



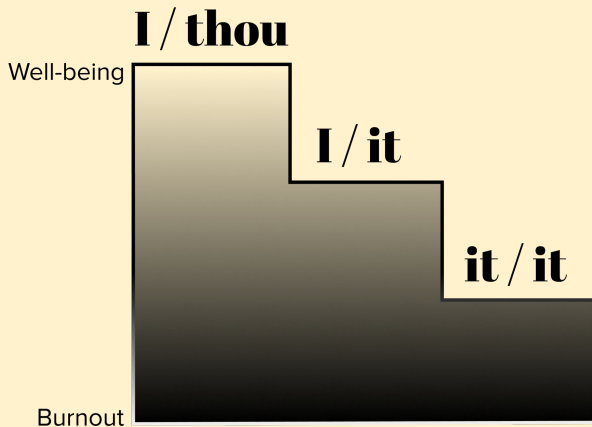
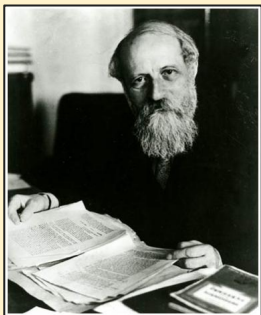
# Buber and Burnout: A Framework for Well-being

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## Case:

A 30 year old medical resident presented to turn of the century philosopher Martin Buber to discuss his personal disillusionment. The resident lamented, “When in the grave night-hour, [I] lie, racked by a waking dream...and noted amid [my] torment: there is still *life*, if only I got through to it—but how, *how?*”<sup>1</sup> When pressed for what helps improve these feelings he replies “You see my wretched [self], I confess to you it is empty, and whatever I do in myself,” I cannot “fathom” nor fix my emptiness.<sup>1</sup>

Buber diagnosed the resident with burnout, one of the “increasing numbers, realizing with increasing distress” that the institutions — governmental, economic, corporate, academic — that ensconce their work “yield no public life” and instead erode at their vitality.<sup>1</sup>



## I / Thou

“If I face a human being as my Thou and say the primary word I-Thou to him, he is not a thing among things...not a he or she...[but] he is Thou and fills the heavens”<sup>1</sup>

“In the eyes of him who takes his stand in [I-Thou] and gazes out of it... can be effective, helping, healing, educating, raising up, saving”<sup>1</sup>

## I / it

“The man who says I-It...with the magnifying glass of peering observation he bends over particulars and objectifies them... he knits them into a scheme of observation without any feeling of universality”<sup>1</sup>

## it / it

“If a culture ceases to be centered in the living and continually renewed relational event [i.e the I-Thou], then it hardens into the world of It, which the glowing deeds of solitary spirits only spasmodically break through”<sup>1</sup>

## References:

<sup>1</sup>Buber M. *I and Thou*. (R.G. Smith, Trans.). T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh; 1937

<sup>2</sup>Wilmar B. Schaufeli, Michael P. Leiter, and Christina Maslach, “Burnout: 35 Years of Research and Practice,” *Career Development International* 14, no. 3 (June 19, 2009): 204–20 (reference used in audio)

<sup>3</sup>Photograph of Martin Buber. Martin Buber Collection. Leo Baeck Institute, Center for Jewish History