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EDUCATION AS THE WAY TO COMMUNICATION*

In the first of the several volumes of his work "Language and Consciousness" ("Sprache und Bewußtsein") the Frankfurt philosopher Liebrucks proceeds from the observation that the fate of the human race depends on whether man can be guided towards "Sprachlichkeit". At first this sentence sounds both exaggerated and incomprehensible, and it is necessary to explain in more exact terms what it means. Let us begin by examining the word itself. Liebrucks does not take "Sprachlichkeit" to refer simply to the fact that people talk to each other, but rather to the fact that they speak to each other in such a way as to fulfil the potential of their human existence, a potential which is made possible through language and through language alone. To put it in more precise terms: through language they are elevated beyond the stage of expedient behaviour and technical production, which is so immeasurably overrated nowadays, and thus, only when they have gained this stage, fulfil the more noble potential in their lives as human beings.

I should like to express myself in a more modest fashion and to characterize the dignified way in which human beings avail themselves of language with a less expansive word, namely "conversing", and this then allows me to formulate the task that we are set as being one of educating people to the point where they are able to converse with each other. In this the word "educate" is not used to signify education in the sense of educating or bringing up a child, but rather the task which the individual is set of realizing the human qualities in himself. Just what the words "human" and "humanity" mean I shall, for the moment, leave undefined in the terms which we are all familiar with from normal usage. As the discourse proceeds these terms will become clearer. [20/21]

In order that we may understand this statement we need, by way of preparation, to cast a brief glance at the nature of language itself or, to put it in more concrete terms, at the nature of speaking, and our question runs as follows: Human beings are capable of putting into words that which occupies them inwardly, that is to say they are capable of bringing it forth from the darkness by means of speaking, and it is only by means of this faculty that they are capable of making it reality - what is the significance of this?

1. We had best proceed from the assumption that language does not simply reflect an existing reality but that it actively changes and shapes reality, in what, in fact, is a basically irreversible fashion, in a direction proceeding from the undefined to the defined. A word which is spoken in a particular situation does not simply render an already existing situation, it rather changes this situation by giving it a particular twist and interpreting it in a particular way and thus, at this early stage, indicating the inevitable decision which is implicit within it. Only when it is committed to language does a situation which has previously been drifting and undetermined assume a clearly defined shape. In the course of this process, however, man too, of necessity, takes on another shape. That which was previously undefined in him becomes clearly defined, that which was ambiguous becomes unequivocal, and this comes about because of the decision which is implicit in the spoken word. We must turn our attention to this process for it is in this process that man raises himself above the simple plane of Nature and becomes a Self ("Selbst") in the real sense of the word, i. e. a being responsible for itself. He acquires inner stability and

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strength, he becomes a moral being, not, however, because of *what* he says, but because of the very fact *that* he says it, himself.

I shall not go into the problem of the *promise*, the problem of a person promising another person something and then having to keep that promise. Hans Lipps and Gabriel Marcel have already produced important work on that subject. I should like to keep much closer to the original achievement of language as it finds expression when an *admission* or an *avowal* is made, since this seems to me to be of fundamental educative significance. Let us first deal with the phenomenon of admission. In admitting to having done something man steps forth out of the mist of gloomy and ambiguous silence and, before the world and himself, renounces all attempts at concealing and glossing over his deed, he renounces all attempts constantly to conceal the significance of what he has done. It is said and thus it is defined. Through this act he himself becomes a person who can freely answer for his deeds. Through the admission itself he becomes a morally responsible personality. He is now in a position to answer for himself and to respond [21/22] freely and responsibly to his own past. (I do not wish to imply here that one should admit or even say everything which could be admitted and said. Many things come right of themselves in the natural course of life. In addition to that it is difficult to state the limit in each case. Thus the teacher can leave many things to take care of themselves and simply ignore them. But fundamentally it is important to note that there are things which have to be said freely and that it is only on this basis that man can become himself, and in particular that this is the point at which the teacher takes charge of the whole development.)

