

The Intrinsic Metaphysical Tendency of Man in the Psycho-Philosophical Theory of Martin Buber



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ABSTRACT: There is an intrinsic desire and striving for perfection in a every single rational being. This is as a result of man's obvious discovery of some lack in every individual person. Even though every individual is unique, yet no single person exhausts humanity but rather participates in it. Consequently, man's striving for relationship is as a result of this his nature. Invariably, man is an incomplete entity, and as such has a destiny to shape. In any given essence in the sensible material order, there are many individuals who though numerically distinct, participate in the same essence. Meanwhile, the person of plurality indicates that no single individual can exhausts the essential perfection. It will be appropriate, therefore, to posit that God through whom everything exists and is sustained ought to be and is actually the perfection of all that is. The wonder or the mystery of our being is fulfilled and surpassed only by the splendour and joy of our coming to life in God. Man, therefore, struggles for this splendour through his threefold relationship with the world/things, fellowmen and finally with God. It is in the de-materialization and spiritualization of this relationship that man comes into deep and permanent union with the Thou in whose presence everything is endowed with meaning. The researcher primarily uses the method of philosophical reasoning and presentation to achieve the purpose of the research.

KEYWORDS: Intrinsic; Tendency; Perfection; Attitude; Relation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the ancient period, philosophers concentrated on "man's relation with the cosmos" (Mackenzie; 1990). This ancient concentration on man's relation with the cosmos led to man's forgetfulness of himself. Obviously, this man's forgetfulness of himself prevailed until later on when Socrates rechanneled the course of philosophy from Cosmo- centricism to anthropocentricism. This he did by way of his famous dictum, "man, know thyself" (Socrates; 2014). In this manner, he awakened man to self-consciousness, not only to be aware but also to be aware of his awareness; to comprehend himself. In contrast, medieval man is very much interested in man's relationship with the absolute, the infinite and the eternal which is God himself. With this trend, medieval man seems to forget the fact that man is a composite being which is dimensionally both soul and body. They exalted the spiritual aspect of man to such an extent that they neglected the bodily side of man. Thanks to St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas who consistently maintained that man is neither soul nor body in isolation, but is rather the composition of the two (Krista; 2012). The Christian culture of the middle ages brought in "intelligere" and "credere" (reason and faith) together in a unique historical synthesis. For the medieval philosophers, man is not at home in the universe, a pilgrim of the absolute, searching for meaning of being and understanding the presence of God. They see man in his ceaseless metaphysical effort, the- remedy for the imperfection of the material universe. For them, man occupies a privileged position and role in the world.

However, the medieval world gave way before the modern world. This modern world is the era of developing positivist science. Philosophy for modern man is basically an anthropology which is individualism. They emphasized the subject as free and that the essence of freedom lies in the choice of the individual subject, the ego. This ego is the idea that moves the modern world. In this era, anything coming to an individual from without, such as command, is rejected as an infringement of the subject's rights and degradation of his autonomy. De-Christianization is a concomitant fact of the modern acceptance of epistemological ideas and the movement of history. The modern exaltation of the ego and the resulting de-Christianization eventually culminated in atheism. So, the modern man seems to regard God as unnecessary. Even, they consider God's existence as a threat to human existence. Little wonder the desirousness of modernity to use everything within reach to facilitate "the death of God". Hence, "the death of God syndrome" of Frederick Nietzsche.

As the modern man is selfish in his understanding of relation, the contemporary life and thought present themselves in the shape of mass culture. There is massification of everything. Contemporary thought is pre-occupied with self-fulfillment, the search for self-fulfillment and cultivation of the self have become the norms of human age. Consequently, Contemporary thought being anti-

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philosophical sees reason as an instrument of scientific investigation. What is called concrete philosophy describes feelings and experiences and these have become crucial and have replaced knowledge. In this contemporary era, which has replaced knowledge with experience, it is inevitable that people will seek the ultimate experience in the chemically induced experience. The combination of mass culture and contemporary era however, do not necessarily signify or imply an increase in human community.

