



New Normal: Social Relationship to Facing Pandemic Corona in The Philosophy of Martin Bubber and Franz Rosenzweig

Erkwan Martinus¹, Alfredo Siboro²

^{1,2} Fakultas Filsafat, Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas, Medan

Email: edosiboro48@gmail.com

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic (Corona Virus Disease 19) that is occurring in the world, particularly in Indonesia, has caused social shifts and became a conflict that could not be avoided but not necessarily could not be resolved, which resulted in dynamic social relations. In dealing with the impact of the spread of Covid-19, the New Normal was enforced as a form of restriction in social relations. As for and what is most needed in carrying out social relations during the Covid-19 pandemic is to develop a sense of sympathy for others. And this is what lies at the heart of Martin Bubber and Franz Rosenzweig's philosophy of dialogue.

Keywords : *social relations, new normal, Covid-19, dialogue, dynamics.*

INTRODUCTION

As social beings, humans always establish relationships with others, try to recognize and understand each other's needs, form social interactions as well as try to maintain these interactions.¹ This can be seen in humans who need help from others through social contact and communication to make ends meet.

In today's social reality, humans even create relationships that are not harmonious, even to the point of becoming a threat to others. Humans who have the power to move aggressively and evil towards others (*homo homini lupus*) actually destroy the opportunity to live a peaceful and full of happiness and free from hatred, violence, and crime.²

To create harmony in social life, the thoughts of Martin Bubber and Franz Rosenzweig become a bridge. Plus the current situation, take place where COVID-19 is a serious problem in creating harmony in human life. The resulting impact will be very broad ranging from political, economic, social, cultural, defense, and security to the welfare of society. Therefore, the author wants to describe the New Normal as a human relationship according to the thoughts of Martin Bubber and Franz Rosenzweig in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

DISCUSSION

Martin Bubber was born on February 8, 1878, in Vienna. When he was 3 years old, he lived with his grandfather, Salomon Bubber, and grandmother, Adela in Lemberg (Galicia, Poland) because his parents divorced. Martin grew up in a Jewish environment where his grandfather was a Hebrew scholar who wrote a critical review of the Midrash (Jewish commentary on the Bible). Salomon not only taught Martin to practice the Jewish tradition but

¹ Sarlito W. Saworno dan Eko A. Meinamo, *Psikologi Sosial* (Jakarta: Salemba Humanika, 2009), p. 67.

² Louis Leahy, *Manusia Sebuah Misteri, Sintesa Filosofis tentang Makhluk Paradoksial* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1981), p. 3.



also introduced the work of German writers, such as Chiller, a German philosopher.³

When he was 14 years old, Martin Buber returned to live in Lemberg with his father who remarried. At the age of 17, he completed his studies at the Polish Gymnasium (1896), then entered the University of Vienna to study philosophy and art history. He continued his studies at the Universities of Berlin, Leipzig, and Zurich. Martin Buber had absolutely no interest in Jewish matters. This is because from childhood he hated all forms of rituals and rigid rituals of Judaism. Instead, his interest is in secular matters.⁴

In Leipzig, he was involved in the Zionism movement led by Theodor Herzland studied almost all aspects related to Judaism which tended to religiosity and piety and not political problems, so that what the Jews needed was not physical development but a spiritual awakening in becoming blessings to the world.⁵

Later, Martin Buber was drawn to Hasidic teachings after reading Baal Shem Tov's Zavaat Ribesh amid his disillusionment with Zionism and formal orthodox Judaism. Hasidism flourished among Eastern European Jews in the XVIII and XIX centuries. These teachings emphasize maintaining the relationship between humans and God, loving God and others, being sensitive to God's Revelation, and emphasizing prayer as the main suggestion for unity with God.⁶

Martin Buber's life experience and his fascination with Hasidic teachings made him aware of his existence as a human being who has rights and obligations. Between rights and obligations, both must have a dialogue, so that it will not open up opportunities to commit crimes. Therefore, Martin Buber gave the concept of dialogue to build peace and resolve conflicts.⁷