The situation is similar with respect to avowals. However, I do not wish sharply to delimit these two phenomena with relation to each other and content myself with intimating certain differences. It is not so much deeds which are avowed as a person's innermost conviction. Here it is important that the conviction is not something specific which existed prior to the act of avowal and which is then expressed, but rather that it only acquires a form and thus actual reality when it is expressed in front of others.

Here, however, I am not concerned with admissions and avowals as such. Both are intended to serve as an indication, to make clear a trait which is generally implicit in the expressing of something previously unexpressed: In every conversation, whenever I divulge something in language, the decisive factor is that when something is expressed which has previously been unexpressed, no matter how hesitantly and uncertainly it may be done, a new piece of reality is created in that something definite is extracted from that which is diffuse and undetermined. Every time something is expressed in this way, every time something is disclosed which has been secretly withheld a piece of *reality is created* and this *requires courage* of the person who thus exposes himself. But it is just in this exposing of himself that man increases in stature.

Education is thus faced with the crucial task of teaching people to speak by liberating them from gloomy silence, by leading them to the point where they will enter into the adventure which is entailed in managing to express things, in freely creating reality i. e. in creating something defined out of that which is diffuse and undefined.

This act of speaking can also, of course, degenerate into mere talk, and this is the reverse side of the process, which one has to try to counter. This danger which is intrinsic to language is not under discussion here. We are rather concerned with speaking in its fullest and most complete sense. One can only describe speaking as a genuine achievement when, rather than running along already existing tracks where it meets with no resistance whatsoever, it seeks with an *all-out effort*, paying absolutely no heed to the risks involved, to extract from the apparently inexpressible a frag- [22/23] ment, perhaps even a fragment which will prove a failure, which can be used as the basis for further progress.

But even that, important as it is, is still not the decisive factor. There is yet another factor to be borne in mind: whenever something is expressed, no matter what it is, we must assume the

existence of a partner in whose presence it is said. According to the way in which the partner responds, whether he agrees, seeks to encourage, whether he objects that greater precision is necessary, or whether he blocks any further development with scepticism and silence, whatever his response, it is this other person who is not only intended as the recipient of what is expressed but who, through his willingness to respond, actually makes it possible for something to be expressed in the first place. This kind of interplay is intrinsic to language. To put it into a simple formula: language consists in conversing. Only when people, sometimes agreeing with each other sometimes disagreeing, actually speak to each other is it real.

2. And this brings me to the second point which is the crucial one for me: language as conversing and the conclusions which result from this definition. Language is real only when used for conversing. This is an easy enough thing to say and it seems almost a foregone conclusion. But then, on the other hand, it is not really so easy as all that. If we take conversing to refer to people's talking to and hearing each other then by no means can every piece of language be described as conversing. We have therefore to make further distinctions and to ask what form of speaking one can describe as conversing in the fullest sense. Our best approach is to make a provisional distinction between speaking in *monologue* form and speaking in *dialogue* form, using the one where we have an individual speaking coherently on his own, and the other where the speaking is done alternately by the one person and then the other. What, however, I am primarily concerned with is the fact that the thinking and the entire attitude are of a completely different kind, and that one can therefore equally well speak of *thinking* in monologue form and thinking in dialogue form. In a most fateful manner our whole lives, even the further realms of science, are penetrated to the very roots with thinking in monologue form.

Let us commence by using a conversation to illustrate this point to ourselves. And let us not, in the course of our observations, depart from conversation in the real meaning of the word, not mere inconsequential talk, but conversation in which matters of greatest consequence are discussed, matters which can be extracted from the realm of silence only with the greatest effort. This process, however, is not possible in a vacuum but rather depends upon the words being received and comprehended by a [23/24] second person. To a certain degree this second person makes me feel more at ease and according to the way in which he responds, whether in spontaneous agreement, or whether he is hesitant at first or even contradicts what I have to say, I become sure in that which I am actually saying. When I am saying something intended purely for myself I am unsure as to in how far I might be running up some blind alley or other, or I am concentrating on some thought which might turn out to be totally irrelevant. Only when the other person agrees with me can I be sure that I have hit upon something of genuine value. However, when the second person raises objections I am obliged to revise what I have said, and it is only with the cropping up of these unexpected difficulties, these "frictions" (Clausewitz), that the creative mechanism is set in motion. The thinking of an isolated individual can only move forward consistently in a straight line. It is only in the presence of a second person that it becomes productive. Not until the second person does more than simply raise critical objections, or make remarks which enable one to pursue one's original line of thought, is perfection achieved, and the result is that, in the exchange which arises from discussing the matter together, a complete and full conversation develops.

