



MARTIN BUBER AND THE I-THOU INTER-SUBJECTIVE
COMMUNITY: A CRITIQUE

MR. RATTHABURUT KHUMSAP

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate School of Philosophy and Religion
Assumption University of Thailand

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RESEARCHER NAME: Mr. Ratthaburut Khumsap

DISSERTATION ADVISOR: Dr. Sebastian Vadassery


DISSERTATION CO – ADVISOR: Dr. Joseph I. Fernando

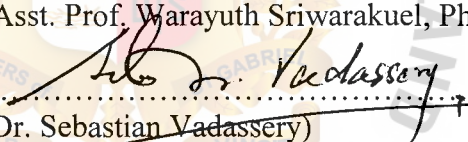
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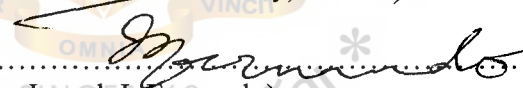
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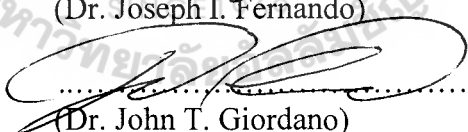

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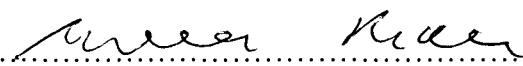
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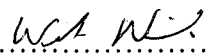

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(Asst. Prof. Warayuth Sriwarakuel, Ph.D.)


..... Member
(Dr. Sebastian Vadassery)


..... Member
(Dr. Joseph I. Fernando)


..... Member
(Dr. John T. Giordano)


..... Member
(Dr. Gerhold K. Becker)


..... Member
(Dr. Wit Wisadavet)

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Researcher's Name: **Mr. Ratthaburut Khumsap**

Dissertation Advisor: **Dr. Sebastian Vadassery**

Dissertation Co-advisor: **Dr. Joseph I. Fernando**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation on Martin Buber and the *I-Thou* Inter-subjective Community is a critique on Buber's concept of relational communities. The emerging glocal (global, local)culture is founded on power. Settling disputes seems to be through wars rather than through dialogue as we have witnessed recently by the Lebanon-Israeli conflict. Martin Buber proposes a new foundation for building communities, namely mutual respect, relationship and dialogue. Being a Jewish thinker he constructed his theory on the Torah (Jewish Bible) which begins with the words "In the beginning Yahweh (God) created heaven and earth." In creation God is reaching out in relationship to the universe and man. Buber renders the quotation as "In the beginning was relation." Besides, God created Adam meaning an earthling, who became a man through relationship with Eve, another human. It is the beginning of relational communities.

The question asked in this research is, "Can the *I-Thou* relationship theory proposed by Martin Buber reduce the glocal (global, local) conflicts between human beings and promote a more humane community on our planet earth?" The thesis proposed is "The Inter-subjective dialogical communities as visualized by Martin Buber, in spite of its limitations, can ensure more harmonious relational human communities on our planet." To achieve this goal the following steps were made by the researcher.

- Society and Community : A Philosophical Perspective.
- *I-Thou* inter-subjective community as visualized by Martin Buber and
- Critique of the *I-Thou* Inter-subjective Community.

Today's emerging global communities are fragmented because its foundation is individualism and power. To prevent a global conflagration and to ensure a harmonious community we need to build intra and inter-relationships on respecting the uniqueness of each individual, community and nation and thus galvanizing the divided communities into a relational world community.

Society can be seen as a mechanism or organism Buber understanding of society is organic than mechanism. Man become a person only through organic community. Where man becomes fully human only through interrelationships. This relationship is the foundation for forming communities.

Jean Luc Nancy speaks of modern man's cry for the restoration of transparent, small scale interrelational communities that liberates man from alienation he experiences today. Nancy's analysis of Western (as well as in non-western) societies show a longing for an "original community" which is built on relationship. Buber's *I-Thou* relational community is the answer to modern man's cry.

Buber in his theory of relationship considers that there are two primary types of relationship, the *I-Thou* and *I-It*. In the *I-It* relationship one relates to the world around both man and nature as objects for attaining power. This is where our globalized capitalistic ideology is heading for. Each one is suspicious and afraid of the other and builds up armament to protect himself from the fear of the other, resulting in conflicts between man and man, between communities and communities, and between nations and nations. The *I-Thou* relationship begins in respect for every individual and enters into dialogue with him leading to communion and mutual understanding. This attitude of

I-Thou extends to all of creation where man finds the face of the Eternal Thou inviting him for communion. Communion with the world of man and nature is communion with the Eternal Thou.

The process of building relationships begins with the invitation of the *I*, the subject, calling the other another *I*. The other is free to reject or to respond to the call. Once the call is heard and responded, an encounter begins leading to dialogue and communion. When responded the *I* become mutually a Thou to one another. At the start the community is dyadic which relates with other individuals and becomes *I-We* relationship. In *I-Thou* relationship there is no third person, to be a third person means to be a He or She not a Thou.

The invitation of the *I* of the other begins in dialogue. Dialogue for Buber is another term for relationship. Dialogue can have different styles. It can be either monologue or disguised monologue where the individual communicates only his own ideas and no genuine dialogue. It is a one-way traffic. Buber also speaks of inauthentic (technical) dialogue which creates a periphery relationship of usefulness. Genuine or authentic dialogues are spontaneous. The partner is open to dialogue and the other initially reluctant suddenly opens up and a genuine dialogue begins. In authentic dialogue each individual takes the other's perspective and opens up to one another. Here communication is honest and unreserved.

Inter-subjective communities are built on *I-We* relationships and nourished by genuine dialogue. Speaking of community Buber focuses on the "between-ness," the relationship that exists between the people in dialogue. Relationship is a new reality and it is this relationship that binds people together in forming a community. In this relationship is the presence of the Eternal Thou, for God is relationship. When the *I* meet the Thou, a relation sprouts between them whereby each becomes persons. This relationship is kept

burning through dialogue. This in time develops into fully matured relationships and such relationships spread to others forming communities. The quality of life in a community or society will depend on the strength of the *I-Thou* relationship within that community. It is continuous dialogue that holds a community together and sustains its continued creativity.



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R. Khumsap

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Chapter 1

Background and Significance of the Research

1. Introduction

When we open the morning newspaper what we find there, more often are conflicts, conflict between nations, between religions, between societies and between individuals. At present a new conflict is on between Palestine, Lebanon and Israel with the possibility of escalating into a regional or global scale conflict. Few months ago the Islamic enthusiasts were violently protesting against the publication of a cartoon on Prophet Muhammed. There is also conflict over the Iranian ambition to go nuclear against the wishes of Western nations. The missile test conducted by North Korea and the fear felt by some of the nations and the resulting conflict between the North Koreans and the Americans and the Japanese are intensifying. In the recent past we had conflict in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Bosnia, in Nigeria, Sudan and so on. For years ethnic rivalries between the Tamils and Sinhalese have been raging in Sri Lanka and there is the perennial conflict between Palestinians and Israelis without finding any solutions. On the surface the root of these problems seems to be economic, social, religious or political but deep down the reason is inequality, lack of respect for one another, in short the lack of interhuman relationship based on respect for individuals and communities or in Martin Buber's words lack of I-Thou relationship. People treat one another as objects for one's own gain. In Buberian terms they treat one another as an It, I-it relationships. Of course throughout human history there have been conflicts between people and people, nations and nations and between individuals and individuals. As a teacher of ethics, I would like to look into the root causes of these conflicts and search for solutions. There is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by arms race, but also by continued injustices among peoples and nations, above all, in my opinion, it is the lack of respect

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for the dignity of people. Humankind's failure to relate to others with respect, is clearly the cause of the ongoing social crisis that our newspapers daily report. The social problems I refer to are those problems that arise from human relationship between peoples and nations. It is important to realize that most of the world's current "hot spots" have a complex inter-economic, racial, religious, and other similar factors yet the root cause is the inability to relate to one another on the intersubjective level. Once peoples' national or religious sensitivity is trampled upon it ignites passions and flares up like a conflagration. Today we see such intractable interpolitico-religious war in Northern Ireland, between Muslims and Jews in Palestine, Hindus and Muslims in India and in many other places. In Thailand, the three southern most provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, the conflict has resulted in many deaths and it still continues. . The unrest in the South of Thailand has raised national concern about how to bring about peaceful resolution to the crisis, how to rebuild peaceful relations between the Buddhist and Muslim sections of the country and continue on the path of building civil society in Thailand. Attempts to bring about peace have failed again. The question is how should we live our lives and organize our societies, to bring peace and harmony in our country and in our world.

As we look at our society's future, we - you and I - must avoid living only for today attitude or only for myself attitude that would inevitably bring conflict to the society. Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher and theologian, has advanced the philosophy of relationship in his book *I and Thou* (1929)¹. In this paper I would be investigating the philosophy of human relationship based on Buber's writings on inter-subjective relationship between man with man, society with society. Specifically this research will center on Martin Buber's thoughts on inter-subjective *I-Thou* relationship in finding

¹ *I and Thou* is the most important work of Martin Buber, the original was written in 1923, which as years went one he improved upon and even he wrote a supplement with the title "A Postscript to *I and Thou*". Besides It was written in German and now different translations are available

solutions to the problem of conflict in our societies. In my view the dialogical philosophy of *I and Thou* of Buber does give us guidelines for building a just and harmonious human society.

2. Research Question

In our globalized world, scientific knowledge has brought much comfort and convenience to humankind. At the same time it has brought much sophisticated weapons, even biological and chemical weapons that are used in solving religious, social and political conflicts. It seems man is on a destructive path of annihilating the humankind and the our planet itself. Perhaps if we listen to the call of Martin Buber, to build an intersubjective society founded on God and the dignity of man, then we can divert the catastrophe that is gaping at man as he proceeds in his destructive path. The question asked in this investigation is, can the theory of interrelationship proposed by Martin Buber bring about a human world where man can live with man as a brother? Or have we to join Cain who killed his brother Abel asking, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen. 3.5)

3. Research Thesis

Building *I-Thou* inter-subjective dialogical communities as visualized by Martin Buber, in spite of its limitations, can ensure a more peaceful harmonious human world community.

4. Research Objectives

- To analyze the concept of organic community in contrast to mechanistic community.
- To explain the *I-Thou* inter-subjective dialogical community visualized by Martin Buber.
- To critique the *I-Thou* inter-subjective dialogical community pointing out its strength and weakness.

5. Limitation of the Researcher

This research limits itself to Martin Buber's understanding of *I-Thou* Inter-subjective Community.

6. Contribution of the Thesis

The globalizing human community² of today is faced with conflicts between people and people on the ground of ideologies, ethnicity and religious beliefs as we find at our own doorstep in Thailand. The contribution of this research is to bring to the attention of our people the clarion call of Martin Buber to build an *I-Thou* Intersubjective Community of relationship as antidote to the ills of our times.

7. The Research Methodology

In doing this research investigation, the writer will be using all the available writings of Martin Buber. The secondary sources consist of books, Journal articles written by philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists who clarify and expand the

thoughts of Buber, including internet sources. In developing this investigation the writer has used the following steps.

Read: The researcher will read all the relevant primary and secondary sources concerning Martin Buber's concept of *I-Thou* inter-subjective community that are available

Select : Swift through the material and select the appropriate material concerning community to analyze and clarify Buber's concept of *I-Thou* Inter-subjective community.

Investigate: Critically investigate the insights of Martin Buber in the light of thoughts of other philosophers who thin differently from him.

Conclude: Draw conclusions that will assist an in building a human community in the globalizing modern world.

8. Definition of Terms

Inter-subjective. A term used by Martin Buber to indicate that the participants in a relationship are both subjects who freely initiate and respond to the relationship.

Inter-human is a term used by writers to indicate the same concept as the inter-subjective.

I-Thou is a primary term of relationship and as such they are always spoken together focusing on the relationship existing between. The individual who initiate the dialogue is the *I* and the one who respond the invitation to dialogue is the *Thou*. Both the *I* and the *Thou* are subjects

I-It is another term employed by Martin Buber to indicate the type of relationship that exists between two individuals or the individual and the created world. Here the *I* relates to the other as a thing whereby the *I* itself reduces its own status to that of an object.

Yahweh is the name given to the Ultimate reality or God in the Torah, the Hebrew Bible. It is the name given to Moses when he asked for the person's name who is talking to him in the burning bush. The meaning of the word in Hebrew is "I am Who am."

Gemeinschaft a German word used by Jean-Luc Nancy in his book "Inoperative Community" to indicate the pre-modern community built on interrelationship.

Gesellschaft a German term used by Nancy to indicate a community where the individuals live in competition with one another.

Utopia is the dreamed ideal society where perfect relationship exist between the members of a society. It is a term used both by Karl Marx and Martin Buber to indicate a perfect society.

Anarchy is a society visualized by Buber where independent communities exist without a strong Central Government

Watakushi to Nanji the title of the book written by Nishihida Kitaro for the Japanese audience on relationship between the *I and Thou*

Between-ness is the term Buber used to express the relation between the *I-Thou* relationship. For Buber the relationship or "betweenness" is a new reality where the *Eternal Thou* overshadows.

Eternal Thou is another word for God to indicate that God is a Subject par excellence that enters into relationship with man.

Chapter 2

Society and Community: A Philosophical Perspective

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall be presenting a broad spectrum of what society is, how it came to be transformed into a community. First the writer will focus on society how it developed from its tribal roots to its mechanistic perception followed by its organic nature or the systems approach to society. This will form the back drop to the inter-subjective community as proposed by Martin Buber.

In our fast globalizing world, clashes between different civilizations and cultures are taking place almost daily. Civilizations originated and grew within the confinement of a particular geographical region. Even though there were interpenetration of cultures of the conquerors and the conquered like that of Greeks, the Romans or Genghis Khan and the vanquished cultures, there were also travelers like the Italian Marco Polo or the Chinese Fa-hi-an who anecdoted their experiences which are often amusing and informative. There were also contacts between cultures through early missionaries both Christian and Buddhist. St. Patrick, the Christian missionary to Ireland, almost created a new culture there. The Buddhist missionary Bodhidharma's influence in China is remarkable. The greatest impact of cultures came with the arrival of colonizers in the 16th century from the West; their cultural influence began to have the greatest impact in Asia, Africa and South America through merchants, missionaries and even by slave traders. They introduced their language, customs, and system of government, education and religions.

In the meantime around the 16th and 17th centuries, Europe was experiencing changes within their own cultures with the arrival of Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment movement. This opened the way for the French revolution with its clarion

call of liberty, fraternity and equality. These events had tremendous repercussions on the European countries and their colonies. The latter began to experience a greater sense of pride in their own culture and language and began to demand independence and in the course of time they received freedom from the colonizers.

By the 17th century science and technology too was on the rise, which not only made life more comfortable for people and the economy also began to pick up. The growth of fast communication with the on coming of technology, mass media took a prominent place in the lives of people. They came to know almost instantaneously what was happening in far flung regions of the globe. Besides transportation was becoming faster and better with the arrival of the supersonic Jets, and people began to move around the world and they came in contact with people of different cultures. In the wake of these developments there was much give and take among cultures. Yet stronger cultures, often due to their economic might, were having strong impacts on weaker cultures and civilizations. There was the fear that stronger civilizations were going to swallow up the weaker ones. This created resistance and resentment manifesting in covert anger in the form of anti western feelings and fundamentalism in the field of religion, as a defense against the perceived threat. Huntington and others call this phenomena “Clash of Civilizations.” He says that “the fundamental sense of conflict in this new world will not primarily be ideological or economic. The great decision among humankind and the dominant sense of conflict will be cultural.” (Huntington. 1987)²

There is a significant difference among civilizations in their philosophical assumptions, underlying values, relationships, customs, and overall outlooks on life. This is inevitable.

²Samuel Huntington (1997). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Touchstone Books. Today most of his conclusions are questioned by other writers.

Realizing these differences in underlying values of their culture a number of countries are going back to the roots of their culture and to a more pristine and radical interpretation of their sacred texts to revitalize their culture which in fact is reinforcing these cultural differences. There is the rise of pluralism taking place. Cultures do change in the course of time either by new cultural insights or through imperceptible influence of other cultures or through the mass media. Cultural thinking has its impact on politics, economy and people's way of life from one historical period to another. Yet the major differences in political and economic development among civilizations are clearly rooted in their different cultures. East Asian political and economic development has their source in East Asian culture that is religious by nature. Developments in the postmodern societies of Europe are shaped by their civilization identities. The impact of the 17th century Enlightenment, the worship of reason, is much less in the East than in the West. This explains to a large part for the failure of democracy to emerge in non European countries since it was not born out of their cultural roots. In these countries society largely remained traditional. Besides in warmer climates, people are less active and are giving to spiritual reflection than those in colder countries as they have to be active to keep themselves warm. In the warmer countries people are easily excitable due the thinning of blood. and are by nature emotional and traditional. The Western countries are more assertive and are making great strides toward greater technological and economic development and democratic system in politics. Due to these factors the West will be ahead of other countries in the fields of science and technology and will remain for years to come as the most powerful civilizations. Other non-Western countries are catching up slowly as we find in China and India. As the West attempts to assert its values and to

protect its interests, non-Western societies confronted with a choice. Some attempt to jump on to the “bandwagon” of the West while other societies like the Confucian, Islamic and Hindu societies are attempting to create their own economic and military power base to resist and to “balance” Western might. The central axis of post Cold War world politics is thus the interaction of Western power and culture with the power and the culture of non-Western civilizations. In this climate of clash of civilizations the notion of society and community has emerged as an important field of enquiry. There is nostalgia among societies and communities of people for a human community, for an inter-subjective community with dialogue as a means of cooperation and settling of differences, rather than power and might. The new discourse on community has challenged the understanding of community as related to the nation-state (Huntington, 1997)

2.2 The Origin of Society

The word society emerged in the English language around the 15th century and is derived from the Latin “Societas” (“socius” meaning companion, associate or comrade) refers to “friendly association with others”. Implicit in the meaning of society is that its members share some mutual concern, interest, objective or common characteristics. Thus society can be defined as “A grouping of individuals characterized by common interests and have a distinctive culture and institutions.” (Wikipedia. 2006) Society may refer to a particular group of people such as the “Karens”, to a nation state such as Thailand or a broader cultural group such as Eastern society. Society can also be explained as an organized group of people associated together for religious, cultural, scientific or political purposes.

2.2.1 Evolution of Societies

Society as we know today evolved gradually. The early hunter gatherer tribes settled around river banks where they were able to produce seasonal food crops and became agrarian village communities. Villages grew to become towns and cities and cities into city states and city states to nation states. Over time some cultures have progressed toward more complex forms of organization and control. The cultural evolution had a profound effect on patterns of community. As people lived together, various networks of relationships came in to existence. Social networks are maps of the relations between people. Structural features found its way through proximity, frequency of contact and type of relations people have with one another.

Traditionally when individuals required aid, for example at birth, death, sickness or disaster, members of the society he lives in, rally around to render services of various types, physical emotional and other forms of help. Often almost in all societies individuals or groups will distribute largess that accrue prestige to the individual or group. Conversely, members of a society also scapegoat or punish its members for violating its norms. They also bestow status on individuals or groups in the form of names or titles when the individual or group has performed socially admired or desired actions. Males in many societies are particularly susceptible to these types of actions and the subsequent reward, even at the risk of their lives.

2.2.1.1 Mechanistic View of Society

There is an ongoing debate in sociology, anthropology and philosophy as to whether there exists an entity called society. Descartes and Newton consider that there is an entity called society and is mechanistic rather than organic in nature. The mechanistic view of the world was developed in the seventeenth by Descartes (1596-1650) Newton (1642-1727) and other thinkers. Descartes based his view of nature on a fundamental distinction of two separate and independent realms: that of mind and of matter, the Cartesian dualism. The material universe is a machine in their view and nothing but a machine. Nature works according to mechanical laws, and everything in the material world can be explained in terms of the arrangement and movement of its parts. He later extended this mechanistic view of matter to living organisms. Plants and animals are considered simply machines. Human beings are inhabited by a rational soul, but the human body is indistinguishable from an animal-machine.

2.2.1.2 Cartesian Reductionism

Descartes' approach to knowledge was his analytic method of reasoning that consists in breaking up thoughts and problems into pieces and arranging these in their logical order. The overemphasis on the Cartesian method has led to the fragmentation that is characteristic of both our general thinking and our academic disciplines. This has led to the widespread attitude of reductionism. It is the belief that all aspects of complex phenomena can be understood by reducing them to their constituent parts. While Descartes was postulating his theory, Galileo Galilei (1566-1642) combined scientific experimentation with the use of mathematical language. In order to make it possible for scientists to describe nature mathematically, Galileo postulated that science should

restrict itself to studying the essential properties of material bodies - shapes, numbers and movement - which could be measured and quantified. For science is concerned only with quantity and based exclusively on measurement and as such inherently unable to deal with experience, quality, or values. Indeed, ever since Galileo, scientists have evaded all ethical and moral issues which is now generating disastrous consequences.

2.2.1.3 Newtonian Model

The conceptual framework created by Galileo and Descartes was completed triumphantly by Newton, who developed a consistent mathematical formulation of the mechanistic view of nature. From the second half of the seventeen century to the end of the nineteenth, the mechanistic Newtonian model of the universe dominated all scientific thought. The natural sciences, as well as the humanities and social sciences, all accepted the mechanistic view of classical physics as the correct description of reality and modeled their own theories accordingly.

2.2.1.4 The Influence of Cartesian-Newtonian Thought

The Cartesian view of living organisms as machines, constructed from separate parts, provided the dominant conceptual framework in our scientific thinking. Although Descartes' simple mechanistic biology could not be carried very far and had to be modified considerably during the subsequent years, yet the belief that all aspects of living organisms can be understood by reducing them to their smallest constituents, and by studying the mechanisms through which these interact.

The influence of this reductionism on medical thought resulted in the so-called biomedical model, the conceptual foundation of modern scientific medicine. It associates

a particular illness with a definite part of the body - of course, very useful in many cases. Modern scientific medicine has overemphasized the reductionist approach and has developed specialized disciplines to a point where doctors are often no longer able to view illness as a disturbance of the whole organism, or to treat it as such. What they tend to do is to treat a particular organ or tissue, and this is generally done without taking the rest of the body into account, let alone considering the psychological and social aspects of the patients illness.

It also had influenced social sciences like economics. Present-day economics, like most social sciences, is fragmentary and reductionist. It fails to recognize that economy is merely one aspect of a whole ecological and social fabric and tend to dissociate it from this fabric, in which it is embedded. Most of their basic concepts- efficiency, productivity, GNP.- have been narrowly defined. Consequently, the current economic concepts and models are no longer adequate to map the economic phenomena in a fundamentally interdependent world, and hence economists have generally been unable to understand the major economic problems of our time. Sociologically the society is seen as a group of individuals put together and are united since individual cannot attain all what he needs by himself. Thus we get the contractual theories.

The situation is further aggravated by the fact that in a misguided striving for scientific rigor, neglect to acknowledge explicitly the value system on which their models are based. In doing so, they tacitly accept the highly imbalanced set of values which dominates our culture and is embodied in our social institutions.

2.3 The Systems (Organic) View of Society

At the beginning of the 20th century a new paradigm in human thinking came into being, a new world view. This was to change the existing mechanistic world view of Descartes and Newton to that of a holistic world view. Those who were working with the mechanistic hypothesis, particularly the scientists, found very difficult to shift to the new world view. The basic concepts, the language and the whole way of thinking were different. The new world view perceived that the universe is composed of atomic and subatomic particles that are interrelated. The emerging paradigm focused on the organic nature of the universe. It brought an intellectual, emotional as well as existential crisis among those who are wedded to mechanistic approach. It will take sometime to work out this crisis but in the end they will be rewarded with deep insights into the nature of matter and its relation to the human mind.

The mechanistic view is prevalent even today and its numerous manifestations can be read every day in the newspapers. The writer believes that the high inflation and unemployment, the energy crisis, the crisis in health care, pollution and other environmental disasters, as well as a rising wave of violence and crime are the result of the mechanistic world view. Since we are still happily trying to apply the concepts of an outdated world view- What we need today is the new emerging “paradigm”- the new vision of reality; a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions, and values. The beginnings of this change, the shift from the mechanistic to the holistic conception of reality are already visible in many fields and are likely to dominate the 21st century. The on coming changes are likely to result in a transformation of unprecedented dimensions, a turning point for the planet as a whole and the society in particular.