In this contemporary era, Positivism has eliminated philosophy. As a result of this intellectual position, the new man finds it nearly impossible to appreciate the truth as important in his life. Relationship consequently, cannot be genuine in a world where truth is disregarded.

Meanwhile, the Contemporary man is undoubtedly unable to appreciate the truth as a result of Kantian rejection of metaphysics. The contemporary man is possessed by the merely experiential and merely utilitarian, that he tends to accept as real and true, only that which is endowed with actuality of the physical and physiological.

In a bid to correct this misunderstanding of what relation should be, Kierkegaard went to the extreme. He seems to be so highly influenced by the medieval trend of thought that he contends that man should do away with any other relation and relate with God alone. It was at this point that Buber came up with the view that relationship is not one-sided but both horizontal and vertical in dimensions. For him, relation should be founded in God and manifested in his creation. He, therefore, defines man as "a being capable of threefold relations". In threefold relations, man is also capable of twofold attitudes: I-It and I-Thou.

Man's ardent desire for perfection:

Aristotle sees man as a being who by its nature, desires to know (Aristotle; 350 B. C. E). This inborn curiosity and enthusiasm in man concerning knowledge is what urged the researcher to research into the structure of man's relationship with the world/things; with fellow men and finally with God. Man is not a being that is satisfied by merely being in the world. Rather, the life of man is authenticated through man's knowledge of his environs, of himself and as well as in fulfilling the purpose of his existence. Hence, Cassire defines man as:

...that creature who is constantly in search of himself - a creature who in every moment of his existence must examine and scrutinise the conditions of his existence (Cassire; 1968).

Man as a person searches for himself, studies his surroundings, and tries to manipulate his environment.

Each producer labels their own products, gives the contents of their products; how it should be used and when it should be needed. For instance, a drug producer prescribes how the drug should be applied. This prescription must be followed if life is to be preserved, if not, life will be destroyed instead. This demonstrates the need to follow always the plan or the prescription of the producer, the maker or the creator.

In the same vein, God created man for a genuine purpose. Man's life on earth is not without aim. It has a purpose. It is geared towards a destination. For Buber, this purpose is union with God-the Eternal Thou. This is the reason why man constantly shows by way of his activities, the ardent desire for perfection. Buber maintains that this union-perfection is made possible through the I-Thou relationship of human which is a road to the divine-God himself. The researcher calls this man's intrinsic urge for perfection, the metaphysical tendency of man to God. Its degeneration in our Contemporary society is as a result of the reluctant attempt of the Contemporary man to enter into a living relationship. Consequently, the contemporary man has seriously taken Science and Technology for his own God and, therefore, is satisfied with the merely empirical and merely experimental.

Twofold attitudes of man

The twofold attitudes of man is not another way of proposing the existence of two different worlds. It will be a grievous mistake to assume the existence of two worlds. Man is, however, capable of acting towards reality in two distinct ways. Any realistic treatise on relationship must necessarily take notice of this man's ambivalence. The world of "it" and the world of "thou", borrowing Martin Buber's expression, reflect two primary and different manners in which man may relate to the world or even to his fellowmen. Hence,

Each man, each single I, comes before the moment in which the Thou is present and encounters it in a twofold manner...(Cohen; 1957).

Admittedly, the two worlds are not necessarily separated from one another or in conflict as such. They are aspects of the same human urge to relate, and therefore, should be open to one another and compliments each other.

Man's relation to the world/things and his fellowmen is paradoxical. It may be mutual or exploitative. Meanwhile,

...he either ignores the challenge of grace and the Thou dissolves in an object..., or the I is filled and transformed, relation is achieved, and the I-Thou, ... is realized (Cohen; 1957).

