

A Comparative Study of Martin Buber and Rumi on God-Man Relation

Elham Ghazazani¹
Amir Abbas Alizamani²

The issue of relation, particularly that of human relation to God stands for one of the most significant concerns by all men of faith. To realize such a relation Martin Buber and Rumi, two globally acclaimed thinkers, have appropriated independent existences for both God and man to make them eligible for having a relation to each other, and they have brought this relationship to the fore in their works. By studying the ideas of these two thinkers we will come to be familiar with a God who has allowed His servants to have a relation with Him and address Him as “Thou” in communication with Him. Man can touch the factors and causes involved in relation-developing and the types of relations with God by introducing himself into the possibility of engaging in such a relation.

According to both thinkers, getting oneself related to God features the highest levels of relations. One of the most crucial factors in arriving at God is developing a relation with the “other.” The other is in fact a radiation of God or the eternal “Thou.” Hence the basic condition for realization of such a relation is developing a relationship with the “other,” and in Martin Buber's words, entering the “I-Thou” dynamic. According to Buber, what obstructs one in entering this relation is the “I-It” relation and getting stuck with it. In their works, both Buber and Rumi have clearly explained the levels of relation and unveiled the possibility and realization of such a relation by articulating how one can touch that relation for the people of spiritual path.

Key Words: God, Relation, the Other, Encounter, I-Thou, I-It.

-
1. Ph.D Student in Philosophy of Religion and Modern Theology, Azad Islamic University, Sciences and Researches Branch, Tehran, I.R.I. Email: elhamghazazani@yahoo.com
 2. Associate professor in Philosophy of Religion, University of Tehran. Email: amirabbas.alizamani@yahoo.com

Introduction

This essay seeks to comparatively introduce the reader into Mawlana Jalal al-Din Balkhi's—better known as Rumi—and Martin Buber's conceptions of God/man relation. The issue of relation is among the most significant issues in different fields of knowledge. Due to his/her generic creation, man is in need of developing relation with the “other”; that is, his/her surrounding world comprising inanimate objects, plants, animals, fellow human beings, and even God. A relation could give meaning to one's life or, in some cases, hollow it of all meaning. Many thinkers of various bents have dealt with the issue of relation, but the present essay comparatively probes into the ideas of Martin Buber and Rumi concerning this issue as they belong to two Abrahamic major religions, Judaism and Islam.

Martin Buber has initiated a new paradigm of relation which is of universal application. This paradigm known as “*I-Thou*” paradigm was presented in a small book entitled *I-Thou*. In this paradigm, Buber speaks of two kinds of relations: “*I-Thou*” relation and “*I-It*” relation. Man has to engage in one of these relations in his/her encounter with the surrounding environment. There is no independent “*I*,” Buber argues, who can create his inner gifts on his own. “*I*” can only be known and come to existence in two ways: either through having relation with “*Thou*” or through having relation with “*It*” (Jones 2000, 316). It is noteworthy that the qualities of “*I-It*” relation are different as compared to those of “*I-Thou*” relation. In “*I-It*” relation, the world merely consists of separated objects. In this latter type of relation, the world is presented as something built only for man and her/his security and s/he approaches other beings in the world as mere objects, and this attitude whittles him/her down to the lowest being in the world that has the least of effective mutual relation (cf. Wood 1969, 72). In “*I-It*” relation, “*I*” does not get engaged in relation with the whole being but with part of it like a researcher who reduces other beings to his objects of study or like a master/slave relation in which a man or a group of people are treated as tools and a man controls the others (cf. Simmon 2005, 2:591). While “*I-Thou*” is a mutual and bilateral relation in which no experience occurs from the other but it is an encounter of two sides both of which impress and acknowledge each other. The primary word *I-Thou* can clear a room for itself when it gets related to its whole being; the relation with *Thou* is fulfilled immediately neither through concepts nor through “*I*”'s hypotheses or imaginations (Wright 1998, 3:44). “*I-It*” and “*I-Thou*” relations, Buber suggests, can happen in different areas. “*I-It*” relation could occur between a man and his/her fellow man or between a man and non-human entities like inanimate objects, plants, and animals. This is also

the case with “*I-Thou*” relation although this relation can occur between man and God too. Needless to say, God by no means fits into “*I-It*” relation as no one could address Him as *It*. Man can only develop a relation with God in “*I-Thou*” form (cf. Wood 1969, 60-65).