2.3.1 Social Evolution of Durkheim and Marx

Emile Durkheim's (1858 - 1917) view of social evolution is based on the idea that societies are in transition from more primitive societies to advanced societies. The primitive society primarily mechanistic, as societal influences are simple and cohesion is maintained through personal contact with family members. The mechanistic society is moderately homogenous in its composition mainly due to the lack of mobility associated with the importance of close family ties. organic society, in contrast to the mechanistic society, is comprised of diverse people of many different classes with many different occupations. Cohesion in organic society is maintained by more complex means. It is mainly kept through the interdependence of dissimilar parts which essentially means that people who have now specialized in their work can no longer be self sufficient and must depend on one another. Durkheim believed that the transition from mechanistic society to organic society would occur because organic societies are natural in which the system of checks and balances takes place. The major reason why the shift to organic society started, according to Durkheim, was the birth of division of labor. "Individuals develop progressively more specialized roles." With the increased differences in individual's roles in society came differences in attitudes and participation in the functioning of the society itself whereby people are being put in closer contact. "...bringing larger numbers of people into more frequent contact with each other has powerful effects on everyone exposed to this situation." (Collins. 2005 p 187)³ Durkheim writes

There is then, a social structure of determined nature to which mechanical solidarity corresponds. What characterizes it is a system of segments homogeneous and similar to each other. Quite different is the structure of societies where organic solidarity is

³ Randall Collins (1994) .Four Sociological Trends. New York :Oxford University press

preponderant. They are constituted, not by a repetition of similar, homogeneous segments, but by a system of different organs each of which has a special role which are themselves formed of differentiated parts. (1972. p.181)

The transition to organic society was called “differentiation” by Durkheim and it occurred slowly for if the differentiation happened too quickly then a state of “normlessness,” called anomie, would result.

Karl Marx on the other hand believed that social changes took place over time as the result of conflict between the classes. Marx held that the society at a timeline moved from the tribal stage to a slave-based economy, and in time the family unit of the tribal stage became villages and townships. Next slaves were replaced by serfs to create economic feudalism and finally to capitalism where the “society is divided into those who own the machines and those who operate them: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.” Marx believed that society was on the verge of an Utopia and used Hegel’s idea of the dialectics to explain social evolution that continues till a classless society is formed.. The three stages of this dialectics in achieving the utopia are the Thesis, the Antithesis, and the Synthesis. Marx believed that capitalism was inherently flawed and that it was the special societal form in the thesis stage. The thesis stage would develop as follows. First workers become alienated from work, and then they become alienated from each other. Next he becomes alienated from himself and finally all classes become alienated from each other. After these stages, with capitalism failing, the antithesis stage would start in which the classes acquire a common ideology to cause a revolution. They need a leader and a clear idea of who the enemy is and then they need effective organization. After a successful revolution the synthesis stage begins. This is where true socialism is realized with the guidance of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Eventually when society becomes

classless, the dictatorship of the proletariat will fall away producing true communism with a completely classless society. The foremost difference between the theories of Durkheim and Marx is that religion really had no positive role to play in society and even stated that religion was the “Opiate of the Masses.” Marx writes

Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people. (Marx,1993,p.76)

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusion about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions. On the contrary Durkheim “saw it (religion) has a critical part of the social system” because it provided social cohesion as well as a way to maintain social norms and stave off anomie. He wrote in *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* “Since religious force is nothing other than the collective and anonymous force of the clan, and since this can be represented in the mind only in the form of the totem, the totemic emblem is like the visible body the god.”(1973, p. 184)

Marx acknowledged that the intermediary steps in this process would be difficult but once true communism was reached, everyone would be much better off. In contrast, Durkheim expressed reservations about the results of social evolution. He saw that if the social evolution came to pass too fast that would result in a normless society or anomie.

With anomie⁴ sets morals of a society would be absent, leading to a breakdown of the social system. He writes in the "Division of Labor in Society"

"...The state of *anomie* is impossible whenever interdependent organs are sufficiently in contact and sufficiently extensive. If they are close to each other, they are readily aware, in every situation, of the need which they have of one-another, and consequently they have an active and permanent feeling of mutual dependence." (1972. P.184)

Another difference between their theories preterd is how the social evolution progresses. Durkheim believed that the change would be relatively steady over a wide time span, incorporating progressive advances in reason and knowledge. On the contrary, Marx thought that there would be conflict leading up to a revolt and that the changes would occur in a short timeframe. This relatively short period would be the time that capitalism was to be expelled and communism would be erected. After communism is erected, social evolution would basically be complete. (Collins. 1994)

⁴ Durkheim defined the term *anomie* as a condition where social and/or moral norms are confused, unclear, or simply not present. Durkheim felt that this lack of norms--or preaccepted limits on behavior in a society--led to deviant behavior.

2.3.2 The New Paradigm

A new paradigm emerged in physics around 1940's that was to influence almost every fields of science - biology, medicine, psychology, economics, politics, and sociology. It consisted of a new value system that is reflected in new forms of social organizations and institutions. It is formulated largely outside academic institutions that remained too closely tied to the Cartesian framework to appreciate the new ideas. According to the new perception the material world is not a mechanical system made of separate objects, but rather a complex web of relationships. Our universe is composed of atomic and subatomic particles that are not isolated, separate entities, but interconnected, or correlated network of events. The notion of separation is an idealization that is often very useful but has no fundamental validity. This inter-relationship pattern is inseparable from the cosmic process, and these patterns are intrinsically dynamic. The subatomic particles are in fact bundles of energy, or patterns of activity.

The energy patterns of the subatomic world form stable atomic and molecular structures which build up matter and give it a macroscopic solid appearance thus making us believe that it is made up of some material substance. At the macroscopic level, the notion of a substance is quite useful for us in our daily living, but at the atomic level it no longer makes sense. Atoms consist of particles and these particles are not made of any material stuff but energy. When we observe them in the microscopic level, we never see any substance, but are dynamic patterns, continually changing forms, a continuous dance of energy.

The world view of modern science is holistic and ecological. It emphasizes the fundamental interrelatedness or interdependence of all phenomena, and the intrinsic

dynamic nature of reality. The same can be said of all living organisms. Every living system- a cell, a tissue, an organ,- is engaged in the process of “mentation” - mental activity and in higher organisms it manifest as the “inner world.” This characteristic of the mind includes self-awareness, conscious experience, conceptual thought and symbolic language. Most of these characteristics exist in rudimentary form in physical organisms. It is a living world, organized in multileveled structures meaning that there are levels of mind. In the human organism, for example, there are various levels of “metabolic” “mentation” involving cells, tissues, and organs, and then there is the neural “mentation” of the brain which, itself, consists of multiple levels corresponding to different stages of human evolution. The totality of these “mentations” constitutes what we call the human mind, or psyche. In the stratified order of nature, individual human minds are embedded in the larger minds of social and ecological systems, and these are integrated into the planetary mental systems, which in turn must participate in some kind of universal or cosmic mind. The conceptual framework of the new systems approach is in no way restrict in associating it with this cosmic mind with the traditional idea of God. In this view the Deity is neither male or female, nor manifest in any personal form, but represents nothing less than the self-organizing dynamics of the entire cosmos. The new vision of reality is an ecological vision that goes far beyond the immediate concerns with environmental protection. It is supported by modern science, in particular by the new systems approach, and is rooted in a perception of reality that goes beyond the scientific framework to an intuitive awareness of the oneness of all life, the interdependence of its multiple manifestations, and its cycles of change and transformation. When the concept of the human spirit is understood as the mode of

consciousness in which the individual feels connected to the cosmos as a whole, it becomes clearer that ecological awareness is truly spiritual.

According to the systems view or organic view, the Darwinian theory of evolution represents only one of two complementary views which are both necessary to understand the phenomenon of evolution. Darwinian view is based on the selection of the best in the development of the species. The other view sees evolution as an essential manifestation of self-organization which leads over time to an ordered unfolding of complexity. The two complementary tendencies of self-organization systems- self-maintenance and self-transcendence- are in continual dynamic interplay, and both of them contribute to the phenomenon of evolutionary adaptation.

2.3.2.1 The New Concept of Mind

In order to apply the systems view of life to higher organisms and in particular to human beings, it is necessary to deal with the phenomenon of mind. Gregory Bateson (1904-1980) defined mind as a systems phenomenon, characteristic of living organisms, societies, and ecosystems. In Bateson's view, mind is a necessary and inevitable consequence of a certain complexity which begins long before organisms develop a brain and higher nervous system. His criteria for mind are closely related to the characteristics of self-organizing systems. Indeed, mind is an essential property of living systems. He writes "Mind is the essence of being alive. From the systems point of view, life is not substance or force, and mind is not an entity interacting with matter. Both life and mind are manifestations of the same set of systemic properties; a set of processes which represent the dynamics of self-organization. This will be my definition of mind; the dynamics of self-organization" (Bateson, 2005 p. 56).

Mind and matter no longer appear to belong to two separate categories, but can be seen to represent merely different aspects of the same phenomenon. For example, the relationship between mind and brain which has confused countless scientists ever since Descartes, becomes now quite clear. Mind is the dynamics of self-organization, and the brain is the biological structure through which this dynamic is carried out.

2.3.2.2 Self-Organization

Life tends to organize itself. The characteristics of this organization include a variety of processes and phenomena which can be seen as different aspects of the same dynamic principle, the principle of self-organization. A living organism is a self-organizing system; its structure and function are not imposed by the environment but is established by the system itself. Self-organizing systems exhibit a certain degree of autonomy. For example, they tend to establish their size according to internal principles of organization, independent of environmental influences. This does not mean that living systems are isolated from their environment, on the contrary, they interact with it continually, but this interaction does not determine their organization.

The relative autonomy of self-organizing systems sheds new light on the age-old philosophical question of free will. From the systems point of view, both determinism and freedom are relative concepts. To the extent that a system is autonomous from its environment it is free; to the extent that it depends on its environment through continuous interaction its activity will be shaped by environmental influences and is less free. The relative autonomy of organisms usually increases with their complexity, and it reaches its culmination in human beings. The theory of self-organizing systems has been worked out over the last decade in considerable detail by a number of researchers from various

disciplines particularly by the Belgian Nobel Laureate Ilya Prigogine (1917-2003). One of the most important characteristics of self-organization is the fact that self-organizing systems are “always at work”. They have to maintain a continuous exchange of energy with their environment to stay alive. This exchange involves taking in ordered structures, such as food, breaking them down and using some of the components to maintain or even increase the order of the organism. This process is known as metabolism.

2.3.2.3 Self Renewal

Another important aspect of the continual activity of living systems is the process of self-renewal. Every living organism continually renews itself. The cells is breaking down and building up new structures, tissues, and organs replacing their cells in continual cycles. In spite of this continual change, the organism maintains its overall structure and appearance. Its components are continually renewed and recycled, but the pattern of organization remains stable. Other aspects of self-organization which are closely related to self-renewal are the phenomena of self-healing, regeneration, and adaptation to environmental changes.

In all these processes, fluctuations play a very central role. A living system can be described in terms of interdependent variable which oscillate between certain limits, so that the system is in a state of continual fluctuation. Such a state is known as homeostasis. It is a state of dynamic balance which displays great flexibility. When there is some disturbance, the system tends to return to its original fluctuating state by adapting in various ways to the disturbance. Feedback mechanisms come into play which tends to reduce any deviation from the balanced state.

2.3.2.4 Self Transcendence

What makes the understanding of living systems quite difficult is the fact that they have not only a tendency to maintain themselves in their dynamic state but, at the same time, also show a tendency to transcend themselves, to reach out creatively beyond their boundaries and limitations to generate new structures and new forms or organization. This principle of self-transcendence manifests itself in the processes of learning, development, and evolution. This leads us to the system theory of organism.

2.3.3 The Systems Theory

The term “systems theory” is somewhat misleading, since it is not a well-defined theory, like relativity theory or quantum theory. It is rather a particular approach, a language, a particular perspective. The systems approach is concerned with the description of systems, which are integrated wholes that derive their essential properties from the interrelations between their parts. The systems approach, therefore, does not focus on the parts, but rather on the interrelations and interdependencies between the parts. Examples of systems can be found in the living and nonliving world but we shall here focus on living systems. Every living organism is a living system- a single cell, a plant, an animal, or a human being. But living systems need not be individual organisms. There can be social systems, such as a family or a community, and then there are ecosystems, in which networks of organisms are interlinked, together with various inanimate components, to form an intricate web of relations involving the exchange of matter and energy in continual cycles. All these are living systems which exhibit similar patterns of organization.

An important aspect of living systems is their tendency to form multileveled structures of systems within systems. For example, the human body consists of organs, each organ of tissue, and each tissue of cells. All these are living organisms, or living systems, which consist of smaller parts and, at the same time, act as parts of larger wholes. Living systems, then exhibit a stratified order, and there are interconnections and interdependencies between all system levels, each level interacting and communicating with its total environment.

2.3.3.1 Social Implications

The systems view of life has many important consequences not only for science but also for society and everyday living. It will influence our ways of dealing with health and illness, our relation to the natural environment, and will change many of our political as well as social structures. All these changes are already taking place. The paradigm shift is not something that will happen some time in the future. It is happening right now.

Cultural historians have often pointed out that the evolution of cultures is characterized by a regular pattern of rise, culmination, decline, and disintegration. Decline usually occurs when a culture has become too rigid- in its technologies, ideas, or social organization- and fails to meet the challenge of changing conditions. This loss of flexibility is accompanied by a general loss of harmony which inevitably leads to the outbreak of social discord and disruption. During this process of decline and disintegration, the cultural mainstream becomes slowly petrified by clinging to fixed ideas and rigid patterns of behavior, creative minorities will appear on the scene and transform some of the old elements into new configurations which become the new rising culture. While transformation is taking place, the declining culture does refuse to change,

clinging ever more rigidly to its outdated ideas; nor will the dominant social institutions hand over their leading roles to the new cultural forces. But they will inevitably go on to decline and disintegrate while the rising culture will continue to rise, and eventually will assume its leading role. As the turning point approaches, the realization that evolutionary changes of this magnitude cannot be prevented by short-term political or social activities provides our strongest hope for the future.

It is not surprising that the new vision of reality is consistent with many ideas in mystical traditions. The parallels between science and mysticism are not confined to modern physics but can now be extended with equal justification to the new systems biology.

Two basic themes emerge again and again from the study of living and nonliving matter and are also repeatedly emphasized in the teachings of mystics- the universal interconnectedness and the inter-dependence of all phenomena, and the intrinsically dynamic nature of reality. We also find a number of ideas in mystical traditions that are less relevant, or not yet significant, to modern physics but are crucial to the systems view of living organisms.

The concept of stratified order plays a prominent role in many traditions. As in modern science, it involves the notion of multiple levels of reality which differ in their complexities and are mutually interacting and interdependent. These levels include levels of mind, which are seen as different manifestations of cosmic consciousness. Although mystical views of consciousness go far beyond the framework of contemporary science, they are by no means inconsistent with the modern systems concepts of mind and matter. Similar considerations apply to the concept of free will, which is quite compatible with mystical views when associated with the relative autonomy of self-organizing systems.

The concepts of process, change, and fluctuation, which play such a crucial role in the systems view of living organisms, are emphasized in the Eastern mystical traditions, especially in Taoism. The idea of fluctuations as the basis of order, which Prigogine introduced into modern science, is one of the major themes in all Taoist texts. (F.Capra. 2006)⁵

2.4 The Vision of a Human Community

By the late nineteenth century social sciences of anthropology, sociology and psychology began to gain momentum, and community became the center of inquiry. The word community comes from Latin “communis” meaning relational living. William Morris (1886) says a community is bound up by the values of solidarity, commitment, mutuality and trust. Thus community is pictured as a fraternity, a fellowship. He continues “Fellowship is heaven and lack of fellowship is hell; fellowship is life and lack of fellowship is death and the deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship’s sake ye do them”. Other writers see community in terms of geographical territory or interest groups or of communion. Territorial community is formed because they happened to live in a particular locality, while others are brought together due to common interests that transcend locality and are bound by religious beliefs or wanting to do service to fellowmen like the Oxfam and other charitable institutions. One can also see community as a group where the members meet and encounter one another creating deeper relationships of oneness and identity. Anthony Cohen (1985) calls these later groups as communities of meaning. He writes; “People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning and a referent to their identity. In these communities the group boundary are mental than local.” Cohen states that community

⁵Fnitjof(1996) Living System in Light Party. California : Mill Valley

involves two aspects: membership - having something in common with each other and that which distinguishes them from other groups. Thus there is similarity and differences. Boundaries of these groups can be geographical while others are mental - in the mind of people like Muslims, Christians or Buddhists. Speaking of this Frazer (1999) writes that the Christian ideal of the communion of saints and the Eucharistic community; the Islamic umma tradition and the contemporary theology community are prominent themes in religions of today. Each expression of community has its own symbols and markers of boundaries defining who is "in communion." The defining of boundary places some people within and some beyond the line. Thus the definition of community can become an exclusionary act. The benefits of belonging to a particular group are denied to non-members. Even belonging to a faith does not per se make a community but the network of interrelationships. When people were asked what community means to them, some communities replies that "For most of us our deepest sense of belonging is to our most intimate social networks especially family and friends, beyond this perimeter lie work, church, neighborhoods, civic life and an assortment of other weak ties (Putnam 2000.) Such an interactive community helps build a sense of self individually and the informal relations enable them to navigate their way around the demands and contingencies of every day living (Allan 1996). Before proceeding further what does the postmodern understanding of community, let us look at for a while the components of community, the individual.

2.4.1 Individual in community

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving, how expresses and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world how like a God! The beauty of the world the paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? (William.Shakespeare.1564-1616)⁶

Thus writes William Shakespeare of the beauty and value of individual human person. This individual human person is the most beautiful of all creation. The Bible referring to man speaks of him as “little less than an angel.” Individual comes into being through interrelationship between other individuals, the community. John Mbiti (1990)⁶ speaking of African view of individuals can be said of all. He writes that “the African view of man denies that a person can be defined by focusing on this or that physical or psychological characteristics of the lone individual. Rather man is defined by reference to the environing community. African view of the person can be summed up in this statement: “I am because we are and since we are therefore I am.

There are differing understandings of individuals among philosophers. Basically individuals are those who are aware of themselves as existing. When we were born we were oblivious of our existence and as we grew up we become aware of ourselves as individuals. Yet it takes time to become fully realized individuals, materializing all innate potentials, if we ever become full human beings, though this is the goal of life. Berkeley (1928) speaking of existence says “to be, is to be perceived” (*esse est percipi*) meaning that an individual becomes an individual when he become aware of himself as the

⁶ From Complete works of William Shakespeare on line www.lech.mit.edu

perceiving subject. While Kierkegaard (1813-1885) in describing individual distinguishes what the individual is essentially and what he becomes. He writes that “there is a movement in one’s life from essential to one’s existential condition, a movement from essence to existence” An individual becomes a person when his essence is realized in his existence.(Lescoc. 1973)

2.4.2 Gabriel Marcel

Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) the French existential philosopher was a seeker of a personal God, rather than the absolute of the metaphysics. He was searching for a God in whom he could hope, whom he could love, and with whom he could enter into a meaningful communion. Thus he began to reflect on the ordinary human experiences of hope, love, fidelity and loyalty and moved on to the genuine encounter with the Absolute *Thou* and develop a genuine *I-thou* (it is Marcel who first introduced this term) relationship with God and human persons. In answering who is a person, he makes a distinction between a problem and mystery. Problem implies that we lack some information on something, to solve it, we need to engage in a search to overcome the temporary ignorance. A problem usually revolves around an object or a relationship between objects. But the question who am I cannot be reduced to a problem because I, is not an object, an it. Although I am some sort of an object since I have a body, but my being is a combination of subject and object; and my subjective part can never be eliminated. I cannot be reduced to a mere object since my existence is not a problem. It is a mystery. I am an incarnate being and act in the world as an incarnated being. Through my incarnation I am able to participate in Being. All human persons participate in the “Mystery of Being.” In his work *Being and Having* he writes that to treat another person as an ‘it’ is a degradation of him.

Whenever one considers his neighbor as a thing, as an object or a function, he is nothing more than a he or she or it for him. When on the other hand, if one look upon him or her as a thou, he begins to see him as a person and enters into an encounter, a genuine meeting in love, friendship and spiritual availability. This meeting involves an invitation, an appeal to become involved in a loving encounter.

He uses three terms in this meeting with the other: presence, encounter and inter-subjectivity. Presence denotes something rather different and more comprehensive than just being there, but being present as mystery to be encountered. The encounter with the mystery of being in the other is essential for growth. It is in inter-subjectivity we grow into Being. He writes:

We must recognize that each one of us, in order to grow, must open out to others and different beings and must be capable of meeting them without allowing himself to be dominated or neutralized. This is what I have called 'inter subjectivity'. It cannot be considered a mere given fact or rather it only assumes value where it is more than a given fact, where it appears as gradual victory over all that incites us to become withdrawn and self centered. (Marcel, 1950)⁷

An inter-subjective person invites the other and when the other responds a relationship is established and through dialogue this relationship is deepened to the level of communion. When one is in communion with the other, the relationship transcends both the level of object or of the human and rises to the level of being, the Absolute Thou and the relationship is transformed.

⁷ Gabriel Marcel (1950) *The Mystery of Being :Reflection and mystery*. New York: Amazon Books

2.4.3 Emmanuel Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) the French thinker based his philosophy on the Ethics of the Other or, in Levinas' terms, on "ethics as first philosophy." For him the Other is not knowable and cannot be made into an object of the self, as is done by traditional metaphysics (Levinas calls as "ontology"). Levinas prefers to think of philosophy as the "knowledge of love" rather than the love of knowledge (the literal Greek meaning of the word "philosophy"). In his thinking ethics became an entity independent of subjectivity to the point where ethical responsibility is integral to the subject, hence an ethics of responsibility precedes any "objective searching after truth" or ontology

He derives the primacy of his ethics from the experience of the encounter with the Other.

The face-to-face encounter with another is an epiphany, an irreducible relation, a privileged phenomenon in which the other person's proximity and distance are both strongly felt and experienced. "The Other precisely **reveals** himself in his alterity not in a shock negating the I, but as the primordial phenomenon of gentleness.". At the same time, the revelation of the face makes a demand, this demand is before one can express, or know one's freedom, to accede or deny. One instantly recognizes the transcendence and heteronymy of the Other. Levinas writes,

The others that obsess me in the other do not affect me as examples of the same genus united with my neighbor by resemblance or common nature, individuations of the human race, or chips off the old block... The others concern me from the first. Here fraternity precedes the commonness of a genus. My relationship with the Other as neighbor gives meaning to my relations with all the others. (Cahoone.1996,p.184)⁸

In Levinas's later thought following "Totality and Infinity", he argued that our

⁸:Laurance Cahoone (1996) From Modernism to Post-modernism. An Anthology. Cambridge:Blackwell

responsibility for-the-other was already rooted within our subjective constitution. It should be noted that the first line of the preface of this book is [paraphrase] "it is of the utmost importance to know whether or not we are duped by morality." This can be seen most clearly in his later account reinence chapter 4 "Otherwise than Being" where he maintained that subjectivity was formed in and through our subjected-ness to the other. In this way, his effort was not to move away from traditional attempts to locate the other within subjectivity (this he agrees with), so much as his view was that subjectivity was primordially ethical and not theoretical. That is to say, our responsibility for-the-other was not a derivative feature of our subjectivity; instead, obligation founds our subjective being-in-the-world by giving it a meaningful direction and orientation. Levinas's thesis "ethics is first philosophy", then, means that the traditional philosophical pursuit of knowledge is but a secondary feature of a more basic ethical duty to-the-other.

Levinas considers that relation with the other is prior to self-understanding, for self understanding comes in relationship with the other. The other mirrors you. The ontological self understanding of being is not sufficient in understanding the other. The *I-thou* relation in Levinas is not symmetrical for the other is always greater than I and I have a responsibility towards the other that cannot be transferred to anyone else. The priority of the other is grounded in the priority of particularity over universality.

Levinas wants to save the particular "mere individual" as a being as such, with a uniqueness of its own. The relation to the other as a being as such has not to be through the phenomenon of being which is manifold and, according to philosophers of being, the other is hidden within one of the many folds of being. Levinas introduces the existential addressability of the other, which is indeed one of the essential qualities of the relation with the other. Addressability is the essential characteristics in understanding and

knowing the other. Addressability is introduced in contra distinction to understanding or knowing the other. He writes:

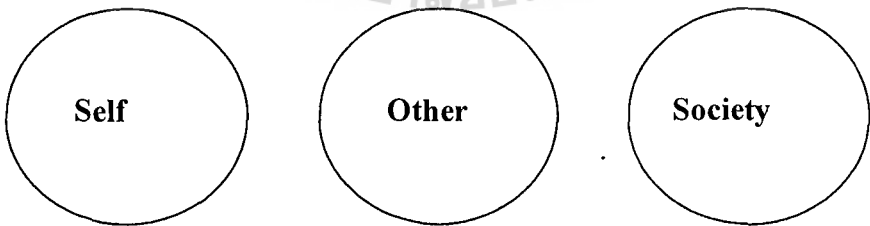
Certainly our relation to the other consists in wanting to understand him but this relation goes beyond understanding. Not only because knowledge of the other, independent of curiosity, also demands sympathy or love, the modes of being which are different from disinterested observation? Because the other in our relation to him does not affect us on the basis of a concept. The other is a being and is regarded as such (Levinas. 1992,p.93)

Levinas is correct in pointing out that the other “affects”us and this affectedness “goes beyond understanding” for “to understand a person means to already speak with them” (Sein. 1993) Addressability is the condition of possibility of talking to the other and speaking with the other. You and I are only possible in a you and me relation by virtue of addressability, which is a calling you into being, of invoking you as you for a me. It cannot be assumed that you pre-exist the you and me relationship. You and I exist only in between the relationship that is between you and me. Addressability holds open the door to a potential sharing of world by talking to each other. We do not share the world but share the world with each other. It also opens the possibility of you and me sharing our freedom with each other. Each individual enjoys the dimension of transcendence. Levinas considers transcendence as the entry point into the ethical religious realm in which responsibility for the other arises

Levinas calls the relation of the *I* in the face of the other as an event of community, the possibility of the encounter that in turn opens up the possibility of you and me sharing our freedom with each other. Indeed the necessity of having to do so one way or another with the other since our respective freedom is ontologically inviolable. Although Levinas claims that this hole in the horizon was the other as such appears occluded by fundamental ontology, by way of universality of being suffocating the particularity of the other as a being. The discussion with the individual enjoys the dimension of transcendence, for Levinas transcendence is the entry into the ethical religious realm of responsibility in the face of other. He interprets the beyond of being ethically and theologically with the intention of the finite, the absolute other.

