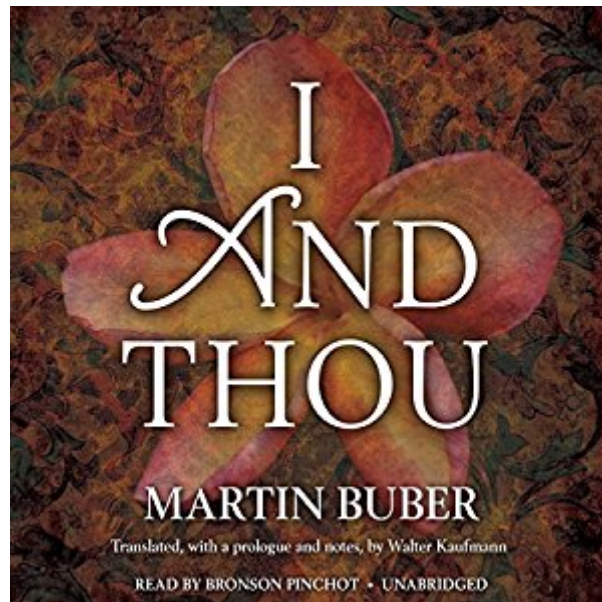


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I And Thou



Synopsis

Martin Buber's *I and Thou* has long been acclaimed as a classic. Many prominent writers have acknowledged its influence on their work; students of intellectual history consider it a landmark; and the generation born after World War II considers Buber one of its prophets. Buber's main proposition is that we may address existence in two ways: (1) that of the "I" toward an "It," toward an object that is separate in itself, which we either use or experience; (2) that of the "I" toward "Thou," in which we move into existence in a relationship without bounds. One of the major themes of the book is that human life finds its meaningfulness in relationships. All of our relationships, Buber contends, bring us ultimately into relationship with God, who is the Eternal Thou. The need for a new English translation had been felt for many years. The old version was marred by many inaccuracies and misunderstandings, and its recurrent use of the archaic "thou" was seriously misleading. Professor Walter Kaufmann, a distinguished writer and philosopher in his own right who was close to Buber, retranslated the work at the request of Buber's family. He added a wealth of informative footnotes to clarify obscurities and bring the reader closer to the original and wrote an extensive prologue that opened up new perspectives on the book and on Buber's thought. This volume provided a new basis for all subsequent discussions of Buber. Martin Buber (1878-1965) was a Jewish philosopher, theologian, Bible translator, and editor of Hasidic tradition. He was also known as one of the paramount spiritual leaders of the twentieth century and is best known as the author of *I and Thou* - the basic formulation of his philosophy of dialogue - and for his appreciation of Hasidism, which made a deep impact on Christian as well as Jewish thinkers. Fleeing Nazi Germany in 1938, he immigrated to Israel, where he taught social philosophy at the Hebrew University.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Unlike the usual philosophical endeavor, this book does not build an argument or make a case about a particular interpretation of the world or some aspect of it. Rather, Buber's seminal work begins with a key insight into our way of being in the world and goes on to weave an intricate web of variations on this theme, creating, if you let it, a sense of his core insight in the reader's own mind. Reading this book is not about reading a philosophical argument or thesis but rather about giving oneself up to the man and his insight: that there are two fundamental ways for us to be in the world, as subjects relating to objects (in order to use them for ourselves) or as subjects relating to subjects (which recognize ourselves in that which meets us at the other end of the "relation"). For Buber this is what it is all about. And, he tells us, we cannot choose one or the other but must (and do) have both though it is easy for us to lose sight of the subjectness of others when we embrace their objectness. And so he bangs away at the need to see the subjectness, not only in other persons but in other aspects of the world as well, and, indeed, in the world itself, holding that to "see" the subjectness that is there, in the world as a whole (through relating in this manner to its parts), is to see God. And this is where it gets somewhat abstruse for he offers no proof of God in the ordinary sense but rather the assertion alone that we must have access to the subjective aspect of being in order to fully live our lives and that this assumes God.

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