Franz Rosenzweig

Franz Rosenzweig was born in 1886 in the city of Kassel, Hessen. Her parents were liberal Jews, where they did not strictly adhere to Jewish customs and regulations. Franz Rosenzweig studied medicine in Gottingen, Munich and Freiburg. After a few years, he changed course by studying modern history and philosophy in Berlin and Freiburg. In 1912, Franz Rosenzweig received a general "doctor of philosophy" with a dissertation entitled "Hegel und der Staat". Subsequently, he began studying law after earning a promotion in philosophy. He experienced conversion in 1913 during the Yom Kippur Jewish feast, which resulted in him becoming a serious believer in Judaism. Then he continued his studies in Berlin at Hermann Cohen, a prominent neo-scientist and philosopher. He also participated in World War I as a soldier in the German army in the Balkans. His great philosophical work "Stern der Erlösung" (Star of Redemption) appeared in 1921.⁸

In the previous year, he also founded *Das Freie Jüdische Lehrhaus*, a free Jewish college, and became its first director. Its goal is to cultivate adults in the Jewish religion and culture. In this college, Martin Buber is also a lecturer. Since 1921, Franz Rosenzweig suffered from a disease that later left him completely paralyzed. When he was sick, he was asked by Martin Buber to cooperate in translating the Jewish Bible in a new way into German. He only had time to contribute only to the book of Isaiah. He died in Frankfurt in 1929 when

³ Pancha Wiguna Yahya, "Mengenal Martin Buber dan Filsafat Dialogisnya, dalam *Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan*, Vol. 2, no.1 (April 2001) (Jakarta: Seminari Alkitab Asia Tenggara, 2001), p. 38.

⁴ Pancha Wiguna Yahya, "Mengenal ...", p. 38-39.

⁵ Pancha Wiguna Yahya, "Mengenal ...", p. 39.

⁶ Pancha Wiguna Yahya, "Mengenal ...", p. 39.

⁷ Pancha Wiguna Yahya, "Mengenal ...", p. 39.

⁸ K. Bertens, *Sejarah Filsafat Barat Abad XX Inggris-Jerman* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1990), p. 156-157.



he was nearly 43 years old.⁹

Human Relations according to the Thought of Martin Bubber and Franz Rosenzweig *I and Thou* in Martin Bubber's Dialogical Philosophy

All of his dialogical philosophical views are written in his book, "Ich und Du" (I and Thou). For him, the beginning of everything is a relationship. Basically, humans live in relationships, even in complex relationships. That is, it is impossible for humans to live in isolation without having any relationship (all real living is a meeting).¹⁰

There are three spheres of relations in human life, namely: (1) living with nature under the territory of language (vibrates in dark and remains below), (2) living with other humans, which is clear and real, and enters the realm of language (manifests and enters language), (3) lives together with a spiritual being, which does not have language but creates it (wrapped in the cloud but reveals itself, it lacks but creates language). And the most unique of the three spheres of relations is the relationship with humans, because, in it, language can be used perfectly so that it becomes a sequence and a conversation that has a reciprocal effect.¹¹

For Martin Bubber, humans have two fundamental relationships, *I-it* and *I- Thou*. Humans will find themselves, become whole individuals, and can find their purpose in life if they have an *I-Thou* relationship, where humans establish reciprocal relationships between subjects. Conversely, this cannot be found in *I-It* relations, where humans treat other parties as objects. The *I-Thou* relationship is not just experience but the presence and is a spontaneous relationship, not bound by rules and transcending time and space.¹² An example of the *I-Thou* relationship is seen in a marriage relationship, where everyone treats their partner as a subject by showing love to their partner.