2.4.4 Component's of a Society

In the above pages I have been considering the approaches of Marcel and Levinas to the individual and the other who form the component of a community. I like to consider a community in terms of three intersecting circles – the self, the other and the community.



The circle of the self pertains to the desires and needs of the personal self, which at best intersect fully with the individual's spiritual self. The circle of the other pertains to meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the people in our lives. We might consider here two groups of others – our inner circle of loved ones, and everyone else. The circle

of community pertains to earning a living through working in the world and fulfilling our responsibilities towards the community. We might also consider here another intersecting circle of our chosen contributions to the community through volunteer work and service to fellow men. The researcher considers, one of the most important aspects of personal development is the way in which an individual grows and becomes aware of himself through his experiences within the community of the family initially, followed by the wider community of others. The individual is born without a sense of the self which he develops through interaction with his parents, siblings and other significant people. The individual develops his sense of self within a community of people. It is a truism what the African writer Mbiti wrote “I am because we are and since we are therefore I am.”

2.5 A Postmodern Concept of Human Community

Modern community is fragmented and riddled with alienation. Postmodern thinkers consider that philosophy has come to an end and has been repeating itself. In his book *Inoperative Community* Jean-Luc Nancy (2001)⁹ says that there is a great longing in human soul for the “original community”. It is a longing for a harmonious and intimate community as lived by the early man, who has been somehow, deluded through the unfolding of history. The postmodern society stands in opposition to a warm and cozy pre-modern community, the *Gemeinschaft*, as Nancy calls it. In line of thinking we live at present in an anonymous society consisting of selfish individuals with no close communal ties. This has led not only to the disintegration of human society, but also generated violence accompanied by a decline of moral norms and values. To put a break to this disintegration, we need to turn back to the period of human history where the

⁹Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) *Inoperative Community*. New York: Amazon Books

communal ties were strong, and strive to create a community with deep communal ties.

According to Nancy:

The lost or broken community can be exemplified in all kinds of ways and by all kinds of paradigms: the natural family, the Athenian city, the Roman Republic, the first Christian community, corporations, communes, or brotherhood - always it is a matter of a lost age in which community woven tight, harmonious and intangible bonds and in which above all it played back to itself, through its institutions, its rituals, and its symbols, the representation, indeed the living offering, of its own immanent unity, intimacy and autonomy (Nancy 2001).

Nancy is thinking here largely of the period of the German romantics, who romanticized about the idyllic community or of Jean-Jacques Rousseau who presented, as a counter point to modern society, a mythical natural community. He was also targeting in his analysis the contemporary communitarians, like Alasdair Macintyre, who spoke of the need for a return to pre-modern communities. The nostalgic thought that of the old days were better and that we have lost something that was present in the past is a recognizable paradigm of our times. This nostalgia is not only present in the programs of political parties, international organizations like the UN and its peace keeping missions but also in commercials and opinions expressed in various media like television, newspaper and conferences, showing fissiparous and war mongering tendencies of our present day human community. The media is wetting our human appetites for a harmonious community through the movies, stories and anecdotes, pretending to offer us a “natural” comfort of experiencing a cozy community. People and communities in everyday life are consistently voicing their frustrations with the “lawless and wild youths” who are alienated from the community they were born in.

It is remarkable that each generation seems to go back to the same criticisms of the way things are taking place again and again. The longing for an original community is not a reference to a real period in our history, but rather to a mythical thought, a nostalgia, an imaginary picture of a paradise lost. This nostalgic imagination may be innocent but when it becomes the starting point for politics of a community, then the innocence disappears. Because they propose a type of community that may resemble a capitalist, or communist, a fascist or racial, or fundamentalist religious communities like the Al-Qaeda that result in strife. It is here that we should become suspicious of the retrospective consciousness of the lost community and its identity (whether this consciousness conceives of itself as the realities of the past) for it constructs images, disregarding past for the sake of an ideal projected vision. We should be cautious of this consciousness because it has accompanied the Western world from its very beginnings and at every moment of its history. In the Occident this prospective vision has the nostalgia for a more archaic community that has disappeared and deploring the loss of familiarity, fraternity and conviviality. Nancy writes:

Our (Western) history begins with the departure of Ulysses and with the onset of rivalry, dissension and conspiracy in his palace. Around Penelope, who reweaves the fabric of intimacy without ever managing to complete it, pretenders set up the warring and political scene of society - pure exteriority. But the true consciousness of the loss of community is Christian, the community desired and pined for by Rousseau, Schlegel, Hegel . . . Marx, Wagner or Mallarme is understood as communion.. (Nancy. 2001).

Some postmodern thinkers visualize a harmonized community that is formed with common norms and values, shared by people with the same identity and background; otherwise the community wouldn't be harmonious anymore. This model of a community

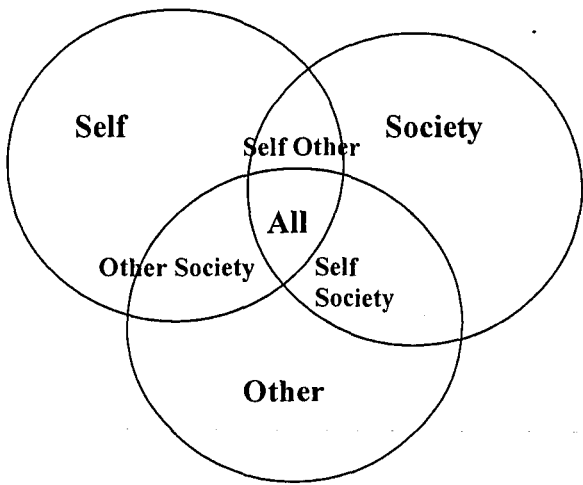
of people with the same identity is not far removed from the logic of many nationalistic ideologies that are present in many parts of the world today. Of course, the intentions are manifestly different yet the political scene both national and international shows that the longing for a pure social identity can still lead to violent conflicts. The Palestinian-Israeli conflicts that began years ago still continue, the Balkan war of ethnic cleansing or the fundamentalist Islamic state that was Afghanistan, the genocide of Daakfur region of Sudan are sad examples of these. Such communities still exist and continue to be formed. The American pushing for a liberal democratic community resulting in the tragedy of Iraq is another example of this. Whatever be the motives of these communities, the belonging to a group or an ideology is the criterion in making the difference between good and evil, between us and them, the authentic Jewish state or authentic democratic society and so on.. What is sought after is a pure undivided social identity, no longer soiled by the stains of other blood.

A group of people who share certain culture of shared values and norms form the foundation for social identity, yet there are conflicts.. Flemish people are defined as different from Dutch people, although they are neighbors, speak the same language and have almost everything in common. India and Pakistan shares the same culture yet religious ideology sets them apart. The current “migration problem” germinates from the fear that the values of migrant groups might threaten the identity of a region or a country thereby affecting its social fabric. The fear in America and Western Europe as elsewhere seems to be that influx of foreigners might change public life so dramatically that our “own” former identity would be in danger. Symbols like the headscarf of Muslim females, or the Turban of the Sikh and the like play an important role in the hot political

discussion on the identity and values of many nations. The very nostalgia for a community brings its own problems as these incidents indicate.

2.6.1 Alienation of Communities

When an individual or a community is committed to paths that fulfill the self interests and do not contribute to the relationships in the society, then these individuals feel alienated from others, the communities and the world in which they live. Likewise, when we commit ourselves to our personal relationships and neglect making a contribution to the world, we give away our center of gravity to others, and remain dependent and internally empty. But when we commit ourselves to a work or to fulfill a role in society which does not honor our individual selves, and neglects interpersonal relationships, we are likely to feel disconnected, drained, unfulfilled, and unable to make a satisfying contribution. The greatest sense of meaning as well as personal fulfillment and contribution to society are likely to result when we live from the intersection points of self, other and society, and not merely between any two stand points. Thus true satisfaction and meaning comes when the self, the other and society are interrelated as shown by the diagram given below.



At the intersection point, where self, other and society meet, we honor the needs and talents of our personal selves, we connect lovingly with others, and contribute to the society then we experience fulfillment and meaning. With such experiences, and with such life choices, we are likely to experience fully the meaning of life and able to express the fullness of that meaning in our relationships and our work.

2.5.2 Human Communities

The world, we are repeatedly reminded by writers, has contracted into a “global village”. One of the effects of this contraction is the bringing hitherto isolated people together, allowing the development of new patterns of civilization and of course creating new tensions. Thus, the processes of globalization challenge and confront communities at local, national and global levels. For example, new information technologies have created “networks” and cyber-communities” in the world with the Internet linking individuals, organizations and communities around the globe without regard for national boundaries. Small communities around the planet are affected by urban expansion through migration from the villages as well migration of people from other parts of the world along with degradation of the natural environment and by the man made environment. The existence of national communities of nation states is under threat from assaults by ethnic or tribal enclaves by migration from other nation states. Ironically the emergence of a global community wielding effective power is seen by some as a necessity in order to combat the ill effects of unfettered market economics, while others have deep misgivings even skepticism concerning the notion whether these will ever be a real global community and whether it will be for the betterment of human kind. If so how can we know and

understand the “community” of the twentieth century and what will be its future in the next millennium?

A number of significant challenges to community have arisen from the fast development of global information technologies. While pundits ponder whether or not Internet users form any kind of viable community as they sit at their computers in far flung area of the world, a deeper and more serious issue that comes up is the manner in which the entire structure of computer networks undermines the more traditional communities.

As Jessica Mathews (1997)¹⁰ points out in an essay titled as *Power Shift* speak of the threats these new information technologies have thrown at the established social hierarchies. The information technologies have empowered civil society, which in turn has allowed the world's peoples generally to be more involved than previously in issues that were once the sole province of States and Governments. Thus the common man has gained power by new links with democratic movements, human rights and international security. Yet, the technologies themselves are not always used to achieve constructive ends, as for example, they promote the spread of global organized crime and enable individuals to cross borders easily to subvert governments and at times create new societal divisions. The future of the state, in her view is therefore uncertain and information technologies, she points out, “Disrupt hierarchies, spread power among more people and groups.” She continues:

In drastically lowering the costs of communication, consultation, and coordination, they favor decentralized networks over other modes of organizations. In networks, individuals or groups link for joint action without building a physical or formal institutional presence. Networks have no person at the top and no center. Instead, they have multiple nodes where collections of individuals or groups interact for different purposes. Business,

¹⁰Jessica Mathews (1997) *The Meaning of Community* ‘ in *Foreign Affairs* (January-February)

citizen's organizations, ethnic groups, and crime cartels have all readily adopted the networks model. Governments, on the other hand, are quintessential hierarchies to an organizational form incompatible with what the new technologies make possible (Mathews, 1997).

The technologies, she concludes, weaken the community by empowering individuals, and ends with a dire prediction:

The prophets of an intermitted world in which national identities gradually fade, proclaim its revolutionary nature and yet believe the changes will be wholly benign. They won't be. The shift from national to some other political allegiance, if it comes, will be an emotional, cultural, and political earthquake (Kunstler 1996,p.39)¹¹.

Mathews raises important questions as globalization and information hi-ways are moving forward: What kind of community can be forged in an interknitted world, where the structure of the technology promotes anarchy, with its emphasis on complete freedom of expression and lack of regard for authority? Does this spell the end of the nation state and, if so, what other kind of political entity might rise in its stead? The challenges posed by the new information technologies have generated significant problems, challenges and possibilities that are felt throughout the world.

There are, however, a number of current crises facing community. Loss of the sense of community based on "place" is a worldwide phenomenon. Millions of people all over the planet are being displaced from their homes. Some are refugees fleeing escalating

¹¹From excerpts published in internet from an article by Thomas Mann Kunstler (2001)

political strife while others are forced from their homes by economic necessity such as farmers from rural China migrating to cities in vast numbers, searching for factory work. Or people from Africa take risks, even life itself in order to reach the sources of work in Europe in search for jobs and a better life. Again Mexicans and other South-Americans seeking a better life are migrating to North America. Such movements of people destroy families, undermine the traditional sense of trust found in community, increases feelings of isolation and dislocation, and creates a host of social problems.

The new urbanites are going back to planning and designing towns and cities on the principles that shaped the traditional neighborhoods in the States as a way of recapturing this lost sense of place and community. This is reversing a pattern of development that they see as “economically catastrophic, environmental calamity, socially devastating, and spiritually degrading.” Discarding the zoning laws that segregate various activities, they seek to create neighborhoods (or hamlets or villages) of manageable size which, when clustered together, become towns and cities. Each neighborhood is constructed on a “human scale” containing both residential and commercial property and provides housing for people of different levels of income. The proposal is not fantastic. Many traditional European towns, for example, have preserved this element of “human design.” But to make such a change citizens everywhere must take an active role in decisions regarding the environment in which they live

Human settlements are like living organisms. They must grow and they will change. But we can decide on the nature of that growth on the quality and the character of it and where it ought to go. We don’t have to scatter the building blocks of our civic life all over the countryside, destroying our towns and ruining farmland... It is within our power to create places that are worthy of our affection (Kunstler, 1996).

Such loss of “community of place” can also bring loss of communities of memory and communities governed by trust. In the late nineteenth century Ferdinand Tönnies theorized that in the development of systems of culture, communities invariably move from a period of *Gemeinschaft*, where shared experience and likeness are most important, toward a period of *Gesellschaft*, where individuals exist in isolation from each other where, there is a strong sense of competition, relationships are contractual and monetary values prevail. Such a progression has been noted by others as well. In this century, Pitirim A. Sorokin (1997) for example, saw societies moving through ideational, idealistic and sensate stages, away from spiritual truth and values towards self-indulgence and material values. But is such a progression inevitable?

Leach (1993) characterizes the dominant mode of interaction in twentieth century life as an amoral “brokering style,” the features of which are “repressing one’s own convictions and withholding judgment in the interest of forging profitable relationships”. Contending that it occupies preeminence in today’s political and moral economy he writes, “Brokers are now busy in nearly every sphere of activity, and they have helped inject into American culture a new anomalism essentially indifferent to virtue and hospitable to the ongoing inflation of desire (Leach, 1993). Because America with the collapse of communism is now the world’s undisputed single superpower, its role as the leading exponent of Western capitalist values which have been exported throughout the entire world is crucial. Indeed, some writers have gone so far as to characterize the current devotion to these values as a worldwide “religious” phenomenon. David Loy (1997) writes:

...Our present economic system should also be understood as our religion, because it has come to fulfill a religious function for us. The discipline of economics is less a science than the theology of that religion, and its god, the Market, has become a vicious circle of ever-increasing production and consumption by pretending to offer a secular salvation. The collapse of communism best understood as a capitalist “heresy” makes it more apparent that the market is becoming the first truly world religion, binding all corners of the globe more and more tightly into a worldview and set of values whose religious role we overlook only because we insist on seeing them as “secular.” (Loy, 1997,p.102).

George Soros shares this view, stating, “What used to be a medium of exchange has usurped the place of fundamental values. The cult of success has a belief in principles. Society has lost its anchor “(Soros, 1997, pp. 45-58). Concluding that “there is something wrong with making the survival of the fittest a guiding principle of civilized society, he proposes an “open society as the antidote to the havoc that laissez-faire capitalism and market values are wreaking in democratic society,” where the guiding principles of “no market values” are eclipsed by the influence of market values. Current confidence that “the unhampered pursuit of self-interest will bring about an eventual international equilibrium” is , in his view, “misplaced “ An “open society” would promote institutions that allow people to live together in place, in spite of their different views, interests, and beliefs concerning what is true. He concludes, however, that there is currently no willingness to establish the means to preserve a global open society.

According to Greider, we stand at a watershed in history; “a revolutionary principle is embedded in the global economic system, awaiting broader recognition: Human dignity is indivisible. Across the distances of cultures and nations, across vast gulfs of wealth and poverty, even the least among us are entitled to dignity and no justification exists for brutalizing them in the pursuit of commerce” (Greider. 1997). He continues, “Any prospect of developing a common global social consciousness will inevitably force to reexamine themselves first and come to terms with their own national contradictions and hypocrisies. And just as Americans cannot claim a higher morality while benefiting from inhumane exploitation, neither can developing countries pretend to become modern ‘one world’ producers and expect exemption from the world’s social values” (Greider, 1997). Values are also a main concern of Philip Seiznick, a communitarian philosopher who contends not only that social justice must be the foundation of community but that it is the responsibility of both individuals and the collective group. Thus, the communitarian concept of community is a “unity of unities” a sort of “federal” unity that preserves the integrity of the parts by emphasizing individual moral autonomy as well as the moral bonds of civility, which are seen to be interdependence and reciprocity (Seiznick, 1992). The concept of “stewardship” in governance further binds social power to moral ideals. It is a concept that looks outward rather than inward or as Seiznick puts it, moves towards “the ‘we’ of humanity.” In this concept of community the balance of particularism is regarded as crucial, respecting diversity “without allowing its claims to override those of basic humanity and justice. Two other communitarians have offered some valuable insights into a community-friendly, sustainable system of economics. In their book for the common Good, Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr, make a distinction between two different paradigms of economic behavior: chrematistics and

oikonomia. Chrematistics, they say, “can be defined as the branch of political economy relating to the manipulation of property and wealth so as to maximize short-term monetary exchange value to the owner” a model that conforms to Leach’s, Soros and Greider’s view of capitalism, as epitomized by the American system. In contrast, oikonomia “is the management of the household so as to increase its use value to all members of the household over the long run.” They continue, “if we expand the scope of household to all members larger community of the land of shared values, resources, incomes, institutions, language and history, then we have a good definition of economics for community” (Cobb, 1989, p. 138).

The concept of oikonomia seems quite close to Seiznick’s “stewardship”. Cobb and Daly’s assertion that “true economics concerns itself with the long-term welfare of the whole community posits a conception of humans as something quite different from mere consumers and of community as something much different from a mere marketplace. They argue that seeing people only as beings “bent on optimizing utility or satisfaction through procuring unlimited commodities,” which is the view underlying current economic theory, leads to “policies that weaken existing patterns of social relationships. They advocate, instead, that “economics should be refunded on the basis of a new concept of Homo economics as person in community,” recognizing that:

The well-being of a community as a whole is constitutive of each person’s welfare because each human being is constituted by relationships to others, and this pattern of relationships is at least as important as the possession of commodities. These relationships cannot be exchanged in a market. They can nevertheless, be affected by the market and when the market grows out of the control of a community the effects are almost always destructive. Hence this model of person in community calls not only for

provision of goods and services to individuals, but also for an economic order that supports the pattern of personal relationship that make up the community (Cobb, 1989).

Daly and Cobb argue strongly for a conscious movement towards the adoption of social behavior and values that will enhance “the common good” and build the foundations of a community that will protect the environment and promote ways of living that provide for a sustainable future. Such an approach addresses some of the key challenges facing postmodern community. At the broadest level of discussion, many contemporary thinkers, such as Daly and Cobb, see the global nature of environmental crises and interconnectedness of national economies, for example as leading inexorably towards the establishment of a global community of some sorts. Others, however, see the whole idea as an utter impossibility. Some of the most provocative pieces to appear in print on this topic during the past several years have been authored by Samuel P. Huntington, who wrote an article *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the world Order* upholding the thesis that the emergence of a global civilization is a utopian fantasy which brought much debate in the foreign affairs department of America. The phrase “world community has become the euphemistic collective noun (replacing the free world) to give global legitimacy to actions reflecting the interests of the United States and other Western powers (Huntington, 1996), he contends. “The West, whose system of liberal democracy has recently been touted as the pinnacle of social evolution and achievement, is not, in his view, a universal civilization. “What is universalism to the West is imperialism to the rest.”

While Huntington focuses on “civilization”, which he defines as ‘the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity of people have, sort of that which distinguishes humans from other species, “the elements he sees as shaping

civilizations are quite similar to those generally accepted as characteristics of community, common objective elements such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions” and the subjective self-identification of people.

He is extremely skeptical of any kind of unified global civilization can ever develop. At the individual level, he asserts that there must always be “the civilization us and the extra civilization them” because we fear and distrust people who are different. We experience difficulty in communicating with them and are unfamiliar with what motivates them, or how they conduct social relationships, and so on. In opposition to Daly and Cobb, he states that “it is human to hate”; for self-definition and motivation people need enemies, competition in business, rivals in achievement, opponents in politics. They naturally distrust and see as threats those who are different and have the capability to harm them. This rivalry is also can be extended also to the sphere of religion as well. As Huntington says, “Whatever universalistic goals they may have religions give people identity by positing a basic distinction between believers and nonbelievers, between a superior in group and a different and inferior out-group (Harrington, 1997)). “Further, if a universal civilization is emerging, there should be signs of a universal language and a universal religion developing.” Nothing of the sort is occurring” (Schmookler, 1984).

Communities that thrive and prosper in the new millennium will do so because they acknowledge the spiritual dimension of human nature and make the moral, emotional, and intellectual development of the individual a center of priority. They will guarantee freedom of religion and encourage the establishment of places of worship. Their centers of learning will seek to culture the limitless potentialities latent in human consciousness and will develop a major goal of participation of all peoples in generating and applying knowledge. Remembering at all times that the interests of the individual and of society

are inseparable, these communities will promote respect for both rights and responsibilities, that will foster the equality and partnership of women and men, and incorporate into their design principles of environmental preservation and rehabilitation. Guided by the concept of unity in diversity, they will support widespread participation in the affairs of society, and will increasingly turn to leaders who are motivated by the desire to serve. In these communities the fruits of science and technology will benefit the whole society, and work will be available for all.

Communities such as these will prove to be the pillars of a world civilization, a civilization which will be the logical culmination of humanity's community building efforts over vast stretches of time and geography. That all people are "born to carry forward an ever advancing civilization, "implies that every person has both the right and the responsibility to contribute to this historic and far reaching, collective enterprise whose goal is nothing less than the peace, prosperity, and unity of the entire human family.

2.6 *Summary*

In the introduction of this chapter I tried to establish the type of clash of civilizations that is taking place in our world. People perceive a significant difference between the philosophical assumptions, underlying values, social relations, customs and overall outlooks of life of their civilization and that of other civilizations. Cultures and civilizations do change, and their impact on politics and economics do vary from one period to another. Then I attempted to give a birds eye view of the philosophical development of society from its tribal roots to the mechanistic and to the organic or system approach to community. In the following section I explained the understanding of

the Individual and the Other who form the community from the writings of Gabriel Marcel and Emmanuel Levinas. The last point addressed the postmodern concept of community. Nancy speaks of the need for the deconstruction of the community and the cry for the restoration of a transparent, small scale community – Gemeinschaft - that might liberate us from the alienation in modern society, the “Gesellschaft”. Nancy’s thesis is that at the core of Western (as well as in non-western) political thinking, there is a longing for an “original relational community”. It is the nostalgia for an Edenic community that was once ours, the longing for a harmonious and intimate community, but that this ideal community has been deluding us through the centuries. In the following chapter we shall consider the community proposed by Martin Buber.



Chapter 3

Martin Buber and the Inter-subjective Community

3.1 Introduction

Martin Buber, is an existentialist Jewish Religious thinker, has several works to his credit and the well known works are the “*I and Thou*,” “*Paths in Utopia*,” and “*Between Man and Man*.” He is not a systematic thinker but his writings are evocative and leaning towards mysticism. In his writings he often shifts his position as he gains deeper insights, as every thinker does as he matures. The concept of relationship between the *I* and *Thou*, the primary words, predominates his writings. The primary given compound notions of *I-Thou* and *I-It* are the bedrock on which Buber’s entire conceptual and existential edifice is built. The attitude of *I-It* where the subject considers the entire world including the human persons as objects and where the *I* learn and plan to manipulate and use the world around to survive and to control. It is an attitude of distancing the *I* from everything and everybody else over there to be observed, calculated and used. The *I-Thou* attitude is highly personal, and direct and relational, where the *I* establishes communion with all the existences including fellow humans addressing them as a *Thou*. In this section of the research I shall be arguing that the *I-Thou* relational attitude that Martin Buber proposes can build inter-subjective (dyadic and multidimensional) communities around the world bringing harmony and peace.