Man's ability for threefold relations

Thus, man has the ability for threefold relations. These threefold relations include: relation with the world/things, relation with fellowmen and finally, relation with the spiritual being. However, these threefold relations can be approached by man in twofold manners. He can either regard them as "it" or as "Thou". Nevertheless, the threefold relations are essential for man to exist really in the world. In the recognition and appreciation of the three lies man's authenticity.

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Man is a being that finds himself in the world. Nevertheless, he is not alone in the world in which he finds himself, but is surrounded by things and his fellowmen. The humanity or the humanness of every single man is determined by the manner in which he approaches the world, fellowmen and God- the eternal Thou. Nonetheless, none of the two manners of approach is to be sacrificed at the altar of the other. Each has something to add to the personhood of every human being, either physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually.

Intrinsic drive for perfection

Man's striving for relationship is as a result of his nature. Man is an incomplete entity, and as such has a destiny to shape. Consequently, no man exhausts humanity, rather each individual person participates in it. Buber, therefore, contends that, "There are no two kinds of man, but two poles of humanity. No man is a pure person and no man is a pure humanity" (Buber; 1958). This accounts for man's continuous effort to achieve self-perfection.

In any given essence in the sensible material order, there are many individuals who though numerically distinct, participate in the same essence. Meanwhile, the person of plurality indicate that no single individual can exhausts the essential perfection. It will then be appropriate here, to posit that God through whom everything exists ought to be and is the perfection of all that is. The wonder of our being is fulfilled and surpassed only by the splendour and joy of our coming to life in God.

Consequently, man is attracted to the world as well as to his fellowmen for relationship. This intrinsic desire or tendency to relate indicates man's effort for self-realization, self-actualization and eventual self-fulfillment. This fulfillment is actualized finally in that union with the ultimate source of all reality that exist. It is in this encounter with the Being of God which does not pass away that man meets one reality (reality as one). At this very moment or point, the question of individuality ceases- "the eternal I that passes and the Thou that does not pass away"(Buber; 1958). In this union, reality becomes one in one.

The interdependence of the world of "It" and the world of "Thou"

However, one should note that the world of "Thou" does not imply the abandonment of the world of "It". The world of "Thou" has material dependence on the world of "It" which operates at the level of utility and experience. Without experience, the world's of knowledge would have been impossible. But if the knowledge of the world is declared impossible, then, it will be equally impossible for the human intellect to reach or grasp the metaphysical structure of reality whose first appeal to man is in sensible and material world of things.

... we earthly beings never look at God without the world, but only look at the world in God...(Buber; 1958)

This is to say that the created things are the manifestations and demonstration of their creator. There is the vestiges of God in his creation. In other words, every single creature of God bears the stamp of God.

Since we have the immediate contact of the real only by way of our senses, our knowledge of reality would not be accessible to man who is still in the world of sensible and empirical realities unless we first experienced the world. But through the world of experience, we move to the divine, for there are traces of divine in the material world of things. Kovacs, therefore, writes:

There is divine meaning in the life of the world, of man, of human persons, of you and me (Kovacs; 1994).

This Invariably means that the human world, the world of you and me, is in a way, the epiphany of eternity.

CONCLUSION

A conclusion then that the world of "It" and the world of "Thou" are interdependent, does not metaphysically demand the same intermingling and inermixture of experience and encounter in relation to the eternal Thou. Thus, Buber opines:

What has lust of grabbing and laying up treasure in common with the joy in the presence of the present one (Buber; 1958).

Hence, the complete and real relation is to be understood only outside of experience. In experience, everything is reified - turn into objects. Concerning this, Buber emphasized that "...complete relation can be understood in the bi- polar way ...as the coincidence of oppositions of feelings" (Buber; 1958).

The mutual and exploitative behaviours or attitudes of man, therefore, indicate the same human urge for perfection. For the actual realization of this perfection, however, the world of "It" needs to be abstracted and viewed from the point of view of the world of "Thou". Notwithstanding, the world of "It" is not evil in itself.

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