

CORRESPONDENCE

TO THE EDITOR OF *Philosophy*
"OUR KNOWLEDGE OF ONE ANOTHER"

DEAR SIR,

It has been remarked (by Dr. John Baillie in *Our Knowledge of God*, 1939, p. 201) that there "is no more hopeful element in the philosophy of our time than the re-opening of the question of the nature of our knowledge of one another." It is because I agree with this statement that it seems to me important, in relation to the article by Professor Aaron on this subject in your April issue, to reaffirm the element stressed in these "reopening" discussions, which Professor Aaron's article seems to disregard. This element is mutuality. What is direct or unique in our knowledge of one another is that by each of us others are known as, in Dr. Webb's phrase, "partners in social intercourse." Every other person is to me potentially a *Thou* to whom I in turn am *Thou*. That element of self-revelation which Professor Aaron admits as a unique feature of personal knowledge presupposes this mutuality; but when mutuality is to be traced to its earliest appearance, before self-revelation in speech has become possible, we must analyse what Aaron terms "a rudimentary communication," when a child—or half-human animal—experiences response of another being to its needs and learns to evoke such response.

In attempting analysis of the development of a child at the present time, it seems necessary to keep in mind those innate dispositions, "cognitive only as potentialities" (*loc. cit.*, p. 67) which we refer to ancestral experience. When the child's face smiles or puckers in response to the mother's smile or frown, it seems not rash to assume that the consciousness accompanying this inherited bodily reaction is tinged with something we might almost term an inherited reminiscence of mutuality. During the ages when the human organism was acquiring capacity to smile and frown, and otherwise react responsively to expressed feelings and purposes of others, it was acquiring also capacity to recognize itself and others as interacting persons. It is within this inherited capacity of interaction that we trace, as individual experience is clarified, both the growing awareness of self and others as persons continually co-operating or thwarting one another in action, and consciousness also of persons as distinct from things whose aiding or obstructing of action involves no such mutuality.

We cannot, Professor Aaron argues, explain our explicit assertion of another's existence in terms of "a vague potentiality with which we are innately endowed." Our knowledge of others, he asserts, "begins with the certain and indubitable perception of objects." What recent reflections upon the *I-Thou* relation would suggest, qualifying or in criticism of that assertion, may be put thus: our indubitable perception of objects is only achieved as we come gradually to distinguish within our innately determined social experience interacting subjects—self and others—and the objects known and used in common by these subjects in their interaction.

Yours faithfully,

MAUD BODKIN.

Welwyn Garden City, April 1944.

TO THE EDITOR OF *Philosophy*.

DEAR SIR,

I should be grateful if you would allow me to make a brief comment on Dr. Heinemann's review of my book on Nietzsche in *Philosophy* for April 1944.

The character of Dr. Heinemann's treatment of my book seems to have been partly determined by his objection to certain paragraphs of my preface in which I speak of the personal "wickedness" of Nietzsche in strong terms. Apart from the