To develop a relation with God, Buber states, one necessarily needs to establish an “*I-Thou*” relation with the environment in advance. Getting related to the other prepares us to have a relation with the Divine. Engaging in “*I-Thou*” relation in this material world eventually leads to the emergence of eternal or infinite “*Thou*.” When man discovers his/her unique and invisible gifts in his/her engagements with other beings s/he in fact touches the divine radiations causing him/her to realize the existence of God in this world indeed (cf. Silberstein 2005, 2:1057). Human relation with finite *Thous* alludes to an infinite *Thou* who never changes to an *It*. This truth has its origin in the fact that when man says, “*Thou*,” s/he does actually mean the infinite *Thou*, since in every relation man walks into the domain of “between” which is an allusion to the Sublime. This allusion to the Sublime is only fulfilled through establishing a relation with finite *Thou*. Therefore, in “*I-Thou*” relation, *Thou* is a two-fold reality comprising the *finite Thou* revealed through the creatures of the material world and the *infinite or eternal Thou* (i.e., God), the relation with whom is the loftiest of all relations, according to Buber.

In Rumi's thought, we also encounter a perspective almost similar to Buber's ideas; however, there are some differences and even Rumi's account of human relation with God is of a greater extent to which we will turn in a more detailed form.

Martin Buber's and Rumi's Notions of God

Some factors are necessary in order for the relation between man and God to be established. These factors, in fact, ground the very possibility of such a relation. Thus, we need to begin with a brief study of these thinkers' notion of God before turning to the central theme of the essay. The necessary condition for the fulfillment of this relation is the existence of a personal and immanent God which is met both in Buber and Rumi. God, in Buber's eyes, is an eternal *Thou* who engages in individual relations; God and man both become involved in a personal relation (cf. Gilman 2000, 449). Buber insists that the Bible's God is a personal deity and believes that God is the Absolute who becomes personal in order to encounter man, and this does not overshadow His absoluteness. God does not degrade Himself to a personal entity, but He engages in relation as an absolute person (cf. Buber 1988, 127). More importantly, man meets and talks to God in the same world in which s/he lives, and it should be noted that God is

not searchable, as He is not present in any particular place (cf. Moore 1996, 142). Buber argues:

It is not as if God could be inferred: from anything—say, from nature as its cause, or from history as its helmsman, or perhaps from the subject as the self that thinks itself through it. It is not as if something else were “given” and this were then deduced from it. This is what confronts us immediately and first and always, and legitimately it can only be addressed, not asserted. (Buber 1970, 129)

Buber is hopeful that a mutual relation could be developed between man and God—a relation in which submersion emerges. However, despite the endurance of individual independency, a deep and mutual relation takes form (cf. Rotenstreich 2009, 21), among whose attributes are discourse, openness, immediateness, sympathy, and mutuality. The highest degree of “*I-Thou*” relation is the very relation between man and “eternal Thou” (God) (cf. Wigoder 1989, 142). In Rumi's perspective, we do confront God as immanent and personal, who prepares the ground for man to get connected. God in Rumi's thought has been construed as a being that can be addressed as “*Thou*” and is anthropomorphic in some points of *Mathnawi*. For example, in *Moses and the Shepherd* story, this picture of God emerges. One day Moses met a shepherd who talked to God in plain and simple words, Rumi says. The shepherd was praying to his God in the following words: “Where do you live that I may serve you there? I'd mend your battered shoes and comb your hair” (Zamani 1378 Sh, 1:436-37). Having heard these words, Moses got angry and rebuked him. The shepherd felt broken and disappeared into the desert. Right after the shepherd's leave, God asked Moses why he separated a servant from his Lord. It does not matter how the shepherd was praying; what matters is the fact that he was trying to reach God. Although, the personal God was not confirmed by Moses, God allowed the shepherd to develop a personal and anthropomorphic relation with Him. This anecdote introduces us to God as both Transcendent and Immanent. The shepherd describes God using such terms that are blasphemous in the eyes of Moses. The shepherd's illustration of God is an immanent one; a God who needs to eat and sleep like man and has some human features in divine scale. It is interesting to note that Rumi regards both depictions of God the same, though one represents God in His transcendent and impersonal state while the other depicts Him as an immanent and personal deity. The following, for example, reads some verses of the shepherd's praying to God:

