
Mentorship

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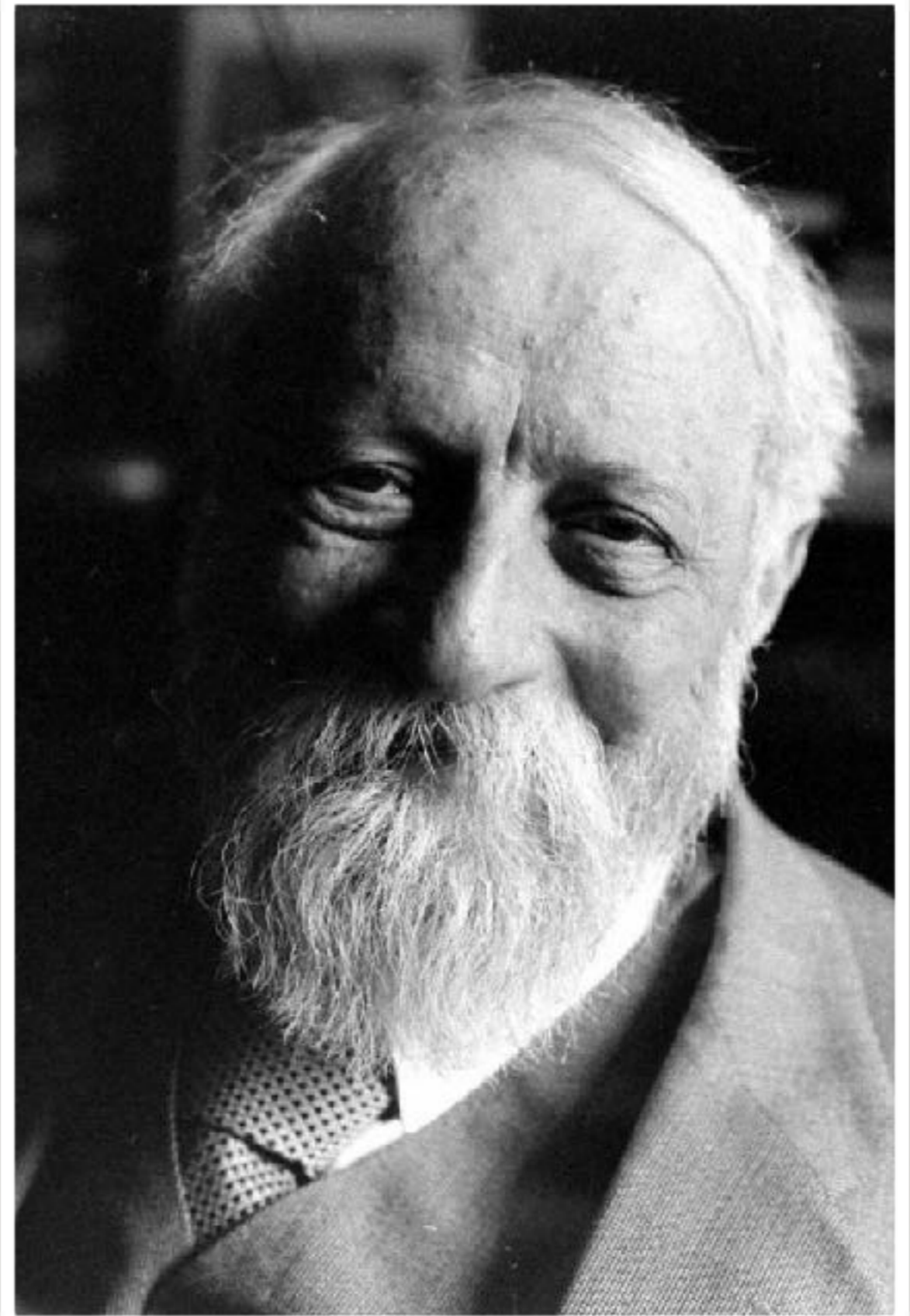
Win Bassett, Teacher, Montgomery Bell Academy

