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## The Exclusiveness and Inclusiveness of The Eternal Being in The Light of Martin Buber's Philosophical Reflection

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### Abstract

The spoken word is the interiority of the human heart made visible. In other words, the content of the heart is revealed in the spoken word. More so, the action of a man demonstrates and manifest really the stuff that the person is made of, for man's beingness is manifested in his character. In the same vein, there are traces and vestiges of God in all his creatures. Put the other way, there is the stamp of God in his creations. Meanwhile, God speaks and is heard in his creatures. Admittedly, creatures are the sure road to their creator. Hence, God is all encompassing. He is all Inclusive and at the same time all exclusive; for God is all but no- thing is God. Consequently, it is in encountering God that man finds meaning in life. Outside the context of God, therefore, the creation will be absolutely emptied into meaninglessness and zeroization. Invariably, man's relationship with God embowed the world with meaning and direction. The above stated facts are the task the writer intends to philosophically present in relation to Martin Buber's inter-subjective philosophy. To achieve this, therefore, the researcher methodically employs the philosophical and critical ways of presentation.

**Keywords:** Inclusiveness; Exclusiveness; Eternal; Critical; Presentation

### Introduction

Man's natural striving for relation is an epiphany of his tendency towards self-perfection. The question of perfection necessarily implies the question of God. It is in the metaphysics of God that the humanness of man including his world can be adequately comprehended. It is even, within the context of man and his world that God is revealed to man. Man and his world that are related to this God are also the manifestation of what God is. At the same time, neither man nor his world is this God. For "God being incomprehensible then, even though is known, yet, He is not known as such " (Onwuatuegwu, 2010, p.41).

Properly speaking, God is all but nothing is God. Eckhart rightly pointed out this when he writes that:

Every creature contains a negative: a denial that it is the other. God contains the denial of denial. He is the one who denies of every other that it is anything but Himself (Eckhart; 1988, p. 24).

He is substantially present in each and every one of His creatures. However, none of these creatures of God is God Himself because their resemblance or likeness unto God is only an analogical one. Hence, the representation is imperfect though true because God is contained in each of His creatures. To put it other way round, every created being bears on itself a signature of the creator.

### The traces and vestiges of God in creatures

Analogically, everything, every created being in the world portrays somehow in gradation an aspect of God. For instance, Lion is an animal well known for strength. When considered from divinized perspective, we can unfailingly come to think of God as most Powerful; Mighty; and the Greatest. In like manner, the consideration of an ant's component parts with their concomitant smallness will bring one's attention to God's diligence and carefulness.

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The goodness we do observe in our fellows and in the things around us points to the Goodness itself which God is. In this regard, Etienne rightly believes that "God can be known by man imperfectly, from the consideration of His creatures;..." (Etienne; 1955, p. 369). Notwithstanding, as God is an infinite Being, so is every created being far and infinitely removed from God Himself. Therefore, they can only represent Him so far as a finite can represent an infinite. Etienne thus warns:

To say that God "is this", or that He "is that", would be to restrict His being to the essence of what "this" and "that" are. God "is", absolutely (Etienne, 1955, p.368).

We are words, phrases, clauses and sentences written in God's own hand writing. As was said earlier, every created being bears an imprint of God – the creator. In creation, are some degrees of God's vestiges, shadows and images. Hence, the ancient dictum that there are two books from which God can be known: the bible and the creation. Nevertheless, God is all but nothing is God Himself. He is above and far beyond the sum total of everything there is:

Of course God is the "wholly other", but He is also the wholly same, the wholly present. Of course He is the *mysterium Tremendum* that appears and overthrows, but He is also the mystery of the self-evident, nearer to me than mine (Buber; 1958, p. 82).

#### **Creatures, the true way to God.**

Everything that is found in the human world is founded in God whose existence alone is necessary. Any other existence is a possible existence and, therefore, is a participation in the one necessary existence of God. The meaningfulness of the world/things and humanity alike culminates in God whose existence is necessary. Without the being of God the world would have been meaningless and nothing. And without God humanity would have fallen into the abyss of beinglessness and zeroization. It is through man's encounter with God that the world is endowed with meaning. The philosopher Buber on this regard says:

Meeting with God does not come to man in order that he may concern himself with God, but in order that he may confirm that there is meaning in the world (Buber; 1954, p.115).

