

# REVOLUTION: A HUMAN NEED



Though it may seem strange to you -- or perhaps you will not be in the least bit surprised -- I still think, feel, and reflect seriously about E... She is still presence to me. She still addresses me. I still respond to her in her presence as presence in me. Yet my thought as thought cannot comprehend how this is possible; thus the relationship itself manifests itself as a mystery. No psychology and no science whatever can account for this yet it is activity; the relationship occurred, yet it is incomprehensible how such a relationship is possible. How, after all the scientific hypotheses about structural similarity, about a shared language, about a similar brain constitution, about people needing other people -- how after all this is said is such a relationship possible. Science, psychology, sociology, biology and physics merely beg the question. How is it possible that I can address and feel addressed by another person? How is it possible that in my address to another person I already feel addressed by that person's being and hence my address is itself a response to that person's being? How is it possible that man can transcend the human situation and feel addressed, nay, be addressed by something beyond, yet in, that situation? How is it possible that such a relationship can continue in a world that is for the most part composed of objects? -- objects to which I have no relation other than use. The nature of consciousness itself that what I am conscious of I am conscious of because

I am conscious. Thus everything, what I see, what I feel what I smell, are mere functions of consciousness and are, strictly speaking, inside me, just as are my hopes, my fears, my desires. How then is it possible to address and to feel addressed by another? I repeat, the find-

ings of science (which are not-as considerable as one might think) merely beg the question, for they presuppose what they want to show is possible. Here, at least science is caught in an epistemological quick mire.

But I do not want to proceed this way, for I realize it will lead me nowhere but into that realm of practice of which I seek to understand its possibility. Thus the problem of understanding how the relationship is possible, how the mutuality of a relationship can occur for that is the essence of being in relation -- is not an empirical concern, but a problem of method. Even Buber in his classic book, I And Thou does not attempt to answer such a question. Yet such a question demands an answer if we are to understand the true meaning of being in relation. Indeed, if we can discover this meaning, how relation is possible, then presumably we have every reason to regard our discovery as having the most profound import for practice, for then perhaps we will be able to create the conditions requisite for relation and therefore in some instances realize through our own act of will a broadening scope of relation and a deeper appreciation of its value. Here then we would not explain away relation or view it as 'necessary' as many political philosophers do and as virtually all sociologists and psychologists do. But we shall grant them now what they have, since ancient Greece, been ever fond of repeating: "that man is a social being". This statement seems to say very much but actually it says very little for exactly what it is people are talking when they utter these words has never been made clear. Our question formulated at the outset still remains: how is it possible that I can address and feel addressed by another person, how

is relation itself possible?

It may be that the difficulty in understanding how relation is possible is that the conditions for its realization are for the most part, absent in this world. It may be that the conditions for entering into relation are contingent upon our ridding ourselves of our ecological prejudices and that for this reason it remains an extremely rare occurrence in our society actualized only by the most free spirits. In that case we would have to discover the conditions in advanced industrial society which greatly limit the possibility of relation and at the same time thereby discover the conditions which

enhance its possibility. Analysis of the negative features in our society does after all have many positive features. When I say "no", I am always saying "Yes" to something else even when I do not clearly recognize the options. But if I say 'no' to something, is it not at least my own personal duty to myself to endeavour to discover what exactly I am saying 'yes' to?

Who could controvert this? And yet modern man is forever bemoaning the fact that he can find no meaning to & for his life. Why? Perhaps because he lives without relation -- if one can call that living. Thus one of the most pressing tasks of our age is to discover how relation -- and I mean relation, a "reciprocity", in Buber's sense -- is possible. By discovering how it is possible, we may hope to discover the conditions requisite for its realization. Such knowledge may call for a revolution but we have nothing to lose: we have only to discover and create a world we all NEED. But who, you ask, shall we study for this purpose? I suggest we start with Karl Marx and Martin Buber. They among all others point to the right path.

Lee Berrouard

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