’s life and thought. Rather than multiply footnotes here, we suggest the reader consult these works, where additional references, citations, and details can be found.
15 Initially published in Schilpp and Friedman’s *Philosophy of Martin Buber*, the autobiographical vignettes from Buber’s life were later issued as a small book in 1973 authored by Buber called *Meetings*. It is currently available in a paperback, 3rd edition, by
Routledge. The quotation can be found on page 3 of Schilpp and Friedman, page 17 of the 1973 edition of *Meetings*, and page 21 of the 2002 Routledge edition of *Meetings*. We do not provide page numbers for subsequent quotations from these autobiographical fragments as the works are very short, the context usually suggests the particular fragment, and we would need to cite three editions.

He grew up speaking German, Polish, and Yiddish, and as an adult he could also speak Hebrew, English, French, and Italian and read Greek, Latin, Spanish, Dutch, and others.

This episode was mislabeled in the 2002 paperback edition of Buber’s *Meetings* as “A Conversation.” The story was reprinted from Buber’s *Between Man and Man*, 13–14. The final 15 words are quoted from Friedman’s introduction to the two editions of *Meetings*, and are from a letter that Buber wrote to him.

Kramer with Gawlick, *Martin Buber’s I and Thou*, 207.

Two English translations of *I and Thou* exist. The first, by Ronald Gregor Smith, appeared in the United Kingdom in 1937 and was published in the United States in 1958 in a second revised edition with a new postscript by Buber. The second, by Walter Kaufmann, appeared in 1970. We quote from Smith’s translation, primarily because Buber himself worked on and approved that translation. Such notable Buber scholars as Maurice Friedman and Grete Schaedler also prefer the Smith translation, as does Ken Kramer, who is blunt in his preference: “Ronald Gregor Smith’s translation is the best translation, much to be preferred to that of Walter Kaufmann” (*Martin Buber’s I and Thou*, 207).


A representative collection of his correspondence is available in English in *The Letters of Martin Buber*. A more complete three-volume edition is available in German.

This letter appears as #657 of the English translation of *The Letters of Martin Buber*, 599.

See Buber, *Land of Two Peoples*.

Hodes, *Martin Buber*, 147–8.

Buber, *Jag och Du*.

Friedman, *Martin Buber’s Life and Work: Later Years*, 31. See also 330–1.

Unfortunately, none of the Buber–Hammarskjöld correspondence appeared in the English-language volume of Buber’s letters.

Published as “Hope for This Hour” in *Pointing the Way*, 222. This essay was also included in the early influential collection of dialogically inflected works on communication edited by Matson and Montagu, *The Human Dialogue*.

Friedman, *Martin Buber’s Life and Work: Later Years*, 188.

See Buber, *Knowledge of Man*, 184.


Buber, *I and Thou*, translated by Smith, 19, 44, 19. The published translations of Buber’s work occurred long before people were sensitive to the damage that can be caused by writing and speaking as though all people are male. As it is manifest in Buber’s work, however, this problem is largely with the translations, as the term rendered here and elsewhere (including in the titles of several of Buber’s books) as *man* was, in German, *mensch*, which means “person” rather than “man.”

We are grateful to John Stewart for his explication of the opening stanzas of *I and Thou* in his Foreword to Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett, *The Reach of Dialogue*.

Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 203.
40 This paragraph involves some quotation from Cissna and Anderson, *Moments of Meeting*, 57.
42 Friedman, “‘Martin Buber’s ‘Narrow Ridge.’”
43 Anderson, “Tao, Dialogue, and Cultural Tensions.”
44 Stewart and Zediker, “Dialogue as Tensional, Ethical Practice,” 227.
45 Arnett, “Toward a Phenomenological Dialogue”; Anderson, “Phenomenological Dialogue”;
47 Cissna and Anderson, “Contributions of Carl Rogers.” Regarding the Buber–Rogers dialogue and our work on it, see, for example, Cissna and Anderson, “Theorizing about Dialogic Moments”; Anderson and Cissna, *Martin Buber–Carl Rogers Dialogue*; Cissna and Anderson, *Moments of Meeting*.
48 Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett, *Reach of Dialogue*.
50 Cissna and Anderson, “Fresh Perspectives.” The studies that make significant use of Buber include White, “Interlocutor’s Dilemma”; Black, “Deliberation, Storytelling, and Dialogic Moments”; and Poulos, “Accidental Dialogue.”
55 For example, see Griffin, *First Look at Communication Theory*, 241.
56 Gordon, “Karl Jaspers,” 116. For an account of Buber’s intellectual breadth, see Friedman, *Martin Buber and the Human Sciences*.
57 For clues, see Cissna and Anderson, “Fresh Perspectives.”
58 A significant, though not yet broad-based, exception to the interpersonal focus is a revival of interest in Buber’s relevance to the study of rhetoric. See, for example, Czubaroff, “Dialogical Rhetoric”; Hatch, “Dialogic Rhetoric”; and Grano, “Wise Ignorance.”
59 Parks published two essays with similar titles on this topic. This quotation is from the more recent, “Ideology in Interpersonal Communication: Beyond the Couches,” 485. See also “Ideology in Interpersonal Communication: Off the Couch.”

Peters, *Speaking into the Air*, 1, 35, 152.

Ibid., 62.

For example, Matheson, “Journalists as Interpreters” and Stoker and Tusinski, “Reconsidering Public Relations’ Infatuation.” In addition, Tonn consistently reflects Peters’s attitude about dialogue in her recent critique, despite mentioning neither Peters nor Buber; see Tonn, “Taking Conversation.”


See various discussions of methodological choices in Spano, *Public Dialogue*.

For Buber’s recommendation on close reading and interpretation, see *Pointing the Way*, 100–1.

For discussions of our approach, see Anderson and Cissna, “Criticism and Conversational Texts”; Cissna and Anderson, “Public Dialogue and Intellectual History”; Cissna and Anderson, “Dialogic Rhetoric.”


Ibid., 165.

Buber, “Replies to My Critics,” 693.

Ibid.


See our accounts of this in Anderson and Cissna, *Martin Buber–Carl Rogers Dialogue*, 2–3; Cissna and Anderson, *Moments of Meeting*, 125–7. One of the most striking outcomes of their dialogue was Buber’s recognition that public dialogue was indeed possible, and, as we noted earlier, he had an assertion to the contrary stricken from a forthcoming publication. However, we doubt Buber changed his basic suspicion about the impact of media on the trustworthiness of public speech.

For example, see Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge*, 414.


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