Hence, outside the context of God, man stands before nothing and meaningless.

However, for man to enter into this relation with God, he has to both dematerialize and spiritualize his own being.

We take note of the fact that in order to find God and receive His presence, man has indeed to forsake a world, namely, the world of having and experiencing and using, the world in which God is not found (Beek & Weiland; 1968, p.70).

This forsaking of the world should not be taken to man turning away from the world entirely – disregarding the world. Rather it means not using experience, utility and possessiveness as a yardstick for measurement and evaluation. We are beings in the world – the world which we are part of, but we are not of the world. It then means that even though earthly possessions are necessary, yet we

should not set our minds on them. They are for man and not man for them.

Relation with God neither excludes relation with fellow men nor with the world/things. However, relation with fellow men and the world should be directed and established in its true basis. Every other relation should be viewed from the dimension of God and not the other way round. Hence:

...to step into pure relation is not to disregard everything but to see everything in the Thou, not to renounce the world but to establish it on its true basis (Buber; 1954, p.78-79).

He furthermore adds:

To look away from the world, or to stare at it, does not help a man to reach God; but he who sees the world in Him stands in His presence (Buber; 1954, p.79).

We related to God not because we want to relate with fellow men or the world. Rather we relate with fellow men and the world because we already know God. Hence, we relate with the world and fellow men with the intent of discovering God in them.

We do not think that we could see what is behind man except by seeing through him into the blessed darkness of God himself and then really understanding that this finite being is the finitude of the infinite word of God Himself (Rahner; 1966, p.117).

Man's relation with God is the culmination of all human relation. It includes all relationships though it surpasses them. Relation with the eternal Being, however, is not to be equated to that of relation with any finite being. He, however, who renounces relation with fellow men in order to meet God will eventually miss his way. It is equally true that he who disregards the world of concrete existence in order to unite with God will not succeed.

It is an error of Kierkegaard to have assumed that relation with God necessarily, demands man's renunciation of every other relation. He notes that:

Everyone should be chary about having to do with "the other's" and should essentially speak only with God and with himself (Buber; 1947, p.71).

Speaking with God does not necessarily exclude speaking with man. Rather in communicating with fellow men, with one's whole being, one also speaks with God. Thus, says Buber:

... speaking with God is something *toto genere* different from with oneself, whereas, remarkably, it is not something *toto genere* different from speaking with another human being (Buber; 1947, p.71).

Buber continues:

The word of him who wishes to speak with God is not fulfilled, but the word of him who wishes to speak with God without speaking with men goes astray (Buber; 1947, p.71).

God has put His hearing in mortals. Thus, relationship that is not founded in God is unfulfilled; but relation with God outside the human world is unfounded. It is not at all true road to the God of all that exists. Relation with God is to be understood not outside the world of existence but within it. Unless one understands what it means to relate with fellow men, one cannot understand either what it means to relate with God. However, we should not forget the fact that relationship with God transcends every other relation whatsoever. In relation between man and God, man goes over and above the concrete world of existence.

According to Buber, genuine relationship with the world/things and fellow men is itself the road that leads to God – the eternal One.

Creation is not a hurdle on the road of God, it is the road itself (Buber; 1947, p.73).

Consequently, man becomes the manifestation of divine nature.

Following the humanist philosophy of Buber, situation in which human beings are regarded as persons and in which things are allowed to be as they really are, is the true road to God. As Cohen states: "The world will not surrender its truth to violence, but only to the asking in which Thou is spoken" (Cohen; 1960, p.50). He also maintains that it is only by way of fellow creature that one can find one's way to God. Hence, he writes:

Creatures are placed in my way so that I, their fellow – creature, by means of them and with them find the way to God (Buber; 1947, p.73).

God that is reached outside and by the exclusion of creatures is not the God of all that exist and in whom all life is fulfilled. For such God is more likely to be the God of philosophers and not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To relate with God in disregard of fellow men and the world is like thesis without antithesis which does not yield any meaningful synthesis.