Nietzsche is not going too far when he writes, "One person alone is always in the wrong; the truth starts with two people." This does not only mean that a second person is necessary to affirm the truth of a matter, but even applies for the act of finding the truth itself. It even applies in the strict sense that the truth is not to be found with either the one or the other party, but that, without it being possible to detach it and isolate it as a fixed quantity, it is present in the conversation. Thus man can seek to aspire to no greater perfection than to converse with his

fellow men. It is for this reason that guiding people to the point where they can converse represents such an enormously important task in education. One might certainly agree that this is true but argue that it is possible to converse in this way *only among friends*. I would admit that this is true but would at the same time turn the sentence round, and it is only then that all the far-reaching significance of the sentence is revealed: When people find each other in conversation then they have become friends. If we can lead a person to the point where he is both willing and able to converse with another person, then we have taken a decisive step along the road to reconciling man with man in this strife-torn world of ours.

3. Before moving on let us cast a retrospective glance at the phenomenon of thinking in monologue form. A person alone can develop a thought. This we can describe as the progressive, constructive way in which he arranges his thoughts, the way in which he explains them, provides reasons [24/25] for them and furnishes evidence for them. This he does in the presence of another person, thinking in monologue form also being addressed to another person of course. However, we must (as Lipps has pointed out) be aware of the fact that productive thinking does not assume forms of this kind, but that these are rather forms of thinking related to very specific situations: In seeking to provide reasons for my thoughts I cite reasons which support my point of view. But providing one's reasons is always something additional with which one seeks to make one's point of view convincing to another person, a point of view in which one feels secure anyway. And if there is anything which could be described as being additional then it is one's attempts to furnish evidence. The evidence is intended to have a coercive effect, to prevent the other person from adopting an evasive attitude. We are conscious that this manner of speaking is a part of the sphere in which one lays *claim to power*. In seeking to provide evidence for one's thoughts one lays claim to a certain kind of power over the other person. It is for this reason that, when seeking to furnish the necessary evidence, one must not allow oneself to be interrupted by objections from the other person, one must rather seek to finish what one is saying until the evidence is complete and it is no longer possible for the other person to contradict. In this kind of case objections only serve to make additional explanations necessary. Thus one can say that furnishing evidence for one's thoughts is a form of belligerent altercation, a part of the legal sphere and thus applicable in mathematics.

It is not my intention to rob these forms of monologue — furnishing evidence and providing reasons for one's thoughts, even the coherent lesson involved in a lecture - in any measure of their due value. They are indispensable if people are to live together, but they must be understood in their specific function within the context of the life of the community. They are necessary whenever one requires to inform a second person of something or to ensure oneself of an insight one has gained. But the decisive inversion of all values, one might describe it as the *original sin* in human relations, occurs when thinking in monologue form asserts itself as the only possible form and the idea of conversing with other people is rejected. When this happens all communication and contact with other people breaks down completely. Other people are no longer acknowledged as people but become mere pawns in the game of power. In this case speaking in monologue form degenerates into *authoritarian utterances*, brooking no defiance. And we need not hesitate to acknowledge the full political implications of this observation. For authoritarian political systems are characterized by their refusal to converse on any point. They do still speak but only in a quite specific manner, a manner in which man's [25/26] "Sprachlichkeit" is completely perverted. They recognize language only as an instrument of power, which assumes the form of orders and instructions to their actual supporters and propaganda with respect to those outside their ranks, a propaganda with which they seek to win these people over. At this point we are confronted with the techniques of propaganda which arise out of the whole complex of problems associated with the desire for self-assertion. Much close attention will have to be paid to just these techniques.