3.2 Martin Buber, the Existentialist

Martin Buber’s Philosophy is founded on Existentialism. Existentialism is not a school of thought but more of a trend or a tendency that can be found throughout the history of

meaning can be attained. In general it is hostile towards abstract theories or systems that describe the intricacies and difficulties of human life through more-or-less simplistic formulas. Existentialists focus primarily on matters such as choice, individuality, subjectivity, freedom, in short the nature of existence itself. Some of the characteristics of existentialists are the following.

- An obsession with how to live one's life and its beliefs and an inward search for philosophical and psychological meaning.
- A conviction that certain question everyone must deal with (if they are to take human life seriously) and that these are special - existential – questions, questions such as death, the meaning of human existence, the place of God in human existence, the meaning of value, interpersonal relationship, the place of self-reflective conscious knowledge of one's self in existing.
- A general unconcern or lack of attention to "social" questions such as the politics of life and what "social" responsibility the society or state has. The focus is almost exclusively on the individual.
- A belief that life at large is very difficult and that it doesn't have an "objective" or universally known value, but the individual must create value by affirming it and living it, not by talking about it.
- A focus that existential choices and values are primarily to be demonstrated in actions rather than in words.
- An assumption that "existential" struggles, in making meaningful decisions in everyday life are better expounded through literary characterizations rather than through

abstract philosophical thinking. The literary characterizations are the best ways to elucidate existential struggles.

- A conclusion that the freedom of the will, the human power to do or not do, is absolute. Some times arguments for free will find its way into Existentialist literature, but these are arguments, for "outsiders" rather than for the writers themselves. Inside the movement, free will is axiomatic, it is intuitively obvious, it is the backdrop of all else that goes on.

These are some general characteristics of existentialist thinkers but certainly there are exceptions. We can see these characteristics in the writings of Martin Buber that will become clearer as we explain his philosophical thinking.

3.3 *Martin Buber and Relationships*

The famous saying of Buber is "All living is meeting." Daily living is an encounter between persons and things. Buber's understanding of life is strongly and unmistakably relational. Relation, not the human person, is the starting point of Buber's philosophy. To place it more clearly the essence of a person is "relation." To be a person is to be related, Writing on the "*I and Thou*" Buber explicitly, succinctly and unmistakably says "In the beginning is the relation." The statement evokes the first line of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Rabbi Jonathan Sacks points out that looking at the man He created, the Creator said "It is not good for man to be alone." Sacks observes that in Hebrew Adam means "earthling" not man (ish in Hebrew) and he remained such until God invested him in a relationship by creating the woman. In this relationship Adam became a man, an *I*, a subject. Thus Buber is right when he says that *I* require a *Thou* in becoming an *I*. The individual becomes a subject when *I* utter *Thou*. Only when someone falls in love, or when someone forms a friendship we call him a

person. Persons appear only by entering into relation with a Thou. *I* require a *Thou* to become an *I*. It is only through relation the person emerges. Buberian philosophy is relationship makes a man, man. To place it in another way, man becomes an *I* through a *Thou*. Individuality emerges only in relationship. When *I* say *Thou*, *I* emerge as a person. Thus all life is encounter, a meeting.

For Buber relationships are not merely a matter of choice, contract or exchange but part of the very existence of man. It is not as if relationships merely precede the formation of an individual, no, the individual is relationship. The infant first feels it's self as the part of mother, child whole and then gradually comes out as a distinct self. The person is and exists and acts basically as participant in a community of relationship. The relation of *I-Thou* is unmediated and direct. Nothing conceptual intervenes between *I* and *Thou*, any prior knowledge or imagination. It is relationship pure and simple.

In relationships there is always the *I* and the *Thou*. There no place for a third person in a relationship because the other is always a *Thou*. If there is a third, the third is a he or a she. Buber writes that in *I-Thou* relationships "He is no longer a He or a She linked by other Hes and Shes, a dot in a world of space time, nor a condition that can be experienced or described" (Buber. 1923). Speaking of encountering and establishing the *I-Thou* relationship "is like feeling a breath and at times like a wrestling match, no matter something happens."

Indeed one cannot stress enough the centrality and presence of relationship over individuals, for Buber it is not mere historical, sequential or causal but existential relationship. Relationship is part and parcel of the formation of the individual, as in the case of an infant or a preliterate tribal individual become aware of their individuality and relationship with others. It is only as a participant in a relation a person is formed, is,

exists and acts. For Buber it is not the *I* or *Thou* that is important but what he calls the “betweenness”¹²

that is the relationship that makes a person *I* or *Thou*. The essential social distinction is not the individuality of people but the kind of relationships they are engaged in. There is another kind of relationship, that he calls *I it* relationship. It is the relation one has towards an object, a thing, in this relationship the *I* do not become an *I*, a person but a thing. It is interesting to note that Martin uses the word “human being” rather than a person to denote individual’s humanity in his writings. Buber considers the *I* of an individual, is nothing in itself. *I* require a *Thou* to become an *I*. In becoming an *I*, *I* say *Thou*. Thus Buber so often recounts in different words “All living is encounter.” (Buber.1923) Our present day language makes it difficult to capture Buber’s thoughts fully. Man becomes a person, an *I* only through a *Thou* relationship, a person appears by entering into relation with other persons.” He insists there is no person prior to or outside of relationship. He writes in the “*I and the Thou*,” “On the far side of the subjective, on this side of the objective on the narrow ridge where *I* and *Thou* meet, there is the realm of “between”. This reality, whose disclosure has begun in our time, shows the way, leading beyond individualism and collectivism, for the life of future generations.”

Buber reveals his own life story in his writings. Stephen Kepnes (1995) observes that Buber’s relational self was drastically unlike Western notion of a singular self. “Buber’s self is not the mirror image of Gusdorf’s singular self. It is not opposed to others, nor does it exist outside of others. Indeed it defines itself with others.” He is communicating his life in fragments, through his writings, he is encountering the *Thou* in his readers and in turn to encounter him as a *Thou* and to relate to him dialogically rather than to know

him objectively. Kepnes describes Buber in his “Autobiographical Fragments” that Buber’s autobiography is the only one of its kind that takes seriously the relational and process qualities of the self and tries to develop an autobiography that reflects these qualities (Kepnes, 1990). It is interesting to note here that he did miss the love in his young days (Appendix 1) perhaps all his life, for his parents separated very early in life.

Buber saw education as a restoration of an individual to wholeness. Knowledge is not for the sake of knowledge itself, but for ever more to become an *I*, a self realized *I* in relationship with others. In the school, the child encounters the *thou* of his companions. Teachers are there to make this encounter possible. Man’s education is a life long process where he continually encounters others thereby expanding his horizon of relationships. Education requires dialogue between the teacher and the student and students among themselves – in adult years he dialogue with his colleagues and the authors of the books he reads. The following Hasidic saying used by Buber indicates how to communicate with our academic colleagues and students. “Men can meet, but mountains never.” When one man considers himself just a human being, pure and simple and the other does so too, they can meet. But if the one considers himself a lofty mountain, and others think the same, then they cannot meet. (Friedman, 1988).

Buber challenges Kierkegaard for abandoning the world in the belief that the world is an obstacle to having direct relationship with God. Kierkegaard writes “Precisely if the highest form of piety is to let everything earthly go, it can be the highest egoism.” It is egoism for the sake of God. Buber’s view is that the only way to have a relationship with the Divinity, the Eternal *Thou* is to respond to the Divinity implicit in all things, in God’s world. As in the “*I-Thou*” relationship, the “*I*” have to find himself fully in relationship with others before he can address the Eternal *Thou* as “*Thou*” in perfect simplicity. Even if he does it in the setting of a community (for example a church group) the address

has to be deeply personal. As Kierkegaard writes “As the single person, he (every man) is alone, alone in the whole world, alone before God.” This aloneness is transformed into communion is relationships. It is in relationship that he encounters the Thou of this world that the encounters the Eternal Thou in all its fullness.

In *Between Man and Man*, Buber writes: “Man is in a growing measure sociologically determined”. Writing on the depersonalization that is taking place in our world he says : “In the technical, economic, and political spheres of his existence he finds himself in the grip of incomprehensible powers which trample again and again on all human purposes. This purposelessness of modern life is manifested in the worship of freedom for its own sake.” Modern rationalism has exchanged the life of spirit for the detached intellect. Progressive modern education has tended to free the child’s creative impulses without helping him to acquire personal responsibility which should accompany it. This sickness of modern man is manifested in making freedom and power as an end in itself. “Power without faithfulness is not faithful to its basic principle; it can know no real fruitfulness or renewal”. Education makes individuals to become I through encountering the Thou, and this encountering and becoming full.

3.3.1 Two Levels of Relationships.

In primitive human language, according to Buber words are not isolated but combined. There are two kinds of primary words of relationship of the I- Thou and that of I-It. He makes this distinction between the two terms to express man’s relationships that make us different from other beings in the world. Relationships make us human individuals. “Thou” for Buber in its ultimate meaning, is addressed to “God” alone the Eternal Thou and expresses man’s relationship to Him. The creative presence of the Eternal Thou is in

all beings of the world, particularly in man, who has the capacity to be aware of this presence in himself and in the world. Thus the primary word "Thou" does not signify things or persons or their relationships but God. The word Thou do describe something that exists independently of the person but exist within every person, when activated or in Buber's terms being spoken, bring into existence relationship with all beings and the Ultimate being. Human person is not just a He or She; it is the third person, for Buber a person is always a Thou, whom the I address. No one can experience his I-ness unless he addresses the other. When call of the I comes, the other does not respond, it remains an I and does not become a Thou. They remain two enclosed fortified I When the other responds, becomes a Thou and the addresser becomes an I. The addresser and the addressed are faceless individuals in themselves but when addressed they are transformed into an I and Thou. The *I* and *Thou*, encounter one another and relationship is established. Therefore Buber coined the phrase "all real living is meeting". Buber's insight is that existence is "relationship," between man and universe, man and man that finds its fullness in the relationship with the Eternal Thou.

Buber is insistent that one cannot address God as Thou if he does not have relationship with existence itself, manifested in diverse forms. Everything gets its meaning in the Thou of God, otherwise they shrink to an It, a thing that can be used to meet our need and greed. The truth is that men who address God, as the Thou because everything is gathered up in the relationship with Him and become an I in all its fullness. In relationships there is no separation between the *I* and *Thou*, if separated then they collapse into icy cold individuals. How can we build such relationships? Buber answers, step into pure relations and perceive everything as the Thou, even what we use like water, air, food for our living are not seen as things but the loving presence of the eternal Thou. By establishing relationships on its true foundation which is the Eternal Thou all living becomes an

encounter in relationships. He further comments “to look away from the world does not help a man to reach God (Buber. 1923). What is problematic is the use of language such as “world”, “God”, and “God in the world” are the language of “It”. We should not make the distinction between world, man and God. The keystone of seeing relation between I-Thou is that men find God in the world. If they do not find Him there, then they live the I-It relationship, because it is the Eternal Thou that gives meaning to the entire universe. Without the Eternal Thou everything is an it. Thus Buber established the necessity of a distinction between types of relationships by noting that humans do not relate to that which is other than their selves as mere things alone. Put more simply, we do not treat others only as objects –as a means to an end. In living with such an attitude means treating all as objects - in extreme cases, even one’s self is considered as object, an it - is an empty and confusing existence. If we see the world only through our experiences, then we will miss much of that which is.

Not every relationship between two persons is an I-Thou nor is every relationship with an animal or thing an I-It. The difference, rather, is in the relationship itself. I-Thou is a relationship of openness, directness, mutuality and presence. It may be between man and man, but may also take place with a tree, a cat, piece of mica, a work of art – and through all of these with God, the Eternal Thou in whom the parallel line of relations meet. I-It in contrast, is the typical subject-object relationship in which one knows and uses other people and things without allowing them to exist for oneself in their uniqueness without allowing them to exist for oneself in their uniqueness. . . (Buber.1923,p.1)

The inference from Buber’s philosophy is that when I-Thou truly meet and communicate, Divinity informs itself in the dialoguers as one another feast on the miracle of their union.

3.3.2 I-It Relationship

We experience most things as just things. They do not respond to our perception, they are not changed by it. They do not respond to our invitation for dialogue. We experience them as object – as It. Even if we distinguish between the outer and the inner experiences, we still do not add anything significant or different to our experience of It. Indeed Buber claims that even a distinction between those experiences that are open and those which are secret does not add anything. Fundamentally we still experience nature as an It. There is no relation between the observer and observed – no connection is created. The experience is totally in the observer and not in that which is observed. But this is only part of our awareness of the world.

3.3.3 I-Thou Relationship

In I-Thou relationship we reach a new level of awareness, when we approach the other as a Thou- a relational being. The Thou is changed by my awareness of him/her and in turn respond to my awareness – and thus establishes a relation between I and Thou.

Ordinarily when I speak of “I am going to meet him” I am making him an object, an It, unless I see in him a Thou who is capable of responding to my invitation for relationship. Similarly when I speak of the things around me I am relating to them as an It. But when I see them in the light of the Eternal Thou I relate to them as Thou, even though they do not respond to my invitation in the sphere of language but they respond to me in another level, in the level of the Eternal Thou. It is up to the I to make a relationship of *I-Thou* or *I-It*. We make objects of the things around us when we do not see them in the Eternal Thou and thus lose the relational perspective. This we do by objectifying, describing and categorizing the world and thereby gaining material control

over it. Buber in fact created a new set of vocabulary, the vocabulary of “relation” *I-It*, *I-Thou* that are the core of life. If we objectify the world, men and God then we are in the level of *I-It*. But when we speak of relationship between, then we are in the world of *I-Thou*. Thus the *I-Thou* relationship always have the touch of Eternal Thou. To live in the world of *I-It* is to miss what is essential in life, the Eternal himself, whose image man is. The fundamental difference between the “*I-Thou*” and “*I-It*” is the attitude or intentionality of the *I*. The world of *It* is the icy world of things whereas the world of *Thou* is the world warm relationships. The realm of *Thou* has different basis from the realm of *It*. Buber expresses this idea in *I and Thou* in the following manner:

When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing for his object. Where there is a thing it is bounded by others, it exists only though being bounded by others. But when *Thou* is spoken, there is no thing. *Thou* have no bounds. When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing, he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation. If *Thou* has nothing when it is spoken, then what does man experience? What, then do we experience of *Thou*? Just nothing. If we do not experience it, what then? Buber says, when we know of *Thou*, we know everything, for we know nothing isolated about it any more (Buber. 1923,p.4)

3.3.4 *I-Thou and the World of Nature*

Maurice Friedman (1987) in his writing “The Knowledge of Man” explains that the *Thou* of *I-Thou* is not limited to men, but includes animals, trees, objects of nature and God. *I-It* is the primary word of experiencing and using. “*It*” takes place within a man and not between him and the world. Hence it is entirely subjective and lacking in mutuality. Whether in knowing, feeling, or acting, it is the typical subject-object relationship. Peter

M. Collins (1998) interprets this I-Thou relationship as follows: The *I-Thou* relationship, which Buber claims is essential for becoming truly human and can be described as in which the I (the conscious human being) "listens" to the other in an *I-Thou* relationship. The auditory capacities of the I, will be engaged, but that is only a part - and in some instances, a relatively insignificant part-of the process. "To "listen" is to attend with one's whole being to become sensitive to the whole being of the other, especially to the needs of the other in the specific situation."

To clarify this point, Buber himself posits the question in his writing called "Postscript to *I-Thou*," he says if we can stand in the I-Thou relationship not merely with other men, but also with other beings and things that meet us in nature. Then what is the real difference between the two relationships? His answer is that we must see everything in the being of a personal of God. But the dilemma is if so then God is accessible to our senses, if not he is not accessible and for Buber God is accessible to man as the Eternal Thou in and through the visible world. What is problematic for theologians is to explain the nature of relationship between man and God. In "Postscript to *I and Thou*" he writes "The concept of a personal being is indeed completely incapable of declaring what God's essential being is, but it is both permitted and necessary to say that God is also a Person' (Buber 1958).

3.3.5 *I Defined in Relationship*

In order to understand the personal I-Thou relationship and the difference between I-Thou and I-It relationship further clarification is needed. The I of primary word I-Thou is different from that of the primary word I-It. The I of the primary word I-It make its appearance as and when an individual become conscious of it as an object. The I of the

primary word I-Thou make its subjectivity without a dependent genitive, meaning it does not possess. Individuality makes its appearance by being differentiated from other individuals. A person makes his appearance by entering into relation with the other's differentiation, is to experience the other as a subject equal to the subject experiencing and enters into a relation. The aim of this relation is relation's own being, that is contact with the Thou. Relation, for Buber, is mutual. My Thou affected by the Thou of the other. The I is real in virtue of its sharing the relationship. The fuller its sharing the more real it becomes. A person becomes conscious of himself when he is sharing in being, co-existing. There is no distinction between being and being when I-Thou is realized. There is union. Buber explains further about sharing in the being; "In sharing the person becomes conscious of himself as sharing in being, as co-existing, and thus as being. Individual becomes conscious of itself as being such-and-such and nothing else. The person says, "I am." Know thyself, means is to "know thyself as having being", that is in I-Thou relationship my particular way of being is brought out meaning, "to know the particular kind of being that I am." Individuality that isolated from any relationship differentiates itself from others and is rendered remote from true being. Individuality of isolation neither shares in nor obtains any reality. It differentiates itself from the other, and seeks through experiencing and using others and things even God himself, to appropriate as much of them as I can.

3.3.6 Balance of I-Thou and I-It

It is interesting that Buber does not condemn the *I-It* attitude nor does he uphold "*I-Thou*" attitude as some kind of a new Zion. On the contrary Buber sees *I-It* as something that is necessary on the way to *I-Thou* attitude besides. He says that "the world is two fold for man." *I-It* is the needed as part of the human condition, "without it you cannot

remain alive and its reliability preserves you.” He is arguing that one could not or should do without economics or politics the two “chambers” of *I-it* world. In another place he compares *I-It* to the chrysalis and *I- Thou* to the butterfly. That is the *I-It* is a necessary realm out of which the *I-Thou* may be formed. Buber does not even contend that in the ideal world *I-Thou* relationships would be common, or prevalent or let alone dominant.

Buber perhaps implicitly favor some sort of balance between the worlds of *I-It* and *I-Thou*, suggesting if the *I-It* realm were to threaten the *I-Thou* realm greater dedication to the *I-Thou* would be called for at the same time Buber says in “Paths in Utopia” that *I-Thou* relations are difficult to stabilize, as there is the inclination to slip to *I-It* relation so there is a need for continued need for reestablishing *I-Thou* relationship.

3.3.7 The Eternal Thou

The Eternal Thou, the foundation of all relation meets man through grace that is the Eternal *I*, takes the initiative and invites man for relationship. He is already present in man by creation, this is the foundational relationship. The Eternal *I* invite freely for relationship and communion – this is revelation. Man is free to reject or accept the invitation by responding, by speaking of the primary word and by communion. Intimacy between man and God is mystical union where subject – object duality gives way to unity. This relationship overflows into all spheres of life. Like a mirror everything reflects the light of the Eternal Thou. All relationships are aglow with this relationship and all relationships deepen the *I-Thou* relationship with God. This relationship with God, men and nature takes ethical dimensions, ethical responsibility for the other which Levinas emphasizes. Consider a human relationship that has progressed to a deep level of understanding where the relationship may look like (for outsiders) casual relationship but

in reality they are aware of the other as a Thou - a being part of the Eternal I. It is a pity Buber says that in quite a few relationships nothing of the sort takes place but experiences each other as objects, as an It rather than as a Thou. These relationships are static and end in disaster. Often partners in this sort of “relationships” are dissatisfied since they feel that something is lacking in their relationship. They are right in their assessment for they are missing the very thing that defines relationships – the Thou. A true relationship with a Thou dynamic, growing, creative, deepening in awareness, leading to the Eternal thou. It is a relationship built on intentionality and decision– the Thou “step up to meet me” I must choose to reciprocate – or the relationship fails. If I go out looking for a relationship, by looking for an object, then I will never find that which I seek.

3.4 Martin Buber and Dialogue

The researcher has quoted so very often Buber’s saying “all living is meeting”, is the beginning of *I-Thou* dialogue. Martin Buber sees in *I-Thou* encounter where two or more subjects meet in deep respect for one another and with sincere openness to share, which is extremely important for the sprouting and nurturing of relationship between the *I* and the *Thou*. He writes “Let me propose, then that in the *I-thou* all give themselves totally and unreservedly to the other, holding back nothing, with complete and unqualified acceptance of the other and the other receives the I in the same way, without holding back and unqualifiedly”

Encounter has significance beyond the co-presence of other individual. It refers to the ways in which people engage with each other. The basic meaning of human existence is not the individual or the collective existence as such but relational existence where man meeting with man. Encounter is an event or a situation in which relation occurs. In the encounter the I invite and the other responds, the dialogue began. The dialogue grows and

develops till it becomes deep dialogue of silence. In silence is the deepest dialogue, it is the dialogue of communion. According to Buber once we have learned to live in relationship with others in dialogue. Encounter is the attempt in bridging the me and me, the encounter. The fundamental purpose of dialogue is to reach out to the other across the gap and this happens when two I's come into relation at the same time.

The reality of space that is between people is the focus of Buber thinking. At its root is the idea that self realization is achievable only in and through relationships with the other. Relationship exists in the form of dialogue, communicating with one another. Furthermore self knowledge is possible only if the relation between God and creation is to be understood as a dialogical relationship. Significantly dialogue involves all relations, relation with nature, self, others and the Eternal Thou. This is the conceptual linchpin of Buber's thinking. He writes that there are three types of dialogues.

There is genuine dialogue no matter whether spoken or silent- where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them. There is technical dialogue which is prompted solely by the need of objective understanding. And there is monologue disguised as dialogue in which two or men meeting in space speak each with himself in strangely fortuitous and circuitous ways and yet imagine they have escaped the torment being thrown back on their own resources (Buber. 1947,p.19)

A genuine dialogue is very rare indeed to find in any type of meeting for it demands the meeting of souls. I-Thou can be spoken only with one's whole being. One must be ready to pay the prize. The life of dialogue involves the turning towards the other. It is not found in seeking but in inviting and in accepting the invitation. In a very real sense we are called to genuine dialogue rather than searching for it. It is spontaneous. It is a mutual surrender to one another. Technical dialogue is driven by the need to understand something but does not engage the souls. In genuine dialogue silence play a strong role. Monologue is distorted form of dialogue that is what happens most of the time when individuals meet. Words are spoken but little or no connection. In genuine dialogue silence play an important role. Aubrey Hodes (1972) in "Encounter with Martin" writes about her experience with him.

He would meet me at the door and lead me into his study. Neither of us spent much time on the usual social preliminaries. Our minds were already on coming talk. After sitting down there was always a silence – not a tense silence, uneasy as between tow people who were not sure each other but a slice of expectations this was not consciously agreed between us. It was a flow of peace and trust forming a prelude to speech. The silence was the silence of communication.(Hodes. 1972, p.155)

Silence, for Buber, plays a deep role in dialogue; it is a kind of attentive silences. Lacourt (1979) writes in "God is Silence"

In silence which is active, the inner light begins to glow – a tiny sparkle. For the flame to be kindled and to grow, subtle argument and the clamor of own emotions must be stilled. It is by an attention full of love that we enable the Inner Light to blaze and illuminate our dwelling and make of our whole being a source from which this Light may shine out . . . Speech has no meaning unless there are attentive minds and silent hearts. Silence is the welcoming acceptance of other. The world born of silence must be received in silence (Lacourt, 1970,p.88)

Dialogue especially where people who are open to I-Thou relation is likely to involve both silence and speech. In silence or in stillness there is communion, where a person is able to relate to the other in silence “unreserved communication streams from him and the silence bears it to his neighbor.” In dialogue persons present are attentive and aware – listening and waiting. In stillness of their “betweenness” world they encounter what cannot yet be put into words. One of the significant features about this stillness is that it is generated in dialogue, when people are gathered to relate. It has therefore a different quality to that which may be experienced through individual meditation. The experience of being out of time and space that this can involve helps to explain how Buber came to see that God could only be approached through I thou relation.

Another key notion of Buber is place of the heart in dialogue. Heart refers to the place in man of unmediated experiences. Heart is the core of a person’s life that involves our very being, our moral sense and our spirit. To open the heart is to allow oneself to see and experience what is beyond the immediate. It brings to bear a form of silent knowing, the light that glows in a form of understanding or appreciation that comes before mental

interpretation. Dialogue is truly the turning towards the Thou in all truthfulness, an address of the heart to the heart of the Thou. Each person participating in such a dialogue must be ready in his heart, always to say that which is in his heart.