The *I-Thou* relationship is not only found in human relations, but also in the relationship between humans and nature and spiritual beings. Conversely, an *I-It* Relationships are also found not only in human relations with nature or spiritual beings but in relationships with fellow humans. This depends on whether humans treat nature and spiritual beings as objects or even develop dialogical relationships between subjects.¹³

Martin Bubber criticizes infrahuman civilization. According to him, humans are increasingly enlarging the *I-It* relations and eliminating the *I-Thou* relations. In the midst of the advancement of modernization, modern humans are increasingly experiencing and using other parties (nature, human and spiritual being), and treating them as objects which then lose their relationship. According to him, the economy and the state are increasingly colonizing and making humans use other humans where humans use goods and services as well as the opinions and aspirations of others. Actually, the *I-It* relationship is not evil as long as humans do not manipulate, modify, and use it. But in reality, the *I-Thou* relationship never lasts, because every *I-Thou* relationship always turns into an *I-It* relationship.¹⁴

The Totality of Franz Rosenzweig's criticism

Franz Rosenzweig, in his book "The Star of Redemption" (1921), in which human rationality as a tendency to totality human social and natural experiences, including their religious system. Franz Rosenzweig sees man, the world, and God as rationally psychological,

⁹ K. Bertens, Sejarah Filsafat ..., p. 156-157.

¹⁰ Pancha Wiguna Yahya, "Mengenal Martin Buber dan Filsafat Dialogisnya, dalam Jurnal *Teologi dan Pelayanan*, Vol. 2, no.1 (April 2001) (Jakarta: Seminari Alkitab Asia Tenggara, 2001), p. 42.

¹¹ Pancha Wiguna Yahya, "Mengenal..., p. 43.

¹² Pancha Wiguna Yahya, "Mengenal Martin Buber dan Filsafat Dialogisnya, dalam Jurnal *Teologi dan Pelayanan*, Vol. 2, no.1 (April 2001) (Jakarta: Seminari Alkitab Asia Tenggara, 2001), p. 43.

¹³ Pancha Wiguna Yahya, "Mengenal..., p. 43-44.

¹⁴ Pancha Wiguna Yahya, "Mengenal..., p. 44.



cosmological, and theological objects in the metaphysical tradition that are united in an idea in Hegel's thought. He also wrote Kierkegaard's themes of dread. In a fear of death, where nothing can convey that feeling either by avoiding it or picking it up so that the totality of Hegel's thinking becomes refuted. At a time when a man finds no peace, while also finding no place in everything where he previously felt himself apart, man is no longer able to believe himself to be a part of that thing. In this state, humans will return to their own place of isolation. In social life, humans place themselves as inseparable beings and reject any idealist speculation about encompassing concepts.¹⁵

Death is a reality that shows how everything cannot be fully grasped and will never stay in one place. That is, the totality is destroyed. Franz Rosenzweig wants to accustom us to a pattern of thinking about differences that cannot be systematic, which means that it is always dynamic changing.¹⁶

Franz Rosenzweig only talks about the problem of creation, revelation, and redemption. The relation of God, the human world which is interconnected with one another, is established through creation, revelation, and redemption. In creation, Allah chose and created the world and humans. In revelation, Allah reveals His name so that it establishes an I-Thou relationship. If humans answer, he continues the dialogue. If humans don't answer, it actually hinders the progress of dialogue. In redemption, the directed world and man were accomplished as a result of the "commandments" conveyed in revelation. It makes possible a love that leads people to God's Kingdom and then to others as representatives of the Kingdom.¹⁷

There are 4 main characteristics in the philosophy of "das Neue Denken", Franz Rosenzweig's "New Thought", namely: (1) experience, (2) relations, (3) language/dialogue, and (4) direction for the future.

Experience is understood in another sense in empiricism or positivism. That is, experience for him is not the same as sense experience or facts alone. The experience he had was an encounter with God, the world, and others. In this case, Franz Rosenzweig wants to criticize any philosophy that studies the nature of things. It is not the essence that is the object of philosophy, but reality. However, this experience is not necessarily accepted clearly, without criticism or control. In fact, criticism of experience is possible only based on an experience that is more profound and pure, not simply by leaving the experience.¹⁸

For Franz Rosenzweig, God is a relationship. This means that Allah is not God for Himself, but Allah for others. And not only is Allah a relationship, but He also establishes a relationship between humans - the world and humans - each other, through creation (past), revelation (present), and redemption (future). Human openness in a world is understood in terms of a relationship to the world to come, which is a better world. In this context, Franz Rosenzweig has already spoken about the *I-Thou* relationship in the mind of Martin Buber, *I-Thou*.¹⁹

In establishing these relationships, the most important part is language, or more precisely dialogue. In this case, speaking is not just monological (talking to himself), but "talking with". Talking always means answering and taking responsibility. Philosophy for Franz Rosenzweig is "philosophy that tells stories".²⁰ The future orientation of Franz

¹⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *In the Time of the Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 151.