(It shall be mentioned only in passing that the language of modern science and modern technology is one which has been developed in the pursuit of power, being a language which seeks to achieve mastery over Nature through a knowledge of the laws which govern it. Scheler is justified when he talks in general terms of power thinking. This kind of thinking has also been engendered by a kind of conduct which has monologue at its base, and is to be located on a plane which we can describe as being both sub-language and subhuman.)

At this point we have achieved an insight of great significance: speaking and thinking in monologue form as such still reflect a form of conduct which is both sub-language and subhuman. In their functions as parts of the whole they are both justified and necessary (just, of course, as many subhuman functions are integrated as a part of the whole into human existence.) When they become absolutes, however, they become an expression of that which is inhuman. When speaking and thinking in monologue form establish themselves as the prevailing way of life we can speak in terms of inhuman conduct. And I might even go so far as to say that that is the absolute core of inhumanity.

Once more I have arrived at the crucial thesis: In the struggle to preserve and realize humanity in our time, in the struggle against inhumanity, if we are to preserve mankind from the greatest of catastrophes, everything depends on guiding people to the point where they can converse, everything depends on developing in them a readiness and ability to converse with others. From this follows the crucial pedagogical task to which, thus fulfilling their responsibility to mankind, those who teach are directly summoned. But the task is immense in its proportions. If we look around us then we shall see with dismay how rarely so far people have really attempted to converse with each other. Having made this observation our first question must be: What might be the reason for this? Why do people remain loath to converse with each other?

4. In order to answer this question we must begin once more and inquire what preconditions are necessary for people to converse with each other. Having established this we shall be in a position to understand the obstacles [26/27] which stand in the way of their conversing. It is very easy to state what these preconditions are. They are to be found in man's dual faculty of speaking and hearing. But closer scrutiny very soon reveals that these are two very difficult things to accomplish as soon as one begins to take them sufficiently seriously, for both of them require of man that he make a particular effort and overcome his natural desire to promote himself and protect his own interests. We shall therefore have to examine these two accomplishments in somewhat greater detail from just this point of view.

Let us first look into the *difficulties involved in speaking*. Anyone who expresses something exposes himself to hazards, especially if it is a case of something being extracted tentatively from that which has previously remained unexpressed. The person speaking puts himself at the mercy of his partner for he does not know how this other person will receive his words. The very possibility of being misunderstood makes for an embarrassing situation, and the possibility of being rejected or repulsed all the more so. To say the least of it the person speaking runs the risk of making himself look ridiculous if not even of compromising himself, and over and above that, if the partner is ill-disposed towards him, of providing the partner with weapons which can actually be used against himself, the speaker. It is always more prudent, "smarter", to say nothing and to conceal one's real thoughts behind a veil of undefined silence. Alternatively, if one has already begun to speak and perceives that the second person is not going along with one, the wisest thing to do is to revert in what one is saying to something quite non-committal and to pretend that one had not in the least intended to say what one had begun to say. The situation is similar when, being asked a question straight out, one declines to give an honest, specific answer because one does not have the required trust in the person asking the question and thus frustrates his attempts at conversing with one. With a sense of shame one may remember many a situation

during the reign of the National Socialist regime when one did not respond to someone's hesitant attempts at holding an honest conversation, because one did not trust one's partner and possibly even suspected him of being a spy, thus, because one was too cowardly, letting slip by the chance of a conversation which might have proved fruitful for both parties.

One can say then that speaking requires a particular kind of courage of one, the courage to *renounce the "natural" safety measures* and to place oneself at the mercy of the other person. But it is only by liberating oneself from one's natural and constant desire for security and by raising oneself above all natural inborn fear - or shyness or feelings of shame, whatever these inhibitions might be - it is only by doing this that one can converse [27/28] in the real sense and thus realize the humanity of man. It requires of the person speaking in *all-out effort* with no heed whatsoever to the hazards involved. And perhaps one can educate people to make this effort by making them conscious of this situation.