The Rev. F. Washington Jarvis, Headmaster Emeritus, The Roxbury Latin School

Martin Buber

Human Relationships

- ❖ **I-It:** The world of [stand-aside] experience and observation:
 - ❖ "the world to be used"
- ❖ **I-Thou:** The world of meeting; the world of deep relationship:
 - ❖ "spoken with our whole being"



I-It Relationships

- ❖ **I-It** is the normally desirable relationship between teacher/mentor and student.
- ❖ **I-It** relationships are important and beneficial relationships that can spring from the dedicated teacher/mentor's concern and desire to help.
 - ❖ A teacher [**I**] must show a student [**It**] that she is using incorrect grammar or spelling, or congratulate her on understanding a math problem.
 - ❖ A teacher [**I**] is called upon to rebuke or discipline a student [**It**] when he is cruel.

I-Thou Relationships

- ❖ **Thou** refers to the presence of uniqueness and wholeness in a person that is the outcome of genuine listening and responding. The relationship is reciprocal, yielding, momentary, leads to clarity, and lacks permanency. **I-Thou** establishes a world of relation and is always in the present.
- ❖ Each person comes to this relationship without preconditions. The bond created enlarges each person, and each person responds by trying to enhance the other person. The result is true dialogue, true sharing.
- ❖ **I-Thou** relationships are not constant or static. People move in and out of **I-It** moments to **I-Thou** moments. Ironically, attempts to achieve an **I-Thou** moment will fail because the process of trying to create an **I-Thou** relationship objectifies it and makes it an **I-It**. Even describing the moment objectifies it and makes it an **I-It**. The only action one can take is to be available to the possibility of **I-Thou** moments.

I-Thou is Rare

- ❖ The vast majority of healthy relationships between teachers and students are, and should be, **I-It**.
- ❖ Sometimes, when a teacher might desire to attempt to open herself to an **I-Thou** relationship with a student or fellow teacher, she is simply unable to do so. Reasons could include stress, exhaustion, disinterest, cluelessness or lack of readiness on the part of the student or teacher, an unwillingness to risk being vulnerable, fear, and the desire to protect oneself by remaining in the safer role as teacher or student.
- ❖ Most students do not think of themselves as desiring an **I-Thou** relationship with a teacher, and some have scarily erroneous ideas of what this might entail.
- ❖ The **I-Thou** intimacy between a teacher and a student is fraught with potential danger.

Relationships in Boys' Schools

- ❖ Reichart & Hawley:
“Boys bring not only their learning histories but their **relational histories** with them to class.”

I CAN LEARN FROM YOU

Boys as Relational Learners

MICHAEL REICHERT
AND RICHARD HAWLEY



Relationships in Boys' Schools

- ❖ Reichart & Hawley:
 - ❖ In reflecting on their relationships with students after the fact, teachers instinctively and appropriately analyze the relationships as **I-It**: this was what I did.
 - ❖ When boys reflect on relationships after the fact, they seem instinctively to analyze things as relational—a kind of unconscious longing for a proto-**I-Thou**: this is **who he was**.

I–It and I–Thou for Mentors

- ❖ Normally, in the teacher / mentor-student relationship, the teacher remains in the role of teacher / mentor, and the student stays in the role of student. The teacher / mentor (**I**) experiences a boy (**It**) as a scholar, athlete, advisee. The teacher conveys praise or rebuke, advice, counsel, knowledge, and discipline.
- ❖ A teacher / mentor's fundamental, normal, and desirable relationship with a student is **I-It**. The mentoring relationship is always **I-It**.
- ❖ There may be rare occasions when a teacher / mentor casts this role aside and enters into an **I-Thou** relationship with a student.
 - ❖ Such occasions are fraught with danger, but such occasions can also be euphoric and enhancing.
 - ❖ The teacher / mentor must be ever vigilant of the dangers of manipulation and control, the danger of "using" a student for one's own gratification.