3.4.1 I-Thou Dialogue and Moral Values

Buber does not explicitly address what is authentic dialogue, is it mind's reasoning power or one's values? He seems to assume that dialogue engages the whole of the two or more persons. If we were to read between the lines of Buber's writing we find that dialogue has certain normative moral function in the community. Communities are not just places in which people have a web of affective relationships, but where people share and foster a set of core values which they consider important. Chess clubs in which people share relationships on basis certain rules of the game but do not form a community of shared values. Buber's writing does not sufficiently stress value aspect of communities. His basic philosophical position is more topological than ethical or sharing of values. This is true in almost all his writings specially in "*I and Thou*," "*Between Man and Man*" and "*Paths in Utopia*." We can argue that the ability to form value judgments distinguishes humans from animals. The animals when they have the urge to eat or engage in sex, they do not consider the circumstances. They proceed to satisfy the urge. In contrast human being is able to examine their urges and inclinations and their preferences and can put off their immediate gratification on the basis of moral values they hold. Thus ethical considerations may block or modify the actions of a person, may otherwise prefer to undertake. Buber by contrast, in "*I and Thou*" does not explicitly consider this ethical dimension. The tension between what is and what the values prescribe, between the ontological and the normative, between is and should are not emphasized. "*Paths in Utopia*" is more open to values than "*I and Thou*." Perhaps he takes for granted that the

relationship between subjects is value laden since he considers wholeness of the persons and their freedom. He writes that “the basic word *I-Thou* can only be spoken with one’s whole being.” The subjects confront each other freely in reciprocity that is not involved or tainted by any causality for here man finds guaranteed freedom of being. Freedom involves value choices. In Buber’s thinking wholeness and freedom are interchangeable. Freedom for Buber is largely freedom from rather than freedom to.

To work out the differences in the intra community level and in the inter community level there is a need for ethical values, which are clarified to generate cooperation. There are a number of situations and issues in our modern world, on which communities both large and complex have reached new shared formulation of ethical values after messy and prolonged dialogues. Example could be the consensus reached by the human community to accord equal rights to women or protection of environment and so on.

As mentioned earlier for Buber encounter and the resulting dialogue is the key in forming communities. In encounter individual meet and dialogue with the intention of *I-Thou* relational communities. In dialogue two individuals meet as subjects inviting the other for communion. (Buber. 1958).

3.5 Martin Buber and Inter-subjective Community

In this section, the researcher brings into focus the meaning of inter-subjective community as perceived by Martin Buber. According to Buber genuine community can be formed only through genuine *I-Thou* encounter and dialogue.

John Locke (1632-1704) and like minded liberals consider that it is the basic interest of the various individuals the motivated to form communities that are naturally harmonious, complimentary and compatible. Adam Smith (1723-1790) and others stressed that

communities came into existence since individuals could not meet all their needs individually and division of labor became a necessity. Such communities enabled to improve standards of living for all concerned and hence one can rely on the invisible hand to bring people of different needs to embrace exchange. Rawls on the other hand theorizes that the veil of ignorance that brings fairness and cooperation among individuals that shapes the community. While modern liberals assume that people who have formulated different conceptions of the good use their reason and deliberation together with facts and logic enable them in forming communities. Those who are interested in a genuine community reject these assumptions as unrealistic. Good many community philosophers like Bruce Ackerman holds, that the communitarian aspect of humanity lies in tradition, culture and history that are depositories of shared values that are transmitted from one generation to the next. Even if a community has a strong tradition and shared culture, there are still important differences among its members. To work out these differences the community must rely on dialogue in which values are clarified and cooperation is generated. There are a number of situations and issues in our modern world, on which communities both large and complex have reached new shared formulation of the good after messy and prolonged dialogues. Example could be the consensus reached by the human community to accord equal rights to women or protection of environment.

As mentioned earlier for Buber encounter and the resulting dialogue is the key in forming communities. In encounter individual meet and dialogue with the intention of I-Thou relational communities. In dialogue two individuals meet as subjects inviting the other for communion. When they mutually accept communities are formed. Genuine dialogue to build communities rarely takes place due to human condition. Often dialogues are monologues in our world as individual lives are focused on power or gaining of material

wealth as both compliment one another. Other times dialogue is the result of curiosity or personal need. For example I ask someone what is the time and he looks at his watch and says it is 10.30. The dialogue ends there, I go my way, and he goes his way. Genuine dialogue is the result of conscious choice made by subjects to share their life from their very inner being. Here two persons sit next to one another without any shared past enter into conversation that lead to sincere I-Thou relationship. One may is predisposed to dialogue at the outset, the other initially may not, then suddenly spontaneously the second person opens up and genuine dialogue takes place. In "Between Man and Man" Buber writes that in an I-Thou relationship a genuine dialogue takes place without any prior communication of any kind. When we speak of genuine dialogue two individuals who are subjects open up to one another accepting one another's perspective and reach a degree of communion. Communication must be honest and unreserved, fictions fall away and every word becomes actual and real. Genuine dialogue can be spoken or silent. When a long married couple in an evening after days work sitting together, the husband watching football match on tv while the and wife mending a shirt are in deep dialogical relationship being conscious of one another's loving presence, even though they do not communicate verbally. In deep dialogue each of the participants really has in mind the other or others, in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between oneself and them. Buber remarks:

Being, lived in dialogue receives even in extreme dereliction a harsh and strengthening sense of reciprocity: being lived in monologue, will not even in the tenderest intimacy grope out over the outlines of the self. (Buber.1958)

Before we move into a critical evaluation of Buber's concept of community let me recapture for the reader the meaning and importance of dialogue in community building. Buber considers the essential building block of a community is dialogue. Dialogue is not

just speaking as Arnett (1996) writes “. . . no matter whether spoken or silent . . . where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them. Dialogue is unique because it evolves through a process whereby the parties achieve a “connection.” This connection is what Buber calls *I- Thou* relationship. This connection enables them to change together or changed by each other. The opposite type of relationship is *I-It* relationship where the other is an It an object where the I dominate the other.

Buber visualizes a society consisting of small communities where dialogue is operative and effective. Of course consciousness and intentionality of the participants are required in building such dialogical communities. The group must know the principle of communication patterns and how communication break down takes place, so that when polarization occurs they will not be panicked. David Bohn (1995) speaking of a group engaged in dialogue:

A new kind of mind begins to come into being which is based on the development of a common meaning that constantly transforming in the process of the process of dialogue. People are no longer in opposition, nor could they be said to be interacting rather they are participating in this pool of common meaning which is capable constant development and change. In this development the group has no pre-established purpose though at each moment a purpose that is free to change may reveal itself. The group thus begins to engage in a new dynamic relationship in which no speaker is excluded.”(Bohn,1995,p.56)

Dialogue in larger groups must enhance communication, build consensus so that they can contain conflicts. Bohn (1995) believes that dialogue is needed to enable groups to achieve breakthrough level of intelligence and creativity that comes only when shared meanings are reached that gives them a sense of operating as “one mind.” When groups could learn to think creatively together all the rest would follow. The shared meaning is the glue that holds the group together. Meaning developed in dialogue is highly subjective unlike the technical dialogue where goal achievement is aim. Besides dialogue does not occur simply because partisans love or like one another. It depends on respect for the other and openness, then dialogue can take place between people who may dislike one another. Kaufman (1970) says; “True community does not come into being because people have feeling for each other (though that is required, too) but rather on two accounts: all of them have to stand in a living reciprocal relationship to one another.” Dialogue is not sacrificing your beliefs just to get along with another person or to please him. Dialogue is not something that happens on its own, nor is it a skill that some people master and others do not. . A dialogue cannot be planned, it will it will just happen.

3.5.1 Community the Realm of the “Between- ness”

Martin Buber looks at community as the realm of the “between.” He used the German word “Beziehung” to indicate what he means by “between,” it is better translation in English would be “relation.” The relation or “the between” is a result of the personal level opening of the person in dialogue with the Other (Avnon, 1998). When man meets man, when one human being turns to another human being as another, the possibility of relation arises. When the I meet the Thou a relation sprouts between them whereby each

becomes persons. This in time develops fully matured relationships and such relationships spread to others forming a community. The I-Thou is a primary given. Individuals as they grow in relation, it (relation) swings like a pendulum between I-It (treat the other as an object) and I-Thou (treat the other as a Thou, a subject) relations and back again. The quality of life in a community or society will depend on the extent to which I-Thou relations exist in that community or society. The method of deepening the I-Thou relationship is through dialogue, open inter-subjective dialogue between man and man, man and God which allows a common discourse to develop and crystallize between the I and the Thou. It is this dialogue, the between that is essential to holding a community together and sustaining its cultural creativity. Reading Buber suggests the process of the “between” (dialogue) does not begin spontaneously. The coming into being of a genuine community does not just arise out of people having feelings for one another (although this may be involved) rather, it comes about through:

First is by taking their stand in living mutual relation with a living Centre (within themselves), and second, by their being in living mutual relation with one another. The second has its source in the first, but the second is not given, only the first alone is given. Living mutual relation includes feelings, but does not originate with them. The community is built up out of living mutual relation, and the builder is the living effective Centre (Buber, 1957,p.65).

Buber appears to be arguing here that at the heart of communities are special people builders or community builders. They are in communion with their inner Center and are

in harmony. They live a dialogical life within themselves discovering the inner truth and meaning of life. Such individuals are the people whom Buber calls as people builders, who create an atmosphere of relation around and among people. They are community builders. These community builders both express and symbolize relation and in every sense animate the community. There are some parallels here with the role of informal educators who are part of a network of educators, who take leadership in the field of education. So the community builders take on a significant leadership role. Two important questions arise from this namely first when Buber talks about people builders does he mean a single person as the active living Centre, or a group of people? If it is the former then there is some tension with his emphasis on co-operative effort and pluralistic socialism, as he explains in "Paths to Utopia." From the tenet of Buber's writings, I argue he means a group of people. For over-reliance on the vision and activities of a single person can be both problematic in practical terms (what happens when that person is unavailable or withdraws, for example), and be a threat to democratic activity, which he endorses in his writings. Focus on an individual leader can all too easily foster dependence and a disposition towards authoritarianism. Although some writers on Buber try argue that he meant a charismatic individual because there are some counterbalances. This exemplary individual is only exemplary as long as they live the dialogical life and presumably and people would turn away from him as soon as they recognized a shift of the leader for example to authoritarianism. (How realistic this is a matter of some debate). Other writes support my view that Buber visualized that a group people to be the active, living Centre of community. This line of thought would hold that community depends upon some sort of network or group of community builders (perhaps expressed in terms of a church, or association, or a more informal set of connections).

A second question here may well be what are the competing or contrasting models of leadership style which we can find in Buber's work? His writing offer mixed messages. In some places he seems to emphasize more traditional understandings of leadership namely the vision and organizing abilities of the individual leader and the creation of a following. These some ways negate the idea of dialogical aspect. Other understandings of his writing look at a leadership style that is more educative and facilitative of creating co-leaderships. It is the latter, "shared" view of leadership that would appear to be closest in spirit to Buber's writings but still there appears to be some confusion here (Avnon, 1998). Buber did shift his thoughts from to another as he gained more insights, as I have written at the beginning of this section.

3.5.2 Community to be Nurtured.

Community building is not a day's job, it must be nurtured continually and need concrete forms of convivial institutions where joyful spontaneous dialogical relationship could be formed and built to sustain the community. Communities characterized by dialogue and relation require particular types of institution. Such institutions need to be dialogical, just and free to allow room for growth and exploration. In "Paths in Utopia" we can see Buber is drawn to co-operative and associational organizations. In his view a "structurally rich society" comprises of local communes and trade communes that are part of democratic associations. He recognized that special care had to be taken on the question of ends and means. Kropotkin (1996) sums up Buber's basic view of means and ends in a single sentence: "the fullest development of individuality that combines with the highest development of voluntary association in all its possible aspects and degrees for all possible purposes; an association that is always changing, and bears on, in itself the elements of its own duration, that takes on the forms which best correspond at any

given moment to the manifold strivings of all.” This is precisely what Buber wanted as he gained maturity in his thoughts. One can contend here Buber is not far from Marxist objectives of a community but there opens a yawning chasm between Buber and Marx that can only be bridged if we look at the structure and the time frame of the realization of Marxian and Buberian Utopias. Both Marx and Buber were strongly influenced by Feuerbach, but in their approach to realize their Utopias were different. Marxian Utopia¹³ where the transformation and consummation of the community will take place at an uncertain time in the future that no one knows how long after the final victory of the Revolution. Besides the road to the Revolution is characterized by a far reaching centralization that permits no individual views or individual initiatives. At the end of the road the uniformity of perception and thinking in man is suddenly and miraculously changed into plurality and multiplicity of thinking and from compulsion and authoritarianism to freedom in living and acting a jiffy of a moment. As against this “Marxist Utopian” model of community Buber refuses to believe in violent revolution or in an uncertain future “leap” to attain the ideal community. Buber is a democrat in thinking and more realistic, so believes rather that the ideal community must be created in the here and now. He does not believe in the post-revolutionary leap, but in revolutionary continuity (Buber, 1949).

¹³ A word used by Karl Marx for the ideal community envisioned by him. Buber too uses the term with a new meaning namely a relational community that is to be realized in the present.

Buber makes particular use of the work of his friend, the anarchist Gustav Landauer. He believed that people should learn by personal example how to be with each other (hence the significance of the builder). For Buber authentic communities had to be communities of spirit that demands commitment, work and dialogue. To be successful one need to be practical rather than application of a theory. Furthermore the Buberian communities are small communes with a strong I-Thou relationships with is nurtured through dialogue and conviviality. The task of the village or local communities is to federate with other communities with the same spirit and structure, thus build a human community of I-Thou relationship and using dialogue to settle differences and to nourish each other

3.5.3 Community and Collectivism

An analysis of Buber's thought reveals a sincerity rarely found in thinkers who turned social critics. The inescapable conclusion that Martin puts forth is that relationship is preeminent in living. He calls the human relation as a primal notion, the basic building material for building communities is clear in these famous lines "In the beginning is relation" and 'relation is the cradle of life' He claims that the relational reality the between, the reciprocal, the bond, the interpersonal, cannot be decomposed in simpler elements without destroying it. Given the primacy of relationships, unless we use our freedom to help others to flourish and grow in relationships, we deny our own well being since social relationships constitute our existence as persons. Therefore morally right actions must be geared to building relationships. The sacredness of life must be understood therefore in relational terms. In "Between Man and Man" Buber writes "Man is in growing measures sociologically determined." In *Life of Dialogue* Maurice Friedman cites the following; "In the technical, economic and political spheres of man's existence he find himself in the grip of incomprehensible powers which trample again

and again on human life purposes.” This purposelessness of modern life is manifested in the worship of freedom for its own sake. It has embraced a detached intellectual approach towards life discarding man’s spiritual dimensions. Education has tended to free the child’s creative impulses without helping it to acquire personal responsibility. For freedom must go with responsibility. The sickness of modern man is manifested most clearly in individualism, nationalism and fundamentalism which make power an end in itself. “Power without faithfulness is life without meaning”, writes Buber. If a nation or civilization is not fulfilling the basic principle of relation it can know no real renewal. Buber is dedicated to relational communities and opposed to all kinds of collectivism” Collectivism is typical of our age giving appearance but not the reality of relation. It imperils the immeasurable value that constitutes man for collectivism destroys the dialogue between man and man and promotes individualism.

Genuine community, which is the only valid alternative between collectivism and individualism, that is impossible without the sphere of “the between”. Buber insists that “the between” or the relationship between the I-Thou is not phantasm or fiction. The between or relationship is a reality that needs constant working out anew. It is not something inert, permanent and changeless. Rather, it is ever re-created whenever two human beings meet. One turns to the other in order to communicate with each other, where each must reach out to a sphere beyond his own, namely the sphere of the between. Buber describes this reality in his own words, “The fundamental fact of human existence is man with man”. What is peculiarly characteristic of the human world is above all, that something takes place between one being and another, the like of which never existed.

Buber states: “Collectivism is typical of our age in giving the appearance but in reality there are no relationships... Collectivism imperils the immeasurable value that constitutes

man, for it destroys the dialogue between man and God in the living communion between man and man,” Buber stands for the dignity of man and for social justice. In spite of his immersion within the Jewish group contrasts with his belief in the most pronounced and pivotal assertion in Christian Western Civilization, namely, the sovereignty of the individual as the embodiment of a personal relationship with God and the basis upon which all social relationship rest.

In spite of Buber’s commitment to the dignity of man in his writings he elevates the group as the preeminent unit, and his thinking in this regard is influenced by his ethnic cultural identity. The distinction that separates Christians from the Jewish faithful often reflects the difference towards the individual and the group. If the individual is the measure of humanity, the requirement to assimilate into any group would be artful. As opposed to traditional Zionism, Buber offers a potentially healing philosophy which has significant personal, communal and global implications. The goodwill he presents to bridge the gap between individual and the group is significant. Buber can be a healing force when applying his empirical and phenomenological understanding of God as a quest for relational amelioration, stability, and redemption between the group and the individual. He writes;

It is only the sick understanding of this age that teaches that the goal can be reached through all the ways of the world. If the means that are used are not consistent with the goal that has been set, then this goal will be altered in its attainment... The person or community which seeks to use evil for the sake of good destroys its own soul in the process. (Buber 1958.) On the question of individualism and collectivism Buebr further writes:

These two types of illusory confirmation correspond to the false dichotomy which dominates our age, that between individualism and collectivism. Despite their apparent

opposition, the individualist and the collectivist are actually alike in that neither knows true personal wholeness or true responsibility. The individualist acts out of arbitrary self-will and in consequence is completely defined and conditioned by circumstances. The collectivist acts in terms of the collectivity and in so doing loses his ability to perceive and to respond from the depths of his being. Neither can attain any genuine relation with others, for one cannot be a genuine person in individualism or collectivism, and “there is genuine relation only between genuine persons. (Buber. 1923)

Buber does not recognize the difference between freedom and liberty. The individual attains meaningful social purpose only through his conduct that achieves responsibility to his own community. Notwithstanding, Buber’s absorption within his own narrowly defined group, the individual represents the uniqueness of the singular choice to rise above the debasement of human nature. The group he relates to is not universal nor does it represent all of mankind. The notion that any group can become a substitute for the ultimate standard negates individual responsibility the heritage of Western civilization. Our communal tradition can benefit our chosen group, only when the individual declares their consent to accept the self imposed constraints that respects the value of his neighbor and each distinct person within his selected society.

While Buber’s insight is correct that “the very nature of value as that which gives man direction depends on the fact it is not arbitrarily invented or chosen but is discovered in man’s meeting with being”. The danger I argue that in accepting his interpretation that the group is the measure of that benefit and supersedes the individual is fatally flawed. Society is not global, it’s local. Harmony among distinct peoples is enhanced when each different group is able to achieve social justice among their own kind. I would say that the individual is the bedrock and the group is the soil upon which future purpose will grow. Meaning is consummated individually not cumulatively. The *I-Thou* is still defined

by the *I-It*. Noble intent can only be realized one individual at a time. Social relations are subordinate and groups are accountable to the individual. Buber's understanding has value if viewed within this context. God creates each person, man fabricates the groups. A question can be asked, who do you think did it better God or man?

In "*I-Thou*" relationship we reach a new level of awareness where we approach the other as a Thou – as a relational being, a being of value. The Thou is changed by my awareness of it and it responds to my awareness – thus establishes a relation of *I* and *Thou*. Buber's life-long concern was to define human person-hood and personal experience. The basic foundation of Buber's philosophy of relationships is the radical distinction between two modes of relationships: "*I-It*" and "*I-Thou*" (Buber, 1923). He uses the term *I-It* to denote impersonal relationships, and *I-Thou* to denote personal relationships. In primitive human language, according to Buber words are not isolated but combined. There are two kinds of primary words of relationship of the *I-Thou* and the of *I-It*. He makes this distinction between the two terms to express man's relationships that make us different from other beings in the world. This makes us human individuals. Thou for Buber in its ultimate meaning addressed to "God" the eternal Thou and express man's relationship with Him. The creative presence of God the eternal Thou is in all beings in the world particularly in Man, who has the capacity to be aware of this presence in himself and in the world. Thus the primary word Thou does not signify things or person and their relationships but God. The words *I-Thou* do not describe something that exists independently of the person but exist within every person, when activated or in Buber's terms being spoken, bring into existence a relationship. Human person is not just a He or She; it is the third person, for Buber a person is always a Thou, whom the *I* address. No one can experience a Thou in him or her unless addresses the other. When addressed the other she or he becomes a Thou. Not only when addressed the other become a Thou and

the addressing individual becomes an I. The addresser and the addressed are faceless individuals in themselves but addressed they are transformed into an *I* and *Thou*. Individuals become *I* or *Thou* in the process of relationship. Therefore Buber coined the phrase “all real living is meeting”. Buber’s insight that existence is “relationship,” between man and universe, man and man that finds its fullness in the relationship with the Eternal Thou. We cannot address God as Thou if we do not have relationship with existence itself, manifested in diverse forms. Everything gets its meaning in the Thou of God, otherwise everything shrink to an *It*- a thing, something that we can use to meet our need and greed. The truth is that men who address God, as the *Thou* because everything is gathered up in the relationship with Him become an I in all its fullness. In relationships there is no separation between the *I* and *Thou*, if separated then they collapse into individuals. How can we build such relationships? Buber answers step into pure relations and perceive everything as the Thou, even what we use like water, air, food for our living are not seen as things but the loving presence of the eternal Thou. By establishing relationships on its true foundation which is the eternal Thou all living becomes an encounter in relationships. He writes “to look away from the world does not help a man to reach God (Buber. 1923). What is problematic is the use of language such as “world,” “God”, and “God in the world” are the language of “*It*”. We should not make the distinction between world, man and God. The keystone of seeing relation between *I-Thou* is that men find God in the world. If they do not find Him then they live the *I-It* relationship, because the Eternal Thou cannot be an *It*. When we speak “I meet him” then we are making him an object, an *it*, unless we bring in the eternal Thou into the relationship. Similarly when we speak of *I-It*, we make objects of the things around us for we do not see them in the Eternal Thou and thus loose the relational perspective. This we do by objectifying, describing and categorizing the world and thereby gaining material

control over it. Buber in fact created a new set of vocabulary in talking about relationships. If we objectify the world, men and God then we are in the level of *I-It*. But when we speak of relationship between, then we are in the world of *I-Thou*. To live in the world of *I-It* is to miss what is essential in life, the image of the Eternal himself, whose image Man is. The fundamental difference between the "*I-Thou*" and "*I-It*" is the attitude or intentionality of the individual. The world of *It* means the world of things whereas the world of *Thou* means world of relationships. The realm of *Thou* has different basis from the realm of *It*. Buber expresses this idea in *I and Thou* in the following manner:

When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing for his object. Where there is a thing it is bounded by others, it exists only though being bounded by others. But when *Thou* is spoken, there is no thing. *Thou* have no bounds. When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing, he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation. If *Thou* has nothing when it is spoken, then what does man experience? What, then do we experience of *Thou*? just nothing. If we do not experience it, what then? Buber says, when we know of *Thou*, we know everything, for we know nothing isolated about it any more (Buber. 1923,p.4)

Maurice Friedman (1987) in his writing "The Knowledge of Man" explains that the *Thou* of *I-Thou* is not limited to men, but includes animals, trees, objects of nature and God. *I-It* is the primary word of experiencing and using. "*It*" takes place within a man and not between him and the world. Hence it is entirely subjective and lacking in mutuality.

Whether in knowing, feeling, or acting, it is the typical subject-object relationship. Peter M. Collins (1998) interprets this *I-Thou* relationship as follows: The *I-Thou* relationship, which Buber claims is essential for becoming truly human and can be described as in which the I (the conscious human being) "listens" to the other in an *I-Thou* relationship. The auditory capacities of the I will be engaged, but that is only a part - and in some instances, a relatively insignificant part-of the process. "To "listen" is to attend with one's whole being to become sensitive to the whole being of the other, especially to the needs of the other in the specific situation."