But there are similar difficulties when it comes to the *faculty of hearing*. For it too demands that one overcome one's natural self-consciousness. It demands that one renounce the naive security of one's own opinion and that one enter frankly into the discussion, acknowledging the likelihood that the other person, whose ideas are quite different from one's own, might possibly be in the right and not oneself. This is a question of taking a relative attitude towards man's "natural" self-confidence, or, in other words, it is a question of foregoing adopting a position of authority. This does indeed go against human nature, if we choose to describe naive ego-centricity as human nature. We must forego all this if we really wish to converse with others, something which may be very easy if we are among a familiar circle of friends, who for the most part share our thoughts and opinions. But the demand goes further. It also requires of us that we be prepared to converse with others when we are confronted with ideas which at first appear to be completely misguided and condemnable, and it even tells us that there is no source of human disagreement which cannot, in the final analysis, be resolved by means of sensible conversation. This, in fact, is something of which we are genuinely convinced. Standing up for this conviction always involves a hazard, because it does not always automatically encounter a corresponding degree of understanding from the other person, but often finds itself confronted with an opponent who rejects all thought of conversing with someone also.

It is then not going too far if we assert that a human form of life can only be achieved where people are prepared to converse with each other.

5. That is why we now ask what significance this has for us, especially in as far as we are involved as people who educate others. This question is not only intended for those who are involved in education by way of their profession, namely the various kinds of teachers, it is also intended for every individual who is responsible for education of some kind, and this means parents who are involved with bringing up their children. In this matter, which concerns us all, we must ask ourselves what we can do to create in people both the faculty and the willingness to converse with others. Conscious planning will be required if even the slightest progress is to be made here. It is crucial in the first place for every individual to hold up his own *readiness to converse* as an example to others. That means that he is required to make an all-out effort paying no heed to the personal hazards involved and to forego assuming a position of authority which [28/29] provides him with so much security. It is indeed a great effort which he is required to make, it being, so to speak, a sort of advance which he is asked to make to other people. I repeat, he is required to forego any position of authority and to be willing, without reservation, to allow himself and his ideas to be put in question. This does not mean that he should constantly be engaged in discussion. Such discussion will remain a rare event for which, if it is not to degenerate into mere talk, he will need to exert himself and participate with all his being. But it means that whenever doubts arise as to his own position or way of thinking, he should also be

prepared frankly to give an account of himself in reply to serious questions. Here the word "serious" is important since this can all too easily be allowed to develop into non-committal talk. The seriousness of the matter must be guaranteed by the person asking the questions being prepared to call himself in question in a similar fashion. A second qualification has to be made: for it to be possible to converse in the real sense of the word the two people participating must have attained a certain intellectual maturity. It is thus only possible if the party who is to be educated has already reached this stage, and is therefore not to be represented as an abstract postulate but must rather vary according to the degree of intellectual maturity achieved by each individual.

In addition to this personal commitment the individual must, secondly, building on this basis, be prepared to draw the other person into conversation, to encourage him to speak and, never tiring in his patience, he must help him overcome his difficulties. One has to give the other person an opportunity to participate in conversation, allowing him the experience of successful conversation, an experience which will fill him with elation and enhance his whole being.

It will be clear that a readiness to converse is not something which can be got by means of a planned timetable, worked on so to speak, but that, on the other hand, it will not develop of its own accord. It can only develop when the teacher is able to perceive the way in which the various parts of the whole complex link up with each other and is constantly ready to recognize and seize the opportunities as they arise. And this means above all, to be quite explicit about it once more, that the teacher is required to overcome his own wishes and preferences completely, since this is an essential prerequisite if people are to converse with each other, and it also means that he is required consciously to relinquish his position of authority.