¹⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *In the Time...*, p. 157.

¹⁷ K. Bertens, *Sejarah Filsafat Barat Abad XX Inggris-Jerman* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1990), p. 158. K. Bertens, *Sejarah Filsafat Barat Abad XX Inggris-Jerman* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1990), p. 158.

¹⁸ K. Bertens, *Sejarah ...*, p. 159.

¹⁹ K. Bertens, *Sejarah Filsafat Barat Abad XX Inggris-Jerman* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1990), p. 159.

²⁰ K. Bertens, *Sejarah ...*, p. 159.



Rosenzweig's "new thinking" clearly stems from the atmosphere of the Jewish religion which is consequently eschatological (future fulfillment).²¹

Martin Bubber and Franz Rosenzweig's philosophy of dialogue in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic situation in Indonesia.

New Normal in Indonesia and COVID-19

In December 2019, the world was shocked by an event that made people uneasy. This event is known as the spread of the coronavirus outbreak (COVID- 19). COVID-19 was declared by WHO as a public health emergency of concern to the international community. The number of COVID-19 cases has increased quite rapidly and the spread is occurring internationally. From the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia in 2020, confirmed cases reported until March 25, 2020, were 414,178 cases with 18,440 deaths (CFR 4.4%).²²

Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a new type that has never been previously identified in humans. The virus that causes COVID-19 is called Sars- CoV-2, which is a zoonotic virus (transmitted between animals and humans). The animal is still unknown. COVID-19 can be transmitted from person to person through droplets. People who are most at risk of contracting this disease are people who have close contact with COVID-19 patients, including treating COVID-19. Common signs and symptoms of COVID-19 infection include acute respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath. The average incubation period is 5-6 days. Severe cases of COVID-19 are pneumonia, acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, and even death.²³

According to the PHEOC of the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2020), as of June 2020, as many as 31,186 cases have been confirmed with 1851 cases died. In handling this pandemic problem, the Indonesian government has taken many steps and policies to overcome it. One of them is to socialize the Social Distancing movement as a first step to break the chain of transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, health services in Indonesia and health human resources are also present in handling cases of the COVID-19 pandemic, although they are not sufficient even though cases continue to increase.²⁴

On July 25, 2020, it was informed that Indonesia had reached 95,418 positive cases with 4,665 deaths due to COVID-19. With the increasing number of positive cases of Covid - 19 with a high mortality rate, it is impossible to carry out an activity by gathering a large number of people, while the public needs a lot of information regarding how to prevent and maintain immunity. Thus, the government enforces a "New normal".²⁵

"New normal" is often misunderstood by some Indonesians. Some Indonesian people interpret New Normal as returning to activities as before or activities as before. However, what is meant by New Normal is an adaptation of new habits, where everyone can do activities by implementing health protocols such as wearing a mask, adopting a clean and healthy lifestyle, and so on. Adaptation to this new habit has been implemented, but many times there are still many people who are unable to comply with health protocols, resulting in high positive

²¹ K. Bertens, *Sejarah ...*, p. 159-160.

²² Ririn Noviyanti Putri, "Indonesia dalam Menghadapi Pandemi Covid-19", dalam *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi*, 20 (2), Juli 2020 (Jambi: Universitas Batanghari, 2020), p. 705.

²³ Ririn Noviyanti Putri, "Indonesia dalam ...", p. 705.

²⁴ Ririn Noviyanti Putri, "Indonesia dalam Menghadapi Pandemi Covid-19", dalam *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi*, 20 (2), Juli 2020 (Jambi: Universitas Batanghari, 2020), p. 706.