In relating with the material world and fellow men, one discovers that there is no absolute happiness in them. As a result of this, one is empowered to search for more satisfying relation. In so doing, one is already along one's way to the eternal divine Being. Happiness here means:

...the realization of all man's desire and implies perfect self- realization (Buber; 1955, p.212).

Man realizes absolute happiness in God. God, however, is traceable in His creatures. That is why, He wants us to come to the fullness of life in Him by means of His creations and to love him in them. To avoid fellow-creatures is to deviate from the road that leads to God.

The meeting point of God and man is a living relationship. Probably, it is this living relationship that Soren Kierkegaard calls Christianity, which was not born out of technological and scientific womb, but out of revelation and God's will. Meeting with God is not a "five – year development plan". It is a life process. It is in this living relation that man does away with selfishness. When man does away with selfishness, he then sees the beauty of creation and glorifies God of creation.

God speaks to man through the ethical. In essence, creature is the genesis of man's relationship with God.

The only means by which God communicates with man is the ethical. But the ethical in its plain truth means to help God by loving His creation in His creatures, by loving it towards Him (Buber; 1947, p.79).

### **The road to God means more than mere creatures.**

However, man's encounter with God does not merely demands loving fellow - creatures, it also demands faith. The clear and intimate link between the world here-and-now and the world here-after is faith. Hence, our relation with God becomes a matter of faith.

Thus, God becomes an object of faith. At first, faith, set in time, completes the acts of relation, but gradually it replaces them (Buber;1958, p.113).

God's question demands faith. It is not a subject of experimental and scientific research:

...for by its nature it cannot be understood as a sum of qualities, not even as an infinite sum of qualities raised to a transcendental level; for it cannot be experienced, or thought... (Buber; 1958, p.112)

Nevertheless, God has injected an intrinsic goodness in the secular world that by means of it we can reach reality.

### **Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness of God**

If God is all inclusive though all exclusive, then He needs not be searched for. Instead, in whatever condition, in whatever position, whether it is joy or sorrow that one finds oneself, one should glorify God in it. It is in the context of one's condition that God is revealed to one. It is also in this condition that one could discover God's plan for oneself. From any condition at all, we are equally near to the eternal divine Being. It is the question of one realizing God in one's condition of life and nothing more. Hence, Buber says:

...There is no such thing as seeking God; for there is nothing in which He could not be found. How foolish and hopeless would be the man who turned aside from the course of his life in order to seek God; even though he won all the wisdom of solitude and all the power of concentrated beings he would miss God (Buber; 1958, p.80).

God is not very far from our situation of life. The best attitude of life for Buber is to see things and situations with the eyes of faith, God is seen in every situation, speaking to and conversing with us. Hence, since God is present in whatever condition, what one needs, is to make one's responsibility full time. Then God's responsibility toward one will be full time as well. God should not be sought, he is all encompassing.

Buber's aim here then, is to establish that relation with God includes all human relation, yet, surpasses all human relation. Hence, he writes:

Only in the relation with God are unconditioned exclusiveness and unconditioned inclusiveness

one and the same in which the whole universe is implied (Buber; 1958, p.99).

Hence, man should try to see God anew in his condition and circumstances of life, his surrounding and in the world in general. Then and only then can man's relation with God be assured and justified. Buber agrees with this when he says:

Man can do justice to relation with God, in which he can only, if he realizes God anew in the world, according to his strength and to measure of each day (Buber; 1958, p.136).

Hence:

The man who turns to him therefore, need not turn away from any other I-Thou relation, but he properly brings them to him, and let's them be fulfilled in the face of God (Buber; 1958, p.136).

Categorically speaking, Buber insists that "man should not disregard any human relation in order to meet God". It is in valuing fellow creatures that man encounters God. However, Buber advises that "every other relation should be viewed from the view point of relation with God". Relation with the Eternal Thou should not be considered from the dimension of other human relations. Even though God transcends human world, yet God is to be encountered in the human world.

To encounter God in this human world, demand is made on each one according to one's strength and to the measure of each day. Here, Buber noted the fact that all are not equally gifted and that grace differs from one individual to another - the uniqueness of each individual person.

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