6. But we must not restrict ourselves by treating the question purely from the teacher's perspective. The kind of conversation we are dealing with is not something which has actually materialized in the adult world, [29/30] in our modern society, with us simply needing to show our children the way into this world. It is rather the case that our adult world is suffering because this kind of conversation is alien to it, or to put it in more exact terms, because conversation of this kind has been displaced and now takes place purely in the private sphere, strictly among friends, whereas in public life, purely on account of its being expedient and functional and because it serves the naked drive for power, thinking in monologue form is alone supreme. And all the danger with which this world of ours is fraught originates from man's disinclination to resolve his problems on the high plane of "Sprachlichkeit", choosing rather to ignore these possibilities and turn to force as the means for achieving his aims. The dangers which arise from this become the greater the more people appear as the spokesmen for large institutions, representing parties or classes or states etc. The final stage of this progression is a war fought with atomic bombs, which will lead to the extermination of the whole of mankind. It is against this background that we have to examine the significance of man's failure to avail himself of the opportunities offered him to converse with others. Against this background one is compelled at the same time to ask what responsibility each one of us, not primarily as teachers but as representatives of mankind has to bear.

First and foremost it is important that people everywhere learn to listen to each other and to talk to each other. For, to put it bluntly, when they talk to each other they do not go dropping atomic bombs or trying in some other way to make others yield to their will. If there has been a glimmer of hope in the last few years then it was the moment when Kennedy and Khrushchev agreed to set up a direct telephone link with each other, for that meant that they wanted the opportunity to talk to each other before things reached the point of no return. And it seems to me that one can say that human reason, as opposed to blind passion, is determined by the ability to speak to other people and to be open to other people's arguments.

Certainly talking to each other in this way does not qualify for the term conversation as treated above, nor is it "Sprachlichkeit" in the full meaning of the word, in the meaning that Liebrucks has given the word. And we shall have to go as far as to ask just what the public forms are of that which, in the private sphere, we have provisionally described as conversation. We can be sure that there are distinctions to be made between various forms, which we cannot, however, go into in detail here.

In the political as well as in the economic sphere we can first of all mention *negotiation*. In negotiation two parties attempt, by means of argument and counter-argument, to reach agreement over a matter in dispute. It is because it has this object in view that negotiation is to be [30/31] distinguished, for instance, from a *discussion*. This continues to be a form of struggle, even if it is fought with weapons of the intellect, and, as a rule, within the confines of scholarship. In discussion one attempts to make one's point of view felt, one argues and seeks to furnish evidence for one's thesis etc. These remain, for the most part, the methods typical of thinking in monologue form, which, in discussion, are applied by one person to counter the arguments of the other. This is due to the fact that the people involved argue from a fixed position and that such positions confront each other. The whole matter only takes on a more relaxed tone because these positions do not have to be defended in deadly earnest. One can quite simply abandon them if they prove to be untenable, without losing face on that account. The point in discussion lies in exposing one's thoughts to the criticism of one's opponent. In this way they are clarified and confirmed, but not really extended in a productive fashion, and it is for this reason that discussions are often broken off without any positive result being achieved, after both sides' points of view have been made clear.

That is what distinguishes discussion from *negotiation* (and it was only in order to make this distinction clear that reference was made to discussion). For negotiation would have no point were it not to lead to some kind of result. And this is once more a factor which determines how the parties speak to each other. Of course, each of the parties will try to gain as much as he can for himself, and will not be afraid to use such means as cunning and bluff in order to achieve his ends. But there are certain limits. Anyone who insists in too stubborn a manner that his demands be met endangers the object of the negotiations, and they are then broken off without any progress having been made. If this is to be avoided then one partner has to "come half way to meet the other". As we pointed out with respect to "Sprachlichkeit", he has to be prepared to listen to other people's arguments. And the result is then a sensible settlement by which an existing state of tension, perhaps even a war, is brought to an end. When negotiations take place reason has been victorious over the useless application of force. Through the medium of language something specifically human has prevailed.