²⁵ M. Nilzam Ally, dkk., "Panduan Aman "New Normal" Menghadapi Pandemi COVID-19", dalam *Jurnal Layanan Masyarakat (Journal of Public Service)*, Vol. 4 No. 2 tahun 2020 (Jakarta: Universitas Airlangga, 2020), p. 416. Diakses dari <https://e-journal.unair.ac.id/jlm/article/view/23472>, pada 25 April 2021.



cases of COVID -19. This has led to social change, so that social interaction is limited.²⁶

The Influence of the Philosophy of Dialogue in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the philosophy of dialogue, humans must accept the realities of their lives, both between the world and humans, and humans and each other, including accepting the fact that humans are currently facing the fear of the dire dangers of COVID-19. In the face of this situation, the relationship that takes place between I and You, *I-Thou* is indispensable as the core of human existence to direct the human person to others, to establish communication between each other for the common good.

The relationship between humans in COVID-19 is not just sympathy or psychological events. The term "world between people" means what actually happens between humans, when one actually confronts another. As social beings, humans must coexist with other humans. In social life, everyone needs to secure a sense of care for others. This social care is an attitude and actions that reflect the I- Thou relationship by sympathizing with others related to the values of honesty, compassion, humility, kindness, and other kindness. The importance of feelings of empathy in forming sensitive individuals with attitudes and actions who always want to provide assistance to others who are in particular need of victims of COVID-19.

The dialogue relationship in philosophy Martin Buber and Franz Sorenzweig would like to invite us to start building relationships with fellow human beings with a sense of empathy through social care for one another. The social care that is introduced is not to interfere with other people's affairs, but to help solve the problems faced by others with the aim of goodness and peace. All of this is for a good goal, namely the welfare of life together towards a harmonious and peaceful life without any fear of the problems at hand.

In other words, New Normal is not a barrier for human movement to carry out social relations with others, let alone help others during the COVID-19 period. New Normal is a reminder that we should continue to be vigilant in overcoming the spread of COVID-19 and is not a barrier to always having a dialogue for the common welfare.

CONCLUSION

The problems of life that humans face can only find the answer in the form of a solution if we are based on humans who live in the world, and humans have something to do with everything. We are nothing but discussing humans in the reality of life and realistically living in the world, not just discussing selfishness. Humans claim to be the correlation between humans and the world and are free to determine their attitude towards the world.

Dialogue relations between human beings are used as a gift to create a life that is prosperous, peaceful, and harmonious even though humans have many differences in terms of economics, social, and politics. Let's help each other and please help in dealing with the problems faced specifically by the COVID-19 pandemic which is endemic. Let's reach out to each other to help others for a better life.

BIBLIOGRAFI

- Ally, M. Nilzam, dkk. "Panduan Aman "New Normal" Menghadapi Pandemi COVID-19", dalam *Jurnal Layanan Masyarakat (Journal of Public Service)*, Vol. 4 No. 2 tahun 2020. Jakarta: Universitas Airlangga, 2020
- Bertens, K. *Sejarah Filsafat Barat Abad XX Inggris-Jerman*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1990.

²⁶ M. Nilzam Ally, dkk., "Panduan ..., p. 416-417. Diakses dari <https://e-journal.unair.ac.id/jlm/article/view/23472>, pada 25 April 2021.



-
- Leahy, Louis. *Manusia Sebuah Misteri, Sintesa Filosofis tentang Makhluk Paradoksal*. Jakarta: Gramedia, 1981.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *In the Time of the Nation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Putri, Ririn Noviyanti. "Indonesia dalam Menghadapi Pandemi Covid-19", dalam *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi*, 20 (2), Juli 2020. Jambi: Universitas Batanghari, 2020.
- Saworno, Sarlito W. dan Eko A. Meinamo. *Psikologi Sosial*. Jakarta: Salemba Humanika, 2009.
- Yahya, Pancha Wiguna. "Mengenal Martin Buber dan Filsafat Dialogisnya, dalam *Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan*, Vol. 2, no.1 (April 2001). Jakarta: Seminari Alkitab Asia Tenggara, 2001.