To clarify this point, Buber himself posits the question in his book *Postscript to I-Thou*. he says if we can stand in the *I-Thou* relationship not merely with other men, but also with other beings and things that meet us in nature, then what is the real difference between the two relationships? The answer gives us the clue that we must see everything in the being of a personal of God. But the dilemma is if so then God is accessible to our senses, if not he is not accessible and for Buber God is accessible to man as the Eternal Thou in and through the visible world. What is problematic for theologians is to explain the nature of relationship between man and God. In "Postscript to *I and Thou*" he writes "The concept of a personal being is indeed completely incapable of declaring what God's essential being is, but it is both permitted and necessary to say that God is also a Person' (Buber 1958)

In order to understand the personal *I-Thou* relationship and the difference between *I-Thou* and *I-It* relationship further clarification is needed. The *I* of primary word *I-Thou* is different from that of the primary word *I-It*. The *I* of the primary word *I-It* make its appearance as and when an individual become conscious of it as an object. The *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* make its subjectivity without a dependent genitive, meaning it does not possess. Individuality makes its appearance by being differentiated from other

individuals. A person makes his appearance by entering into relation with the other's differentiation, is to experience the other as a subject equal to the subject experiencing and enters into a relation. The aim of relation is relation's own being, that is contact with the Thou. Relation, for Buber, is mutual. My Thou affected by Thou of the other. The I is real in virtue of its sharing in reality. The fuller its sharing the more real it becomes. A person becomes conscious of himself when he is sharing in being, co-existing. There is no distinction between being and being when I-Thou is realized. There is union. Buber explains more about sharing the being. In sharing the person becomes conscious of himself as sharing in being, as co-existing, and thus as being. Individual becomes conscious of itself as being such-and-such and nothing else. The person says, "I am." Know thyself, means is to "know thyself to have being", then individuality means to "know the particular kind of being" that I am. Individuality differentiates itself from others and is rendered remote from true being. Individuality neither shares in nor obtains any reality. It differentiates itself from the other, and seeks through experiencing and using to appropriate as much of it as it can.

Buber maintains that the eternal Thou meet man through grace. However it is not found by seeking alone, but by speaking of the primary word and by communion. In this juncture, man sees that relationship between man and man leads to eternal life, God himself. Consider a human relationship that has progressed to a deep level of understanding where the relationship may look like each of the persons in it are treating each other as objects, but in reality they are aware of the other as a Thou - a being apart from the I, yet also a part of the I. It is a pity that in quite a few relationships" nothing of the sort takes place but experiences each other as objects, as an It rather than as a Thou. These relationships are static and end in disaster. Often partners in this sort of "relationships" are dissatisfied since they feel that something is lacking in the

relationship. They are right in their assessment for they are missing the very thing that defines relationships – the Thou. A true relationship with a Thou dynamic, growing, creative, deepening in awareness. It is a relationship built on intentionality and decision—the Thou “step up to meet me” I must choose to reciprocate – or the relationship fails. If I go out looking for a relationship, by looking for an object, then I will never find that which I seek.

3.5.4 Inauthentic and Authentic Communities

Buber recognizes that all social groupings are not communities. They may be collections of individuals having emergent properties and culture of their own. Buber places social groupings in four categories; collectives, instrumental groups, false communities and authentic communities. Far from treating communities as some sort of perfect place Buber stresses that authentic communities combine the inevitable *I-It* or instrumental groupings with an *I- Thou* bond. They become inauthentic only when they are largely instrumental group dominated by the *I- It*. He asks a rhetorical question: is not the communal life of modern man bound to be submerged in the It-world? True he says that economics and power are the two main chambers of this life, the world of profit and power. Man’s communal life cannot be dispensed with any more than the It world. Buber adds in *Paths in Utopia* that “community is the reality of the actual and communal life of big and little groups living and working together.” Community itself lies squarely in the world of *I-It* in as much as utilizing experiencing and evaluating are necessarily part of communal life. But when the *I-It* dominates and an association is primarily an instrumental grouping of people which serves specific needs or interests, then the community is lost. Often the pressure of numbers and the forms of organization will destroy any real togetherness. He continues “the real living together of man with man

can only thrive where people have the real things of their common life in common; where real fellowships and real work guilds exist” He call these as “true communities” or “genuine communities” In “Between Man and Man” he writes “the special character of the We is shown in the essential relation existing or arising temporally, between its members, that is in the holding sway within the We of an ontic directness which is the decisive presupposition of the *I-Thou* relation. The We includes the Thou potentially. Only men who are capable of truly saying Thou to one another can truly say We with one another.”

Buber seems of the opinion that most of the institutionalized groups are antithetical to authentic communities, often due to the intense dedication to a project make for true communities. He calls genuine communities as those who have effectively balanced *It* and *Thou* elements. Such groups experience a communal sense of elevation and exhilaration and a pure *I-Thou* is approximated. Instrumental groupings are cold while authentic communities are warm. In *Between Man and Man* Buber says in such communities there is a charismatic, intense emotive quality which a grouping experience when the community leader passes away like when Buddha or Francis of Assisi passed away. “When all impediments and difficulties between them, are set aside and a strange fruitfulness or at all events an incandescence of their life with one another is established.” Buber also thinks such true We is also found among some revolutionary or religious groups in their early days .In *Paths in Utopia* Martin further explains:

It is not a matter of intimacy at all . . . the question is rather one of openness. A real community need not consist of people who are perpetually together, but it must consist of people who precisely because they are comrades, have mutual access to one another and are

ready for one another. a real community is one which in every point of its being possess potentiality at least the whole character of the community In the happiest instances common affaires are deliberated and decided not through representatives but in gathering in the market-place: and the unity that was felt in public permeated all personal contacts. (Buber.,1927,p.48)

3.5.5 The Political Community

Buber is of the opinion that there should not be state that legislate norms for the society. For a state consist of vibrant communities each of which make their own norms and the state should not interfere in their functioning. It should step in only when a community cannot any longer carry on authentically. Paths in Utopia he writes:

People living together at a given time and in a given space are only to a certain degree capable on their own free will in maintaining right order and conducting their common concerns accordingly. The line which, at any time limits this capacity, forms the basis of the state at that time, in other words the degree of incapacity for a voluntary right order determines the degree of legitimate compulsion. (Buber. 1958)

Buber, being aware of the dangerous potential of the state to become oppressive of the community, wants to keep the state at bay from interfering in the affairs of the community. Therefore there must be a vibrant community with a lively common life for if the vibrancy wanes the state may step in and take control of the community. Buber basically opts for a type of socialism that must be sustained from below through commitments of individuals and small communities not through a centralized state. Communities must be free to choose their own course of relationship with one another in

true spirit of mutuality - in the spirit of I-Thou relationship. Buber considers that the means of production and consumption must be done cooperatively than dictated by the state through a nationalized policy. Because of his particular approach to socialism, some writers call him an anarchist.

Buber was much influenced by Gustave Landauer (1870 - 1919) who was an anarchist. Landauers ideas had a profound influence on Buber and he too believed in communities of people without state. "What we Socialist want is not a state but a society i.e. a union which is not the result of coercion but emerges from the spirit of free, self-determined individuals. (Landauer, 1919) In this sense we can call Buber an anarchist.

3.6 Summary

In the forgoing pagers the researcher made several key points raised by Buber on community in his writings "*I and Thou*" "*Paths in Utopia*" and "*Between Man and Man*." He recognizes the centrality of relationships and the need of individual building communities of relationship and dialogue. Buber is aware of the danger of being lost in a community, and therefore he asks community leaders to integrate individuals into strong communities otherwise they will be lost in the process of community building. In Buber's view communities are to be built on dynamics of relationships. He realizes both the need for and the danger of communities becoming social groups who are bound only by an activity or a project, where only the I-It element alone is emphasized.

Buber strongly favors small personal authentic communities over large centralized bureaucratic societies. His basic philosophical position is that *I-It* is as important as *I-thou* relationships for living in this world, though *I-Thou* is more inter-subjective and inter-human and must be the binding force in communities. Besides Buber favors a state

with independent strong communities built on *I-Thou* relationships that a monolithic community controlled by state. Buber is clearly a powerful communitarian.



Chapter 4

A Critique of Buber's I-Thou Inter-subjective Community

4.1 Introduction

The researcher in this section of the investigation would like to present a critique of the theory of inter-subjective community developed by Martin Buber. There are hardly any thinkers who seriously critique Martin Buber's approach to the philosophy of community except that it is utopian. The following reflection is culled from various writers and includes the researcher's own ideas as well. I will not only critique Buber's theory on I-Thou Inter-subjective community but also look into the strength and weakness of his theory.

After the two world wars and gaining independence from the colonial powers in several parts of the world, the human communities were looking towards a new way of living together peacefully. But in its wake new problems arose. Though political freedom was given to countries a new type of colonialism raised its hood-economic colonialism. Nations are still struggling to free themselves from the clutches of the economically powerful. As peoples and nations began to assert themselves, their cultural values and religious beliefs there arose what is known as the clash of civilizations. The result of all this is violence and threats, counter threats and violence. The world is in confusion, perhaps a foreboding of the coming of a new paradigm. In the world scene we can recognize a two fold trend; one seems to oppose the other. On the one hand, there is the trend of pluralism that appreciates the genius of different people; on the other side the trend of globalization wants to unify everything, which to a certain extent is forced by the super powers. The growing trend of pluralism is very visible that each nation is proudly upholding their traditional cultures, traditions and religious beliefs often going back to their original inspiration, some call this fundamentalism. Pluralism also gave

inspiration for alternative life styles like the punk culture, the new age religions and spiritual paths, the new pluralistic sexual mores and morals, equality of gender and other similar trends. There is the growing trend of globalization, opposing pluralism by steam rolling of economic, political, cultural values and religious beliefs by nations who have wealth, technology particularly information technology. Economically and militarily powerful nations are looking at pluralistic approaches, traditional life styles and religious practices with suspicion and the less powerful nations and cultures resist and resent the approaches of the powerful nations. The growing conflict between globalization and pluralism is manifested in the form of regional, national and international conflicts which powerful nations are trying to stamp out saying that they are a threat to peace. From the perception of this researcher these conflicts are the signs of the birth pang of a new humanity. The old paradigm is giving way to a new paradigm; this was testified by bygone ages when such changes took place. An example would be the 16th century, a turbulent period when the medieval paradigm was giving way to the paradigm of enlightenment. We are living in uncertain times. The grounds are shaky. Mankind is looking for a peaceful life like a parched land waiting for the rain. The world today seems to be a messy place to live in. Perhaps it is the wake up call for a new synthesis between pluralism and globalization, the birth pangs of a new paradigm, a new synthesis. In this time of uncertainties and commotions, Martin Buber's I-Thou inter-subjective community of dialogue is like a guiding star on the human horizon to guide the faltering steps of humanity. Martin Buber's dialogical approach in building human community is not a perfect cure for all ills yet it shows a possible path in this confused times.

4.2 Critique of Buber's Inter-subjective I-Thou community

Medieval philosophers were seekers of wisdom, “sapientia”. They did not make any distinction between philosophy, theology or sciences. As the word indicates, philosophers were lovers of wisdom. And philosophy was at the service of faith, “intellect seeking to understand faith”. The situation has changed dramatically with the coming of enlightenment. It enthroned reason as the ultimate source of knowledge; analysis became the method of knowledge that gave birth to varieties of sciences. In the East there were sages of wisdom.

In the history of Western thought there is a thing called philosophy and there a thing called theology; and it has usually been possible, except during certain periods such as the middle ages, to distinguish between the two. In the history of Eastern thought there is only a thing called theology (Tomlin, 1950,p.21).

Western Philosophical tradition has been centered on reality as being. It has been immersed in the tradition of ontology and metaphysics, obliterating almost every other strain of thinking. Of course there have been philosophers who tried to move away from this tradition yet it remained riveted to being. Emmanuel Levinas and Martin Buber tried to move away from such a tradition yet largely they were children of their tradition. Levinas focused more on the other and the individual's responsibility towards the other while Buber focused on the “betweenness” namely the relation that is between the I and Thou. Another characteristic of Western philosophy is the method used, cool rationality to analyze reality and to place them in various pigeon holes. In Medieval period reason

was the handmaid of faith. Reason was to understand faith. Eastern philosophical tradition still considers wisdom as the goal and as such does not focus on differences in sciences. For them all fields of science was to know how to be “free from the entanglement of life,” from the limitation of life,

If the Greek origins of European philosophy have made it more intellectual, in the East the emphasis has been on the unease of the soul rather than on metaphysical curiosity. While the Western mind asks what is it all about? The Eastern asks What must I do to be saved.(Radhakrishnan. 1952.p.4).

The appearance of anthropology, sociology and psychology at the beginning of our century has some way influenced Western rationalistic approach to a more comprehensive understating of reality. There is a shift from the cool detached rational approach to reality, to a more unified understanding of reality. Philosophy is again moving towards wisdom tradition in its effort to understand reality. The arrival of the humanistic sciences and world conflicts brought another focus to human enquiry namely community, how men live with one another in peace. Martin Buber seeing the growing individualism and political, social, cultural and religious rivalries, focused his philosophical writings on building inter-subjective communities founded on I-Thou relationships as we have seen in the foregoing chapter of this investigation. In these pages the researcher would make a critique of some of his thought patterns that shaped his notion of community.

4.2.1 Martin Buber and Judaic World View

Community, dyadic or multi-dyadic community is the pivot of Martin Buber's writings. He takes his inspiration for the community from Judaic Bible, the Torah. He expressed this, saying "in the beginning was relations" to coincide with the Biblical saying, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Creation is the beginning of the universe where God began his relationship with man, then Yahweh related to the Jews in a special manner as his chosen people. Thus relation is the foundation of a community. Its archetype is the relation that exists between Yahweh and the Jewish people. This relationship began in dialogue between Yahweh and Moses, the representative of Jewish community by the theophany on Mount Sinai and the Covenant between them. Judaic community is built on a dialogical paradigm, whereby a unique relationship is created between God and a people who has been chosen to be the theophanic subjects. A personalized structure occurs which entails a relation between two subjects (Yahweh and Israel) that commit to one another and grow by becoming aware of each other and deepening their relationship through intimate dialogue. The specific relation of the Covenant cannot be limited to a mere register of the alliance but establishes a paradigm of authentic relationship which man is called upon to realize in all of his existential structures.

In Buber's vision, the world can be seen as a world of beings or a world of things that man sets to value, he lives either in a paradigm of the primary word of *I-It* or that of *I-Thou* relationships. Depending on his own way of referring to the world, man becomes an individual or a person. As an individual man perceives the world as an "*It*" and as a person he becomes conscious of the presence of the "*Thou*" in the world. There is no *I*

in itself but only I relationally configured accord to the primary word with which man addressness the world. Thus *I* of the *I-It* is different of the *I* of the *I-Thou*.

The Eternal Thou the omnipresent Presence is a subject that is ever present in the world and cannot be an object to describe. The Eternal Thou is known through meeting, through relation, through dialogue. The unknowable God making Its presence by addressing man, is Revelation. But this is not a revelation which took place in an historical past but taking place now within the fabric of daily life, in everything, if man listens and hears the addressing of the absolute Presence that summons him to responsibility and meeting. Human community is built on relationship with God and fellow man. The ideal is how Yahweh, God relates to man and continue to dialogue with man.

Critique

Martin Buber's perception of reality and community is deeply rooted in the Judaic world view. Such a view cannot be universalized without being offensive to the sensibilities of people of other world views, for example Eastern religious views. This being true yet to a vast majority of people who follow the Abrahamic tradition, this view has a deep meaning. Independent of this particularism, our world of destructive tendencies can learn much from the thoughts offered by Buber. The relational dimension of life is beyond the fences of particular religious perceptions and can be effectively employed in creating communities of relationship. Each religious world view is a limited view, so if we employ a dialogical approach in understand other religious world views, it will help us understand other world views, transcend our own limited world views, have a more

comprehensive understanding of the universe we are living in, and create a universal community based on relationship.

4.2.2 Martin Buber, the Anarchist

Gustav Landauer (1870-1919) a philosopher politician who propagated the Raterepublic - a society of local communities governed by commissars - was the friend and mentor of Buber. Both were socialists in their thinking. Together they came up with the view that religion without socialism was disembodied spirit and socialism without religion is void of the spirit. Landauer's ideas had a profound influence on Buber and they worked for a state that is a conglomeration of self-governed communities of people. These self-governed communities have their own rules and regulations and the state should not interfere in the working of these communities except to assist them in living as independent communities. Both also being Zionists they hoped to build such a state in Palestine where different communities like Jews and Arabs could live in peace and accord. Buber writes:

True humanity is a federation of federations . . . an association of many people . . . consisting of small living communities, strong cells of organism and immediate community, all of which are participating in direct and vital relationships like those of its members and with an equally direct and vital way unite to form this association like their members have united (Buber 1985,p.94).

Buber was dreaming of the establishment of a nonviolent socialism free of the structures but participated and founded upon love. Buber recognized the necessity of a revolutionary transformation of society. It is a revolution that has first to take shape in human minds, a new way of thinking in human minds. He himself recognized this as a Utopia yet he wanted very much such a state. He tried with all his strength to make Israel such a state, where people of various races, beliefs and traditions could live in peace and harmony having their own independent communities but he failed. Many call his socialism anarchist socialism.

In Buber's understanding the very truth of socialism is neither a doctrine nor a tactic but a means to stand amidst a fragmented human world to build communities of reciprocal relations which is the mystery of man. (Buber 1985) His central concern was to hold at bay the world of "It" which the capitalist society is aiming at. He wanted to build a society of "We." One of special quality of the "We" is relationship as his motto tells us "All living is meeting." For "We" must dwell in that decisive ontic immediacy which is a necessary prerequisite for the *I-Thou* relation. "We" include all the potential "Thous." Only people who are truly able to call each other Thou can say "We" in all honesty and truthfulness (Buber. 1982).

Today Buber's anarchist communities of I-thou relationship is generally left out in our political thinking and looks upon it as a human attitude of a person vis a vis whom I meet as an equal not as an object. Buber's special concern as a socialist was to restructure the State into a community of communities. It is important to call to mind the sociological distinction he makes between what he calls "Community" and "Society". Community stands for a social organism founded upon immediate personal relationships while Society is a mechanically amassed accumulation of human beings. These polar opposites of ideas in other terminological pairs like "loving community" and "automated

state” that is social and political. In his view the social principle rests upon union and mutuality while the political principle is fed by power drive to rule over others.

The social philosophy of Martin forms the background to the dialogical man which he had been elaborating since 1913 that was crystallized in his text *I and Thou* (1923). Even in the early text (1923) he had this political dimension in his mind and hinted at albeit cautiously. Buber speaks of community or brotherhood of true public life in his early writings. In his later book *Paths in Utopia* published in 1950 he goes on to place greater emphasis on the connection between his understanding of the dialogical nature of man and his Social Utopia. As mentioned earlier he wanted the state of Israel to be such a state where communities of Jews and Arabs could live side by side. If they had listened to him, so much human suffering would have been avoided. Although Buber was unable to realize his ideal yet believed that Jerusalem could become the center of free socialism in the world.

Critique

Buber was influenced by Feuerbach and Marx in his concept of community. Like them he too wanted to build a classless society where equality and relationship prevailed. Like Marx he wanted to revolutionize the society not by violence but by cooperation and relationship. Neither did he agree with Marx on a prosperous classless society some time in the unknown future, he wanted it now and he did his best to achieve his goal but humans did not listen to him nor do they still.

Most of his ideas on anarchic socialism and the communities in consonance with I-Thou relationship which he dreamed of, found their way into his book *Paths in Utopia* (1950).

The name suggests that Buber himself understood that his ideas on community and an

anarchic socialist state is utopian, idealistic perhaps never realizable. Basically he is an idealist or may be a mystic idealist who saw community from the point of God. He failed to consider the human condition which is strongly self-centered and the individual has to struggle to overcome this egoism to realize the fullness of life. In this struggle the ego which lives on the upper crust of life with its sense attractions (materialism) and power needs. Enslaved by these drives and preoccupied with the sustenance of life, most people do not have the time and the orientation for a higher level of living as proposed by Buber. To follow the ideals suggested by him, man needs leisure and training to reflect. The common man can hardly have these. Even the educated are driven by power needs, unconsciously following the pattern set by others. The whole society today works on power. Every country wants to be powerful and to be super powers. In a world entrenched in power motives we need dreamers like Martin Buber to call our attention to true goal of life namely inter-subjective living. He invites us to build a community of relationship:

Thou encased as you are in the shell of society, state, the church,
the school, the economy and your own arrogance, mediator

among mediators, break your shells and become immediate, move thou to
move others . . . Unmix the crowd! The shapeless substance has grown from
powerless, lonely people, people who have got individual out of the crowd,
from the sapless into communities! Break the reserves, throw yourselves into
the surf, reach out and grasp hands (Buber 1953,p.78).

4.2.3 Martin Buber and his Jewish Critics

As long as there are human beings on this earth there will always be diverse opinions and thoughts. This ought to be so as each one of us receives differing insights, understanding, even have one's own prejudices. As a human being Buber too had his insights into life which we have been exploring in the chapters of this dissertation. There are those who disagree and criticize him on his attitude towards Jewish historical revelation both by the orthodox and liberal Jews. Eugene Borowitz (2004) in his article on "Buber and His Jewish Critics" brings together some of these criticisms.

4.2.3.1 Jewish Revelation

Buber reads revelation in the light of I-Thou relationship. Revelation is an ever present reality where God is addressing constantly each human being at every moment of his life. Man needs ears to hear. The Eternal Thou is constantly revealing himself to man directly as well as through his creatures. It is for man to respond to Him by developing an I-Thou relationship with Him. Thus dialogue between God and man is revelation that is not something of the historical past as many orthodox Jews consider but revelation is taking place right now, at the present. In fact the contemporary revelation will authenticate the older revelation. He writes; "Now the living God stands before me and it is to that God with whom I stand in relationship to which I must respond. Not the past event, not my encounter with God yesterday or the Jewish people's Covenant with God at Sinai three thousand plus years ago, but the present is more commanding to me."

4.2.3.2 Jewish History

Buber did not deny the importance of history in any way. Our God-given human nature is shaped through historical factors. Psychologists would say our nature is nurtured by traditions. He opposed the Jewish assimilationists who maintain that a modern Jew could not deny the historical closeness without losing their racial identity (It is a sociological fact all people of all religions consider themselves as chosen by their God in whatever form they conceive him.) Buber gave priority to revelation over history. He insisted that nationality should not be allowed to discriminate the individuality of the person, his right to self determine in face of the I-Thou encounter.

4.2.3.3 Jewish Law

Jewish piety traditionally gave priority to Mosaic Law, the Torah and disciplined action, not to the dogmas or the creed, speculation or mediation. Buber on the other hand gave priority and importance to the *I-Thou* revelation and law has a secondary status different from the orthodox Jews. For him the *I-Thou* relationship is more important in building inter-human communities than the law. Law comes into force only when the free spontaneous communities cannot function. The Korach's rebellion against Moses which Buber brings up as an example of the anarchical approach that he upholds in defense of the *I-Thou* relation in a community, rather than the theo-political interpretation of his critics. Besides Buber maintains that through the passage of time the Law became an I-It artifact that is superseded by the imperative of *I-Thou* encounter. No code, no matter how sacred it once was, may usurp the individuals autonomy to choose for the *I-Thou* relationship.

On the one hand the orthodox Jews criticized Buber for forward views, on the other, the liberal Jews were dissatisfied with Buber's approach to revelation, history and law. For the orthodox, Buber's approach to Judaism was throwing the baby with the bath water while the liberals saw that he has not gone far enough by not dumping every thing as unsuitable for a radically changed human situation. They wanted a total break with rabbinical Judaism, as in the past, the Jews did by adapting Jewish laws to changed situations and so it can be done now to meet the modern man and his life.

Critique

The researcher though not a Jew, finds the view of Buber more balanced, where he gives priority to personal encounter with the Eternal Thou and the I-thou inter-human relationship over the historical revelation and law. But Borowitz (2004) the writer of the article would like to give more weight to the historical Covenant made to Israel than the I-Thou relationship. He writes:

We do not meet God as personalist monads but as individuals who know themselves in their singleness to be simultaneously sharers in a people's history and destiny. Our "I" comes to the Eternal Thou as an inseparable part of the Covenant made with the people of Israel.

Receiving the commandment which comes from relationship with God we are called upon to act not merely for ourselves alone but for ourselves as a part of the people of Israel. (Borowitz, 2004, p. 78)

The reaction of this researcher to the above statement of the writer is that each individual is part of a culture, or a faith which he imbibed as a child so it is very hard to change. Perhaps it should not be changed, for changing would make him uncertain of his life path. We all need some type of faith to escape from the ennui of life. It is a human condition.

4.2.4 Martin Buber and Eastern Mysticism

Hasidism which Buber professed was strongly influenced by Vedanta, Taoism and Zen Buddhism. Perhaps it is more correct to say that all mystical insights have similarities as they come from the same source. They see unity in the pluralistic world. Buber in his writing combines pluralism and mystical absorption in the Divinity. The concept I-It is focused on western aggressive materialism while the *I-Thou* is letting whatever the Eternal Thou wills. The latter points to the strong influence “Wu Wei” and “The Parable of Chuang Tzu” of Taoism. Tao refers to the Eternal way that like a body of water flows on endlessly and inexorably. And living is to flow with “The Way.” Buber wrote a book on “The teachings of Tao” showing that he studied the Eastern Way of living and thinking. The spirit of Hasidism is both Eastern and Western; it combines reality of being and the reality of nothingness. Buber’s writings are ample example of this influence. His genius aligned both East and West. West is focused on being and duality and plurality. Existence is plural, and God himself is a Being and mystical union is a communion without losing each others identity. Eastern approach sees reality as unity of all realities. Plurality and egoness is maya, illusion for Reality is One, which we cannot describe, since it is beyond our categories. Therefore reality is Nothingness we cannot say anything

positive, since it will be subjecting it to human realities. The ultimate dwells in us and so our life is to realize the Ultimate reality.