But negotiation cannot really be described as *conversation in the real sense*, and the fact that people negotiate with each other is still not sufficient for the realization of true humanity. It is possible for people to remain strangers in negotiation, and they may even possibly regard each other as enemies, it being only the voice of calculating reason which causes them to negotiate with one another rather than to fight against each other. It is for this reason that the compromise which is reached is also questionable. And the agreement can be broken at any moment. That [31/32] is why it is crucial, above all in the political sphere, that people do not stop at simply negotiating with each other but that they begin really to converse with each other in the sense that we have already outlined. This means that one should not from the outset regard the other person as an enemy and portray him as the villain and oneself as the shining hero, but that one should rather appreciate him as a human being and be prepared to listen to his reasons and to put one's own motives in question. This is then not only a matter of concern for the particular leading representatives but also, and perhaps even more so, a matter of concern for each individual member of the two camps. It is in this context that one has to see the need, at the universities, to converse with the representatives of the student groups. This is especially the context, however,

of the conversation between East and West, a conversation which transcends the strict divisions of the political boundaries. Understanding can be achieved and the danger of war can be averted on a long term basis only if every individual, in East and West, will cease to see the other party as a mischievous devil, and is prepared to accept him as a human being who is striving to realize the potential of humanity, in a manner which one certainly does not have to imitate but which is just as entitled to a hearing as one's own.

Thus we can see that the problem of "Sprachlichkeit" is directly linked with the burning political issues of our time. By leading our pupils to the point where they are willing to converse with others, we as teachers have, in all this, the additional task of making it possible to take the heat out of the situation and of creating the conditions for establishing a lasting peace. Showing people how to converse with each other is quite literally educating them for peace.

7. However, one has to see the limitations that there are both in this case and whenever people seek to converse with each other in peace: willingness to converse has to be mutual, shared equally by both partners. The conversation proves unsuccessful or does not even begin to develop at all when the other side refuses to make this concession. And this too can take two forms. It can happen on the one hand that the other side will simply refuse to allow itself to become involved or will abruptly withdraw with some excuse or other. It can also happen that it will not adopt the frankness which is required of both sides and that it will convert the whole affair into that form of propaganda which people are so pleased to describe as "discussion". In a "discussion" of this kind one tries to carry through one's own point of view, which itself is not regarded as being a matter for discussion, and one requires of the other person that he listen but one is not prepared to listen oneself. This was an approach adopted, for instance, by the National Socialists, who made use of discussion as a means to acquiring power but who then, quite logically, put an end to all discussion as soon as they were actually in power.

In this sphere there also arises the fundamental problem of tolerance and its relation to intolerance. When it becomes clear that a discussion is being used to the wrong purpose, then one has no other choice than of one's own accord to withdraw, since it has shown itself to be pointless to continue. Discussion is possible only when both sides are prepared to listen, and refrain from claiming that they alone have a monopoly over the truth.

Nevertheless the matter must not end with people withdrawing in resignation and abandoning the idea of conversing with another party. On the contrary it is crucial, despite any number of setbacks, that one exercise patience and constantly try afresh to converse with the other person, that one constantly take the risk of leaving the ground of which one is sure in order to express something which one genuinely feels, and that one reveal oneself to one's partner with one's defences down. One must therefore not simply be prepared oneself to converse without any preconceived ideas but one must also always challenge one's "opponent" to make the attempt, in order to establish in how far a common understanding can be achieved. This applies at the various levels at which it is both possible and necessary for people to converse with each other, from the most intimate private sphere to the great public sphere of politics.

It is only in this way that we can hope to cope with the dangers with which mankind is now threatened. Let me refer here to Martin Buber who, in one of his last essays which bore the ominous title: *"Die Umkehr im Angesicht des drohenden Untergangs"*, also pointed out that our last hope of redemption lay in seeking to converse with each other. He writes: "If the Great Peace is to come about and the devastated life of the earth is to be renewed, then the peoples of the world must, through the humane men among their ranks, find the way to begin conversing with each other again. For war has always had one adversary, whose work is done in seclusion: language - fulfilled language, the language of people really conversing with each other, the language in which people can understand each other and can reach understanding with each

other... When language can once more be heard from one camp to the other, no matter how timid the attempts may be, then war will already have been called in question."

That brings me to the end of what I have to say. I hope I have made clear the fact that the fate of mankind really depends on people's coming together to converse with each other, and that this is a great and demanding responsibility which confronts us all in our daily lives, whether in the realm of politics or in the more intimate sphere of our private lives.