Critique

Buber may not be original but his originality consists in harmonizing the West and East, individuality and nothingness. In spite of his effort to combine mysticism of East and West yet the influences of the culture he was born in, can be strongly felt in his understanding of mysticism. Mysticism for Buber is an extension or continuation of the I-Thou encounter. He develops his ideas on mysticism in his writing *Daniel*. Mysticism is an encounter with the Eternal Thou which is not isolated from encounter with man. It is experienced within the human encounter. Yet in mysticism man encounters the Supreme Thou. He gives the highest value to the mystical encounter with the Divine. His writings are not clear regarding his stand with regard to total absorption of man in God (Eastern) or man and God keep their individuality separate from one another (Western). Perhaps in the opinion of this researcher there is only one Reality that is the Ultimate or the Divine or God. To keep man separate from God as an individual eternally on the basis of a philosophical principle of duality goes against the experiences of mystics whether Eastern or Western as shown by the research made by Abraham Maslow.

Mysticism is affective relationship not a rational relationship. In rationality man wants to think and organize reality based on human rational rules. Perhaps it does injustice to reality. We need to remind ourselves that rationality is only one aspect of man. Man is more than rationality. There is the faculty of intuition which is affective in nature and goes to heart of reality. Mysticism is essentially an intuitive experience and when some

write on it he uses his rationality to interpret it. Such a rational interpretation is not the full reality of experience. This we see in dogmas about God where we confine Him to rational statements. Writing of this D.T Suzuki says that “Zen has come to the conclusion that the ordinary logical process of reasoning is powerless to give final satisfaction to our deepest Spiritual need.”

4.2.5 Nishida's Critique of Martin Buber

Buber wrote his famous work *I and the Thou* in 1923. It is based on Western philosophy of being. It is peculiar version of philosophy of being since it shows strong undercurrents of mystical theology and an unmistakable glow of eastern religious thought combined with poetic language. He wrote it with the Western audience in mind using Western categories.

In 1932 Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945) of the Kyoto school of Japan wrote a long article calling it *Watakushi to Nanji* or *I and Thou* (1932) with the Japanese audience in mind. He used the Eastern Mahayana category of thinking. At the first sight these titles suggest a variation on the same theme, but they are not. Nishida did not read the book of Buber perhaps knew its ideas from secondary sources, *Watakushi to Nanji* basic foundation is the Zen Buddhist thought of “Nothingness.” In Eastern thought, as I have indicated earlier there is no distinction between philosophy and religion. Speaking of the place of philosophy in Eastern thinking Takeuchi Yoshinori (1960) writes:

The life of religion includes philosophical thought as its counter part, a sort of centrifugal force to its own centripetal tendencies. Strictly speaking Buddhism has nothing like what St Paul refers to as the “folly of the cross.” This has led it in a different direction from Western

Philosophy and religion. Philosophy has served Buddhism as an inner principle of religion, not as an outside critic . . . That is to say philosophy in Buddhism is not speculation or metaphysical contemplation but rather a metanoia of thinking, a conversion within reflective thought that signals a return to the authentic self – the non-self or anatman. It is a philosophy that transcends and overcomes the presuppositions of metaphysics . . . but how is one to explain this way of doing religious philosophy and reconstruct it in terms of suitable to the present world when the very idea of philosophy and metaphysics has been usurped by western model (Yoshinori, 1991, pp.3-4).

Nishida in his introduction says that he is writing it for the Japanese audience and it reflects on the *I and Thou* relationship from the background of Mahayana philosophy of absolute Nothingness of Ultimate Reality. Nishida's arguments differs from the *I-Thou* relationship of Buber. Nishida's concern is mainly with logical categories or the logic of place that is seeing all beings as being within the particular locus that ultimately opens out into a field of infinitely expanding circumference or absolute nothingness – to time, history and the relationship between the *I* and *other* being in the world including the *Thou*.

Ueda Shizuteru, the disciple of Nishida made a study of Buber's *I and Thou* and Nishida's "Watakushi to nanji" and offered the following understanding of Buber-Nishida perspectives.

4.2.5.1 I-Thou Relationship in Nothingness

Nishida sees Buberian I-Thou as a reaction to the atomic, mechanized view of the human individual that gave primacy to I, leaving the individual lonely and isolated. Buber's "between" (Zwischen, the German term used by Buber) the *I and Thou* brings out a third category distinct from the individual I and the universal Thou, namely the "relation" at the same time preserving plurality and unity. The duality between the I and Thou enables the encounter and dialogue possible, if not I has only one way of relating to the world, the *I-It*. It makes possible a mutual reciprocity of full and immediate contact between the subject and the other. The *I-Thou* relation reinforces the dominance of the I, for it calls the *Thou* for dialogue and the Thou can accept the invitation by responding. There is no other Thou, that can call the I out of its prison since all are Thou, except the Eternal Thou who is behind every human thou calling for dialogue and communion. This removes the subject-object dichotomy and attains communion. Seemingly the problem is not solved according to Nishida but it persists because there is duality, subject and object in the western approach. It is the "anatman" of the Mahayana Buddhism, according to Nishida that completely removes duality and the separateness, since it is absolute unity away from human categories.

4.2.5.2 Relationship in Being and Relationship in Nothingness

According to Nishida, the Ultimate reality is "Nothingness" the "anatman" which transcends all categories of beings as said above. To call the transcendent as "Being" is to bring it down to the level of the possibility of an object. The between or "relation" in Buber's thought takes away the distinction between subject and object. But does it? The Nishidian concept of "Nothingness" challenges the primacy of the subject object

distinction radically since “Nothingness” is beyond all distinctions. The logic of the comparison is clear, only a radically self-negated I can encounter the world (thou) as it is. But if the I and the world belong to the universality of being as the subjective (self-conscious) and objective (phenomena) poles, then every encounter with the phenomenal world including the encounter with other subjects will end up reinforcing the I.

Therefore only a universal “Nothingness” in which the subject object dichotomy has been cut at the roots can allow for a truly self-conscious encounter with the world.

Buber's use of “between” (Zwischen) to denote the encounter between the I and thou while “relation” (Begegnung) to denote the result of that encounter – relationship is of interest. Nishida considers “relation” a better terminology to express the unity that takes place between I and thou as a result of encounter. Yet the term “relation” is a human category that enables the I to overcome its isolation through the relationship, as it experiences mutuality with the Thou. Man is born in a relationship that leaves a psychological trail in the human spirit. It is not a metaphysical apriori but a process in time.

Stepping back to look at the place of the *I-Thou* in the history of a particular relationship helps shed light on the dialectic interplay between distancing and relation. It does not describe the special quality of the relation of I and Thou that sets it apart from all other relating. Nishida considers this relationship as not measure up to the concept “locus” (basho, Japanese term used by Nishida) or Nothingness except as an approximation. The “relation” between I-Thou does not take away the distinction between subject object but reinforces it.

The all encompassing locus of reality for Nishida is Nothingness. The ultimate structure of Nothingness as it presents itself to consciousness is that of a self identity that take away all duality. It is pure and simple Nothingness. Relationship of individuals based

on an absolute Being negates the uniqueness of the other. The unity in being proposed in relationship by Buber is only a mental fiction and so union with the Eternal Thou relativizes the Eternal. Absolute Nothingness means that no relationships are possible except the dialectics of coming to be and passing away. It is an interplay of being and non being, of affirmation and negation, of birth and death. To denote this process of becoming and passing away we use a common denominator and call it being in the relativistic setting. Absolute nothingness means no coming into being or passing away.

When Nishida speaks of locus (Basho) of Nothingness he does not mean the same common ground of Being, the Eternal Thou Buber is speaking about. His concern is the place of the Eternal Consciousness of Nothingness, the crowning achievement of the world of becoming. In the context of the logic of Basho, the *I-Thou* can never appear as the ultimate or absolute, no matter who the *I* or what the *Thou* are. Nor can the opposition between the *I* and *Thou* can be reduced to a mere paradox of logical contradiction attributed to the limitation of conscious knowing or the transcendence of a Supreme Being. For Nishida the structure of reality cannot be described on the model of a dialogue between persons any more than Nothingness can be reduced to the affirmation or negation of a mere quality shard in common by beings (Heisig, 2000).

4.2.5.3 The I of Being and the I of Nothingness

Even if we grant the radical relativity of all personal relationships and reject the idea of an Eternal Thou at work in these relations by calling the I out of its self enclosure into the fullness of being we are still left with human relationships in living, the natural inclination of each person to relate to other human persons. The ideal of the full and immediate contact between *I and Thou*, in the light of Nishida's thought, seem to be that

all human relationships are transitory and leads to the Nothingness rather than to the fullness of Being. For Nishida the relationship of fullness of Being is absolute contradiction in relation to Nothingness. He means that relationship is absolutely independent of true reality that makes it impossible for the I either to fully negate itself or open beyond the personal dimension into a wider horizon of reality (Heisig, 2000)

"*Watakushi to Naji*" defines the activity of (human) personhood as self reflection, a dialogue between I and I and the fruit of this dialogue is the meaning of consciousness of Nothingness, of reality as experienced. Self reflection is the activity of reality itself and therefore of the unity of consciousness from one day to the next that allows the constellation of meaning that flow out of actual events that is the particularization of the universal Nothingness. For Buber the I defines itself only in the encounter with a Thou and the more complete the encounter is, the greater the enhancement of the I. For Nishida, the I depends on its identity with the other I and the fuller the confrontation the deeper the bond with the other I, and richer is the identity of the I leading to a deeper understanding of Nothingness. In each case a distinction is drawn between the everyday I to a truer and more real I.*

Buber's *I-Thou* belongs to the tradition of radical personalism that has always been an option in Western philosophy. The definition of Supreme Being as personal is perhaps nowhere clearer than in Western intellectual history than in the neo Scholastics. For Nishida the Ultimate Reality as Nothingness and the option for radical personalism in any form is excluded from it because the fulfillment of the I is located in its transformation into a Non I. (the negation refers only the negation of human categories for "Nothingness" is the absolute affirmation of the Eternal I.) It is as common in the East to reject the analogy of personhood as misplaced. As with the notion of Nothingness in comparison to Being and the notion of the Non I has a range of

interpretations. Nishida is only one of the examples. It is also common in the West to draw analogies into the loss of self in mystical union in order to clarify this difference as Buber himself does so. (Heisig,2000) As with the notion of Nothingness in comparison to Being, there are a variety of interpretations.

It is clear that the activity of personhood is self reflection as we have already mentioned that, it is the locus of dialogue between I and I, which is the same locus for Buber for the encounter of *I* and *Thou*. The fruit of this encounter is meaning which is not something inherent in things merely because of their being, but something that simply needs to be recognized by a subject as an objective fact. Meaning making is an activity of reality and therefore the unity of consciousness from one day to the next that allows for the constellation of meaning in the flow of actual events. Ultimately it leads to the particularization of the universal in which there is no distinction between that which expresses and that which is expressed as the universal Nothingness. Nishida writes:

Each element that goes into this constellation of meaning is an expression of the individual consciousness. The true significance of conscious unity lies in the fact that the expresser and the expressed are one and the same. The I am in dialogue with the I within the mind. The I is of yesterday and the I of today exist in the world of expression, just as I and Thou do. All individuals must somehow be conceived of as determination of a universal and by the same token the individual must determine the universal. The meaning of the individual and the universal must consist of a dialectical determination between the two - not a universal being determining the individual but a universal of nothingness in which

determination takes place without anything doing the determining
(Heisig,2000,p.34).

Thus the *I-Thou* relation is more of a secondary or derivative function of self reflection. The *I-Thou* encounter is an instance in the Nishida-Ueda concept of Nothingness, a path leading to its own negation.. “What we think of as transcending the self always confronts us in one of three modes 1) as a thing 2) as a thou and 3) as a transcendent I. The personal awareness that sees an absolute other within the self includes these three confrontations” To speak of self seeing itself in itself means that the self sees an absolute other and that this other is the Self. What unites seer and the seen, what determines without doing anything is the universal of Nothingness.

4.2.5.4 The Thou of Being and the Thou of Nothingness

Buber insists that the *I-Thou* is to be extended to things in nature as well. The things in nature participate in existence with that of the Eternal Thou. For Nishida it is an encounter between one subject and another subject that is an I encounter an I within the confinement of Nothingness. Buber takes the idea of I-Thou encounter expressed by Max Scheler's “*Einfühlung*” in which the I is submerged in an other through a kind of emotional transference. Max Scheler writes:

As a direct contact between one person and another, the I
knowing a Thou or the knowing an I must take the form of direct
intuition. As we are accustomed to think in the classical form of

intuition, artistic intuition, this is not a matter of directly uniting with an object, but of recognizing oneself as harboring in the recesses interiority an absolute other and turning to that other to see it as absolute other not to unite with it (quoted in Heisig,2000,p.22).

Nishida speaks of nature when he says "To know of the Bamboo, learn from the bamboo." For him the intuition of the other beings entails an impersonalized I encountering the other as I, a seeing without a seer and a seen. In the encounter with the world of things the I and the other I both are enhanced reciprocally, with no possibility of the absolute nothingness becoming the ground of the encounter. The Non-I touch every other I by negating its attachment to any being, including the natural and human world. On the contrary for Buber in the encounter not only the I is enhanced but also discovers the Eternal Thou (Heisig,2000)in the other. The Eternal Thou is the ground of the encounter. The I of the *I-Thou* affirms everything it touches by personalizing it even the impersonal things. The philosopher of Nothingness and the philosopher of Being encounters nature but their approaches differ much from one another. The former begins from the experiencing I alone, the latter begins from the I that experiences persons.

Both Nishida and Buber speak of love. In Buber's philosophy love is the relationship between the I and Thou. This does not consist only in being responsive to the call of the I but of accepting the responsibility for the Thou. It is precisely here love takes a role not in an inner sentiment or mystical rapture but in the ethical overflow of love where the Eternal Thou makes its presence felt.

In the locus of love in Nishida's philosophy love has a slightly different meaning. He writes in "*Watakushi to Nanji*", as love is not a satisfaction of personal desire, it does not turn the other into an object of love. Love discovers the self by negating the self. It does not value another in terms of what lies outside the other. It is not rational but spontaneous. It is not longing but sacrifice. One cannot love oneself without loving the other. He writes:

By seeing the absolute other in the recesses of my own awareness – that is by seeing a Thou - I am I. To think in these terms or what I call "the self awareness of absolute Nothingness" entails love. This is what I understand Christian agape to be . . . It is not human love but divine love; It is not the ascent of the person to God but the descent of God to the person . . . In the same way that Augustine says that I am I becomes God loves me, so I am truly because of God's love . We become persons by loving our neighbor as ourselves in imitation of the divine agape (quoted in Heisig, 2000,p.24).

It is not clear whether the Christian idea of the selfless love of God for humanity is here being used to paraphrase the ideas of the self awareness of absolute Nothingness or the other way around. Or what one idea has to contribute to the other. In any case Nishida makes the claim that his loving self-awareness of absolute Nothingness discloses an "infinite responsibility" of a historically situated I toward a historical Thou. To take this claim at face value to accept it as more than a link in logical argument – is to raise an important question, since the evidence in his own writing seems to point in the opposite direction, away from

responsibility to the concrete demands of history. Nishida also sees love as a fiction in the sense of responsibility generated by I-I encounter. But this is to increase self awareness. He writes:

There is no responsibility as long as the thou that is seen at the bottom of self is thought of as the self. Only when I am I by virtue of the thou I harbor at my depths do I possess an infinite responsibility at the bottom of my existence itself. This thou cannot be a universal abstract thou nor the recognition of a particular object a simple historical fact . . . the genuine “ought” is only conceivable in recognizing the other as a historical Thou within the historically conditioned situation of the I (Heisig, 2000,p.24).

The self of Nishida's self awareness relates to the world and to the thou as a kind of no self which is said to give itself more fully to the other because it is grounded in Nothingness rather than in being. But no other criteria are given for judging this self giving, it remains locked up within the self's ascent to self awakening.

Critique

Relationships are part of human living. All humans living in the West or East enjoy relationships. But the understanding of the underlying meaning of this relationship is different, that depends on the philosophy of life they are accustomed through their culture. Time is seen in the West historically while in the East a-historically. The biblical understanding of creation is in time, Yahweh creates the world in time which is Buberian understanding but time for East is not numerical in the sense of one event in relation to

another. Time for East is rooted in the Nothingness as Nishida perceives. In a globalizing world it is possible to interpret realities differently by crossing borders of thinking, which give a deeper perspective.. Martin sees God as the Eternal while Nishida as Nothingness. Often our tendency is to ask who is correct. Here the researcher would like to introduce a spiritual thinker who crossed borders of thinking from Christian to Mahayanist point of view. It is not clear whether he was aware of this crossing over. He is Meister Eckhart, one of the great spiritual writers of the 14 century Europe who is famous for his sermons. In a sermon on the feast of for St. Germaine, he took a quotation from Ecclesiastics: "In his days he pleased God and was found just." Taking up first the phrase "In his days," he interprets it in the following manner He says that “

there are more days than one. There is the soul's day and God's day. A day, whether six or seven ago, or more than six thousand years ago, is just as near to the present as yesterday. Why? Because all time is contained in the present Now-moment. Time comes of the revolution of the heavens and day began with the first revolution. The soul's day falls within this time and consist of the natural light in which things are seen. God's day, however, is the complete day, comprising both day and night. It is the real Now-moment, which for the soul is eternity's day. . . . The soul's day and God's day are different. In her natural day the soul knows all things above time and place; nothing is far or near. And that is why I say, this day all things are of equal rank. To talk about the world as being made by God to-morrow, yesterday, would be talking nonsense. God makes the world and all things in this present now things; you should be occupied intellectually . . . (Eckhart,1320,pp.55-56)

We see that the Biblical story of Creation is thoroughly contradicted in the setting of time as the Bible writer perceives it while Eckhart sees it in the setting of Eastern perception of time. Further, his God is not at all like the God conceived by most Christians. God is not in time mathematically enumerable. His creativity is not historical, not accidental, not at all measurable. It goes on continuously without cessation with any beginning, with no end. It is not an event of yesterday or today or tomorrow, it comes out of timelessness, of nothingness, of Absolute Void. God's work is always done in an absolute present, in a timeless "now which is time and place in itself." God's work, is sheer love, utterly free from all forms of chronology and teleology. The idea of God creating the world out of nothing, in an absolute present, and therefore altogether beyond the control of a serial time conception will not sound strange to Buddhist ears. Perhaps they may find it acceptable as reflecting their doctrine of Emptiness (*śūnyatā*).

Human Existence is conditioned by its finiteness. Man can never attain fullness of understanding because of his human condition. Each individual perspective is circumscribed perspective. So too Martin Buber's understanding of *I-Thou* relationship is one perception while that of Nishida another. A crossing of border perceptive will give a deeper understanding of realities as Eckhart has shown us. The marriage of East and west brings deeper understanding as a man and woman in a marriage brings deeper understanding to life. In the following pages we shall dwell on some of these strengths and weakness

4.3.1 The Strength Buber's Philosophy

Martin Buber's I and Thou present a philosophy of personal dialogue and relationship dialogue, in that it describes how personal dialogue can define the nature of reality. Buber's major theme is that human existence may be define by the way in which we engage in

dialogue with each other, with the world, and with God. God, claims Buber, is the Eternal Thou. "Every particular Thou is a glimpse through to eternal Thou". This is because man's "sense of Thou, which cannot be satiated, till he find the endless Thou, had the Thou, had the Thou present to it from the beginning". Buber contents that I-Thou relation between the individual and God is a universal relation which is the foundation for all other relations. If the individual has a real I-Thou relation with God, then the individual must have a real I-Thou relation with the world. If the individual has a real I-Thou relation with God, then the individual's actions in the world must be guided by that I-Thou relation. Thus, the philosophy of personal dialogue may be an instructive method of ethical inquiry and of defining the nature of personal responsibility. So too Martin Buber's understanding of I-Thou relationship has its own strength.

4.3.1.1 The I-Thou Relationship

The greatest contribution of Buber as well as the strength of his thought lies in his philosophy of "Relation." For Buber "person is relation", it is the very meaning of human existence. To placed more clearly existence is relate. Thus "Thou" is a term of address and the individual addresses the other as Thou, and in this address the *I-Thou* is born. If the individual does not spontaneously address the other as a Thou or the other refuses to respond, then both are enclosed in their aloneness. They remain icy cold individuals. They live an alienated existence. When an individual lives in a self-created enclosure, he leads an alienated existence. The "betweenness" of the I and Thou is "Relation" which is the presence of the Spirit. For "all real living is meeting" and in its midst, is God. Buber says the word "Thou" can be addressed only with one's whole being. Then the Thou steps forward in all its singleness and therein, is the intimations of the Absolute Thou. *I-Thou* relation is not an experience of the other, then the other becomes an It. "The Thou relationship actually form

the I of the person because the I-Thou relation precedes the recognition of self as self. Here we again see Thou response to the invitation of I brings into existence a new reality, the relationship and dialogue nurtures it and relationship blossoms. Neither the I nor the Thou imprison the other but leaves the other to respond freely. In this relation a convergence of the I and Thou takes place and the Spirit is incarnated. This is the sacred mystery of Relation. This Relation is the center of Community. It is this Center that binds the community. In this Relation, revelation of persons takes place. This revelation goes beyond the persons, "it fills the heavens" for "the extended lines of relation meet in the Eternal Thou," (Buber, 1923) For Buber God is not an idea but the Absolute Person whom humans know only in Relation. He says that God cannot be comprehended by intellect but is embraced in love. The precondition of the I-Thou relation is the recognition of the Eternal Thou in every face. This Relation does not alienate us from the world, because meeting with God does not come to man in order that he may relate himself with God, but in order that he may confirm that meaning in the world. It is the Eternal Thou that gives meaning to the world. The Eternal Thou is a process not in the sense He is continuously incarnated in relationship of love. He is becoming ever more real. Having said all these the researcher believes that the strength of Martin Buber's approach lies in relationships that creates the Inter-subjective community whose linchpin is the Eternal Thou, who alone is the binding force of all *I-Thou* (dyadic) and *I-We* (multi-dyadic) relationships.

4.3.1.2 The Eternal Thou

In the Buber's mind, the Eternal Thou is not just a transcendent God somewhere in the heavens but he is immanent God who dwells in the midst of men and nature. He is the God of relationships. This is another greatest strength of Buber's thinking. Sometime the Eternal Thou is personal; other times impersonal in his writings. This is understandable since he

stands in Western tradition of duality and being at the same time influenced by the East particularly Taoism in his understanding of the Ultimate Reality which is impersonal (personhood is a quality of the Ultimate and not the essence of that Reality). Perhaps Buber is right for we cannot pigeonhole God into human categories, for he is both personal and impersonal according to human contingencies. Besides being a mystic himself, he has experienced God as the unity of all, the mystery into which he is absorbed in. As a true seeker, he was not adherent to any dogmas of structured religions. Abraham Maslow who studied various self realized personalities from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds came to the conclusion that all human individuals are open to mystical (peak) experiences. These experiences have certain commonalities; for example all mystics without exception experienced the whole universe, including the individual as part and parcel of Existence. This cognition of oneness with Reality is non evaluatory. As a result of this experience, the individual becomes more detached, more objective and the perceived Reality as independent not of the perceiver but of all of existences. Buber is trying to give expression to his unique experience, in terms that are available to him.

4.3.1.3 The Human self and the Eternal Thou

The real issue in question here is whether or not in its ultimate depths the human self is and will always remain in any future mode of existence finite, determinate and ontologically distinct from the Absolute ground of all reality. Or whether at its deepest level the human self is really identical with the Absolute hence in its ultimate root, the individual self is indeterminate, infinite and non multiple. Here lies the third strength of Buber namely the understanding of East and West are ultimately the same, in spite of the different paths.

The Eastern and Western religious literature supports his understanding of the Eternal Thou. The heroes of the Book of Job and Bhagavad Gita, Job and Arjuna, both started out as rational, morally autonomous selves quite distinct from God and in dialogue with Him.

Arjuna moves to true self knowledge by turning within, penetrating through introspection to the limits of the finite self, then transcending beyond into union with the pure consciousness of the all embracing Infinite Self. Thus he attains union with the Eternal Self.

Job on the other hand advances to authentic self-knowledge not by solitary introspection, but through interpersonal dialogue with his human comforters. At the end he comes to the final stage, not of identity with God but of a trusting I-Thou personal relationship with Him, retaining his (Job) full personal identity and moral autonomy yet going beyond the merely rational analysis to a loving, obedient surrender of God in mystery. The end result is union with the Eternal.

The researcher argues that the Ultimate Reality is one and the same whether East or West. The method or the path of attaining this experience is different in East and West. The experience of the ultimate is unique to the individual experiencer since he interprets the experience in line to his personality and culture he finds himself in. Besides, according to the researcher's thinking, human consciousness is not a substance but an activity, an activity of self expression whose goal is to express in human terms, the experiences of life, in the context the experience of the Limitless. The experience the Ultimate is unique and individual but in communicating it, the individual employs the limited language and its categories. John Foster clarifies this concept through a diagram showing how the starting and the end of religious experience is the same, but the pathways and terminologies are that of the culture in which the persons are rooted.¹³

¹³

John Foster employs the following diagram to show that both eastern and Western mystics begin with the empirical self, moves on divergent ways and finally reaches the same end.

4.31.4 The Authentic and Inauthentic Communities

The Central theme of this dissertation is Buber understanding of Inter-subjective Communities. His emphasis is on the Inter-subjective communities is the greatest strength of his philosophy as a whole. Here to recall the distinction we made earlier between society and community is very important. Society denotes a conglomeration of people without much inner relationship. It follows the model of Mechanistic society, where people are put together related only through space and time. For Buber this is collectivism, an inauthentic community.

Buber's I we community is a relational community, a living community, where there is an inner relationship. It is an organic community that grows together, each affecting the other. It is the authentic community based on the system model. Due too this particular understanding of community, Buber does not support the all powerful stae model, which is based on society as a conglomeration of people. Therefore he opted for an authentic model of political community, where small communities of interrelationship - authentic communities- exist together. Martin Buber is the great champion of authentic organic, inter-subjective communities.

4.3.2 The Weakness of Buber's Ideal

In Buber's *I-Thou* Inter-subjective community he presents the ideal of relational harmonious community. He did realize that this ideal utopian as he writes in *Paths in Utopia*, He does not take very much into consideration the human condition or the limitation of human beings and their different levels of maturity. Some call him a dreamer or an idealist. Although this is the weakness of the theory, we do need idealists and dreamers so that the common humanity does not lose the perspectives in life. If we look into the folders of

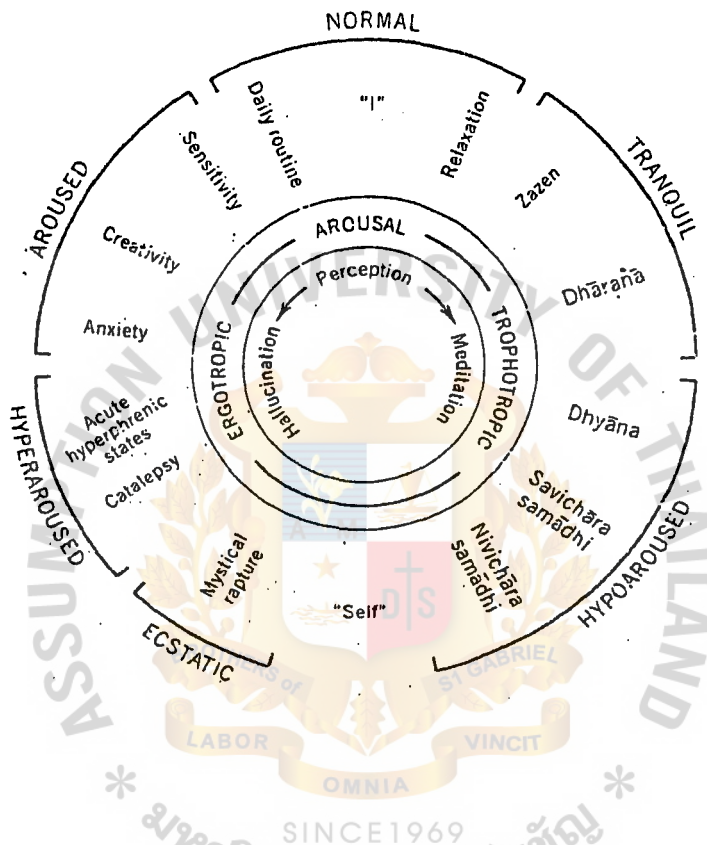
history we find that when human society is in its lowest ebb, a reformer, an idealist, a dreamer comes along, to focus humanity's attention on to the ideal to get back to the right path. The present society is blinded by power and struggles to maintain it through wealth. The result is violence as we witness each day. Buber stands in the midst of a society that may be rushing towards to a nuclear holocaust, shouting on the top of his voice, "Build Inter-subjective communities of *I-Thou* relationships." It is up to us to listen to his wakeup call. Every page of his writings resounds with this message: "In the beginning is relationship," "All real life is meeting," "Man in not man till he is in *I-Thou* relationship." We may need to listen to his clarion call to escape from a world catastrophe that is gaping at us.

Another weakness of Buber's theory is its Jewishness as we have remarked earlier. The theory will give much inspiration to people that follow in the footsteps of Abraham. Buber did attempt to relate it to Taoism, yet the underpinnings of his thought is western based on Judaism. Though it is Jewish in inspiration, there can be much which the Easterners can learn and be inspired.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter the researcher has been critiquing the philosophy of relationship proposed by Martin Buber. First the researcher criticized the overtly strong influence of Judaism on his theory, that is both a limitation and strength. Then researcher moved on to Nishida-Ueda's criticism of Buber's understanding of the Ultimate Reality from the view point of Mahayana Buddhism. Finally the researcher discussed some of the strength and weakness of Buber's theory in general. Also the researcher pointed out that the Ultimate Reality that both East and West speak of is the same Reality seen and approached differently. Besides we need

not look at these divergent path ways as opposed to one another but in fact they compliment one another. Perhaps what is important is Dialogue between the East and West in the spirit of Martin Buber I-Thou relationship so that we can move forward in forming one humanity.



According Roland Fischer (1986) mystics both in the East and West begin with the empirical given self then travel different ways and reach the same goal, the Transcendent. The former through a more intuitive self-penetrating, analyzing dialogue reaches the Eternal Self. The latter begin with the same empirical self-travel through dialogue with nature and others reach the Eternal Thou.

Contemplation (West)

The mystical union (contemplation) or transformation into the Eternal Thou is a highly active process that begins with the increased activation of the sympathetic nervous system (Ergotropic activity) that generates high sensitivity to spiritual matters. This makes the person highly creative and anxious about one's inner life (sorrow for one's sins and altruistic activities). As the soul moves on it become less anxious and begins to dwell on the goodness of God and His words in the scriptures resulting in accelerated mental activity wanting totally to be

possessed by God, the object of the soul sole desire. With entire longing of the soul. This high intense mental activity bring the catalepsy (bodi y ridgity.) and finally the soul is taken by God and experiences mystical rapture, a trance like stage with profound emotionality towards the object of contemplation and final union with God.

Samadhi (East)

Samadhi begins with the empirical self and engages intuitively with the inner self, the essence of Reality. It begins with increased activity of the parasympathetic nervous system, through zazen (meditative sitting) leading to the concentration on one single object that brings in relaxation and quietitude. This guides individual to the next stage of Dhyana (meditation) where all extraneous thoughts are silenced focusing only on the essence of one's being the self. Here still the mind is active (savichara samahdi) and finally all thought is given up experiencing Nirvichara Samadhi where the essence of all things are penetrated. This is followed by total identification with the Ultimate self, the Samadi..



Concluding and Findings

5.1 Introduction

Martin Buber was a mystic by nature and his signature tune can be heard in all his writing. To phrase it differently mysticism is the back-drop of all his writings. During the maturing period of his life, his attention was mostly drawn to the presence Yahweh, God in his life. Besides early in his life his parents were separated and missed out much love and care which a child needs for his growth. His grandparents supplied what they could but he was hungering for the love of his father and mother. His thirst for this love was quenched by the love of Yahweh for him and the people. His sensitivity to relational love found its way to his writing particularly in the theme Inter-subjective I- Thou relationship. This sensitivity was heightened by an experience in his life, which, he himself testifies, deeply affected his mode of thinking. One day while he was engaged in his devotional practices a young man came to see him with life questions, being preoccupied with his devotional practices, he gave only half hearted attention to the young man's situation. This young man later committed suicide, Being sensitive he was shaken Buber says of it as follows:

What happened was that one forenoon, after a morning of the "religious" enthusiasm," I had a visit from an unknown young man, without being there in spirit (with him). I certainly did not fail to let the meeting be friendly, I did not treat him any more remissly than all his contemporaries who were in the habit of seeking me out about this time of day as an oracle that is ready to listen to reason. I conversed attentively and openly with him – only I omitted to guess the question which he did not put. Later, not long after, I learned from his friends –

he himself was no longer alive – the essential content of these questions I learned that he had come to me not casually, but borne by destiny, not for a chat but for a decision. . . .He had come to me; he had come in this hour. What do we expect when we are in despair and yet go to a man? Surely a presence by means of which we are told that nevertheless there is meaning (Buber 1969,p.52).

This incident had a profound influence on his life and message. His preoccupation with God alone, was changed to encountering Him in his fellow man and in the community through the *I-Thou* relationship. It gave birth to his most important work *I and Thou* where he highlights his new way of thinking.

5.2 Recapitulation of the Research

In the forgoing chapters the researcher traveled with Martin Buber to understand his discovery of the meaning of life particularly in the *I-Thou* inter-subjective community. In this concluding part of researcher investigation. The researcher shall come up with some conclusions. Before proceeding further, let me first summarize some salient points of the research so far.

The question asked in the introductory chapter by the researcher is “Can the *I-Thou* Inter-subjective Community” be an adequate response to the clashes of civilizations that are taking place around the world?

The researcher’s response is that “Martin Buber’s concept of I-Thou inter- subjective relationship will reduce this tension and conflict experienced by communities around the world. To achieve this goal the researcher enumerated three objectives:

- To analyze the concept of organic community in contrast to mechanistic community.
- To explain the I-Thou Inter-subjective Community as visualized by Martin Buber.
- To Critique the *I-Thou* Inter-subjective Community of Martin Buber

In the second chapter on “An Epistemological Understanding of Community, the researcher considered the nature of the individual from diverse philosophers’ point of view and came to the conclusion that the various perspectives of are limited perspective. To have a more comprehensive understanding of the individual and community we need to work on relationship. Both the West and East have nostalgia for an Edenic community, a community of harmony and love between human beings among themselves and the world of nature. Writers proposed various theories to create such a community but it seems to be beyond the reach of man. Martin Buber’s approach to form a harmonious community is attainable with reasonable cooperation of the people. In the third chapter I ventured into Buber’s Inter-subjective community of *I-Thou* relationship which is highlighted in his book *I and Thou*.

Martin Buber’s vision of a community is founded on “relationship” and it can be traced to his noted writings *I and Thou*, *Between Man and Man*, and *Paths in Utopia*. Martin’s catch phrases are “All living is encounter” or “In the beginning is relation” and points to the centrality of relationship in living together in a community. Community sprouts from *I-Thou* relationship where two individual subjects enter into a relation of mutuality without swallowing each other or subsuming the other. Martin calls such a relationship “*I-Thou*” relationship. This *I-Thou* relationship moves from its initial dyadic relation to multidyadic relationships which he calls the *I-We* relationship, a communitarian relationship. He considers a State, the political entity consists of various I-We communities of relationships.

The bedrock of this relationship is the Eternal Thou, who is present in every finite relationship. At the beginning of creation such was the community, where God and man, man and man, and man and nature formed a community of interrelationships. This is the reason why he said “In the beginning was relation.” Thus the relational climate of Paradise binds each another forming a harmonious community. It was only when man abandoned relationship for power “to become like unto God” man lost paradise, he became his own, resulting in conflict, dissension and death. Buber sees, that today’s man, is steeped in power and the net result is clash between individuals, communities and civilizations. Modern man has been drunk with power, while his heart is shriveled up in love relationship. Buber’s message is a clarion call to return to inter-subjective relationships. In the fourth chapter the researcher critiqued Martin Buber’s theory of relationship.

5.3 Findings of this Research

Several conclusions could be drawn from this investigation towards building communities that would be an antidote for a world fragmented by fissiparous tendencies of self advancement, struggle for power and prestige through arms struggle and the craze to be super powers. The researcher would like to restrict himself with three conclusions: The Paradigm of Relationship; The Paradigm of Dialogue and the Paradigm of Community.

5.3.1. The Paradigm of Relationship

This is a time when the globalizing world is going through crisis after crisis in the social, political and religious fields. It is torn apart by conflicts and dissonances. It is time when we need to listen to sages like Martin Buber. He points his finger to the sore spot of humanity, inter-subjective relationship. He shows the way to create a human community on the

foundation of relationships. The secret of building an Edenic community is what Buber is talking about in the *I and Thou Between Man and Man and Paths in Utopia*. Our human community should be rebuilt on relationships rather than on power derived from weapons or economic might. Human individual can be cowed down for a while because of fear but his spirit will not allow trampling his freedom and dignity for long, he will revolt. Man is a subject and not an object.

Buber's central contribution to the twentieth century thinking is his insistence on the fundamental difference between human individuals as subjects and objects. Object in Buber's terms is an "It", something that is observed disinterestedly without giving one's self over to it. It is something that can be used. When one views others in this fashion they are not individuals or subjects but objects, belonging to the category of it, just like trees or rocks or buildings with no relationships except that of an It. A "Thou" – some what awkwardly translated the German "Du" – to denote the subject nature of the other, whose existence is a shared existence. Community is a group of "Thou"s sharing their subjectivity with one another. Besides in addressing another as a "Thou" is to render one's self totally to the other and to God, the ultimate of all Thous. A Thou is not a thing among other things in this world rather the world is seen in the light of Thou. Each individual is an I and a Thou, two subjects, the I calling and Thou responding by which a relationship is established - the "I-Thou" relationship. This relationship is not merely an occasional encounter, but rather an epiphany of sorts that becomes a constant experience, a dialogue, a communion. This is the life of dialogue of communion between the I and the Thou that gives meaning to life.

The notion of the I as a thinking subject has been seen since the Enlightenment, as the universal subject. In an increasingly urbanized, technologized, bureaucratized world, this subject has become conflict ridden and neurotic, unable to move out of himself to the world of I-Thou relationship. The I-Thou relationship is always a shared experience that dissolves

the ego interests by giving selfhood to each other. This selfhood is inherently social, rational and spiritual. In *Between Man and Man* Buber articulates his conception of Human existence:

Man's special place in the cosmos lies in his connection with destiny, his relation to the world of things, his understanding of his fellow men, his existence as a being that knows it must die, his attitude in the ordinary and extraordinary encounters with the mystery with which his life is shot through. (Buber, 1958,p.37).

In the thesis statement at the beginning of this research I have stated that Martin Buber's message will, if followed, reduce world tensions and build a community of interrelationships. Respect for the dignity of the individual and inter-human and inter-subjective relationships are the cornerstones of a relational a community.

5.3.2. The Paradigm of Dialogue

The essential building block of interrelationship and community is dialogue. In dialogue the I addresses the Thou and the Thou responds and real communication takes place between them. No matter what each of the participants really has in mind in their present mode of thinking and turns to the other with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between them is the kernel of dialogue. Persons who are engaged in dialogue follow what is known as the "narrow ridge communication" meaning that the participants in dialogue have a common ground where they are open to and care for the others' view points. Dialogue is a place where participants meet and compromise their thoughts and ideas on life and the affairs of the world.

Thus dialogue is a guide for the development of a community where the I and the Thou and the I and the We search together for genuine alternatives from extreme positions. True dialogue involves meanings i.e. it allows the participants to create new meanings change the old, giving way to mutual understanding. In dialogue meanings are discovered together rather than alone by each individual because they understand that meanings are beyond the individual's own understanding.

When I speak of dialogue here I do not mean nor does Buber the technical dialogue between people, who come together to have a conversation or to chit chat or to attain a particular goal like that of a football club and so on. Here the end envisioned is to understand themselves that leads to communion. The meaning developed in dialogue is highly subjective, personal, touching the inner being of each person engaged in dialogue. In the technical dialogue there is no intention to communicate from the core of the individual's being or to learn from the other or influence the other to have another perception of life. Kaufmann (1970) working on Buber's ideas on dialogue and community observes that true community does not come into being because people have feeling for each other (it may well be but it need not be) but on two grounds; first all the participants in a dialogue understand that there is a living center in each person and second in living together as a community there is a reciprocal center of relationship - a common perception or a common heart – the Eternal Thou. Relationship built on weapon or economic or hierarchical power is not capable of achieving dialogue, nor is it possible even if the individuals or groups have equal power positions, except when there is genuine respect for each other and is mutually in search for meanings beyond themselves. Dialogue is not sacrificing your beliefs to get along with the other nor can it be forced upon but it happens on its own. Dialogue is neither a skill nor is it planned from above (people in power) but it will happen when there is genuine and sincere search for common meaning arising from deep respect for the other, seasoned by the desire to live together.

Persons, communities and nations cannot be built through the use of brute power, weapon power or economic power. Those who shout, because they have power, are weak, and that is why they rely on outside means. It is respect for the originality of individuals communities, life realities that can bring genuine peace and harmony to our society and our world. Dialogue with deep respect for individuals, communities and their individual, cultural and religious traditions is the corner-stone of the new community where there is peace and harmony. Dialogue is not based on power but on understanding and cooperation.

5.3.3 The Paradigm of Community

The 20th century has witnessed an unprecedented celebration of social sciences like anthropology, sociology and psychology and yet even the most sophisticated social or psychological account of human beings does create relationships between them. People often believe that aloneness is the nature of human beings and relations are only possible through a medium or a middle link, an institution, an objective, an authority or a policy and cannot relate directly and honestly. In fact we have become afraid of open naked relationships without barriers. Martin Buber endorses direct relationship through dialogue. In building communities of dialogue he emphasizes two essential dimensions of human life, namely the inter-human and communitarian relationships. Speaking of these he writes “whenever the life of a number of men, lived with one another, bound up together brings in its train shared experiences and reactions.” In the inter-human relationships, the only thing that matters is the unique other, - the unique subject – with the intense desire is to relate to him in such a way as not to regard or use him as an object, but a partner in a living event. The sphere of inter-human consists solely of actual happenings between men which is mutual that tend to grow into mutual relations. The inter-human relation consists of elements of everyday life that lead to a genuine I-Thou dialogue (Buber 1988).

Generally people are predisposed to engage and relate with the other. Ridley (1997) says though our minds are built on “selfish genes” yet he is open to social, trustworthy and cooperative endeavours. He continues:

Humans have social instincts. They come into the world equipped with predispositions to learn how to cooperate, to commit themselves to be trustworthy, to exchange goods and information and to divide labor. . .this instinctive cooperativeness is the very hallmark of humanity and what sets us apart from other animals (Ridley 1997,p.102).

There are three qualities that are basic in forming a community; Tolerance, Reciprocity and Trust. Tolerance brings the quality of respect and openness towards the other, curiosity to know the other and willingness to listen and learn from the other. Reciprocity entails “I will do this for you” attitude without expecting any immediate return and hope that sometimes down the road someone will return the favor when one needs. Trust gives the assurance that people and institutions in the community will act in a consistent, honest and appropriate manner. Trustworthiness and reliability are essential for the communities to cooperate and develop.

Buber visualizes a deeper understanding of community namely it must be built on I-Thou love relationship between individuals who are subjects. It must be built on a network of inter-human inter-subjective relationships based on continuous process of dialogue. A Buber point out that community is to be understood by the fact that its members have a common relationship to a centre that transcends the partners in the relationship. This relationship between individuals is built on I-Thou relationships as it moves from dyadic relations to group relations of I-We relationships that develop and bind them into communities. These

relationships have a center, as said above that is transcendent, the Eternal Thou. This center is manifested through core community beliefs (depending on the particular community), communitarian activities and common worship, that are essential to the integration of the group. Buber also affirms that a community, as a group which make all decisions a through a process of group decision making, to use a more recent term “direct democracy.” Indeed his view of society is very similar to that which forms the basis of the modern communities such as the New Age Movements or the Green Movements and so on, but there is no evidence to show that these movements are inspired by Martin Buber.

The ideal society or community is one in which individuals relates to each other directly in a personal I-Thou dialogue and live in small groups or in manageable communities that in turn have relation to other communities of similar spirit. The problem of the modern world is the disappearance of communities, the breakdown of the *I-Thou* relationship communities and replaced with the impersonal *I-It* relationship communities in which people are not persons but objects to be manipulated for the attainment of individual or collective ends. Martin advocated the rebirth of communities through “rebuilding” communities through the above mentioned values. Buber goes on to advocate socialism as the appropriate method through which society may be reborn, though he rejects Marxian type of communities instead he favors the tradition of Saint Simon and Robert Owen (1771-1825) namely building a world community of inter-human, inter-subjective dialogical world society through small democratic communities of I-Thou, I-We relationships. These communities are the backbone of a world community that will ensure peace and harmony in the world as Buber cajoles us to build.

5.4 Recommendations

The researcher came upon the following areas that could be further researched.

1. A research could be developed on religious dialogue according to the lines laid down by Martin Buber.
2. A further research could be undertaken focusing on the philosophical foundations of I-Thou relationship.
3. A third research could be developed on the concept communities as visualized by Martin Buber.



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Appendix 1

Martin Buber's Life and Works

Martin Mordoch Buber - a religious existentialist, a romantic traditionalist and a mystical pacifist, Austrian Jewish philosopher, theologian, and storyteller – strove his entire life to defy categorization and became one of the modern thinkers par excellence. His philosophy, though lacking the systemic rigor and historical reflection like Kant or Hegel, nevertheless addressed the alienation of the individual in our modern society and brought about through dialogue, a holistic interconnection between individuals, communities and nations.

Born 8 February 1878 in Vienna Martin spent his childhood in Lvov, Lemberg at the home of his grandparents Salomon Buber - a prosperous business man and a scholar in rabbinic literature - and Adele Buber – an enthusiastic reader of German classics. Young Buber spoke Yiddish and German and later studied Hebrew and French and Polish. In 1892 he moved in with his remarried father and began reading Emmanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche which brought a religious crisis and withdrew from all religious practices. When he entered the university he was a thoroughly secular modern Jew whose heroes were Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Jakob Bohme, a Christian mystic. At the University he studied philosophy, art, German literature, philology and in 1898 joined the Zionist movement. Martin saw that Zionism is a necessary antidote to cultural and spiritual crisis within Judaism. In 1901 he married a Catholic writer Paula Winckler, who later converted to Judaism. In the same year he became editor of the Zionist weekly “Die Welt”, but shortly he resigned his post and returned to the practice of Hasidism. During this period he wrote many scholarly works on Hasidism like “The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism.”

At the outbreak of the World War I he created a committee in Berlin to help the Jews and started publishing “Der Jude” a literary journal to voice the ideas of the German Jewery. In 1920 along with Franz Rosenzweig founded the Institute for Jewish education to renew Judaism. In 1924 he became professor of Jewish religion and ethics in Germany and in the following he translated the Hebrew Bible into German. When the Nazis came to power they forbade him to give public lectures and in 1938 he left for Jerusalem where he became professor at the Hebrew University. Most of his books were written there. Some of his prominent works are; “I and Thou” (1923) speaks of dialogue between I-Thou and building communities, “The Eclipse of God” (1952) considers the relation between religion and philosophy, “Paths in Utopia” (1949) deals with social theories, “Pointing the Way” (1956) on various philosophical themes “Knowledge of Man” (1956) gives a more systematic approach to man’s knowledge and “Between Man and Man” (1961) a commentary on I and Thou.

Buber’s chief contribution to the twentieth-century thinking is his insistence on the fundamental difference between the way one looks at people and things. A thing is an object an It that is observed disinterestedly without giving oneself over to it. One treats even people as objects not as individual subjects. A Thou attitude on the other hand transforms everything into an I, a subject whose existence is always a shared existence. Addressing the other as aThou means is rendering oneself totally present to the other as a Thou and to the Eternal Thou. A Thou is not a thing among other things in this world, rather the world is seen in the light of the Thou. The I and Thou relationship is not merely an occasional encounter, but rather an epiphany that becomes a constant experience, a dialogue. It is this life of dialogue of the I and Thou that giving meaning to life.

He passed away from this world of I –Thou dialogue to the dialogue of the Eternal Thou on 13th June 1965 at his home in Talbyern, Jrusalem.

Autobiography of the Researcher

Name: Ratthaburut Khumsap

Education: B.A. in Political Science, Ramkhamheang University
M.A. in Policy and Planning in Society, Krik University

Experiences: Personnel Staff, Management Trainee, Imperial Hotel.
Personnel & Administration Manager, Pack Shot Entertainment Co.
Human Resources Manager, SSUP Group.
Human Resources Manager, BNK Group.
General Manager, First World Import Export Group.

Teaching Experiences:

Part times lecturer in Business Administration
Department Faculty of Management Science
Phranakhon Rajabhat University, Chankaseam
Rajabhat University, Walaialongkorn Rajabhat
University

His publication in English and Thai:

Khumsap Ratthaburut. (2006) How we ought to live? :
Alasdair Macintyre and Virtue Ethics. The Journal of
Chansad.
_____. (2006) All Living is Meeting: A
Buberian Perspective Environmental Ethics. Rajabhat
Phranakhon Research Journal.
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