Moses saw a shepherd on the way, who was saying, “O God who chooseth (whom thou wilt),

Where art thou, that I may become thy servant and sew thy shoes and comb thy head?

That I may wash thy clothes and kill thy lice and bring milk to thee, O worshipful one;

That I may kiss thy little hand and rub thy little foot, (and when bedtime comes I may sweep thy little room;

O thou to whom all my goats be a sacrifice, O thou in remembrance of whom are my cries of ay and ah!" (Rumi 1940, 2:1720)

While Rumi depicts a personal God, this very God does not have any particular place and is present everywhere and more lucid than whole existence. If creatures are not able to visit the Divine Presence, it is due to the intensity of His epiphany:

God is manifest amongst others as the moon amidst the stars. (Rumi 1940, 1:1400)

The veil over the sun is just the light of the lord: the bat and the night have no lot therein. (Rumi 1940, 6:1205)

Then God, as understood by Buber and Rumi, is communicable, and man can establish a relation with Him.

Buber and Rumi on God/Man Relation

We can approach this relation from two points of view: God's relation with man and man's relation with God. As it was mentioned before, God/man relation, according to Buber, can by no means emerge in "*I-It*" form. Rumi also believes that God never seeks to engage with His servants for the sake of benefit and does not involve in "*I-It*" relation. He always establishes "*I-Thou*" relation with His servants: "I did not ordain (Divine worship) that I might make any profit; nay, but that I might do a kindness to (my) servants" (Rumi 1940, 2:1756).

However, this is not the case with man's relation with God as the ground is prepared for man to develop "*I-It*" relation with the Lord. This latter type of relation is limited to those who approach God to have their material needs granted, and upon the disappearance of needs, God is consigned to oblivion and the servant jumps out of the relation. Rumi is even of the belief that those men of faith who keep the Divine Company merely for the joy of paradise and in dread of inferno have already involved in "*I-It*" relation:

Seek the (answer) from the same quarter to which, in the hour of pain, thou bendest low, crying repeatedly, "O my lord!"

In the hour of pain and death thou turnest in that direction: how, when thy pain is gone, art thou ignorant?

At the time of tribulation thou hast called unto God, (but) when the tribulation is gone, thou sayest, "Where is the way?" (Rumi 1940, 3:1140)

Then, according to Rumi, even God has provided all conditions for His servants to establish "*I-It*" relation. "I" may eventually awaken to a state by obtaining genuine knowledge of God in the process of relation-developing in which s/he becomes submerged in Divine Beauty and forgets his/her material needs and seeks to get related in an unconditional fashion with his/her whole existence. In such a state, the "*I-It*" changes to "*I-Thou*" as man no longer approaches the Lord to meet his/her needs, but based on love: "A person ran to the baker for bread: on seeing the beauty of the baker, he gave up the ghost" (Rumi 1940, 1:2785).

Unlike Rumi, Martin Buber believes that man is not able to establish an "*I-It*" relation with God. As it was mentioned previously in the introduction to the essay, Martin Buber allows the "*I-It*" relation between man and lower creatures or even between a man and her/his fellowmen. Needless to say, it is not so unconceivable to speak of "*I-It*" relation between man and objects, plants, or animals. The world might even be so that there is no escape from such relations, but it has to be noted that this relation could occur between man and his/her fellowmen. "I" can treat the "other" merely as a means to reach his/her ends and degrade the "other" down to an inanimate thing. One can also find such a view in Rumi as he warns over the infamous consequences of "*I-It*" relation between man and her/his fellowmen. It is in the same spirit that Martin Buber argues that keeping with the "*I-It*" relation leads to the solitude of "I." This in turn distances man from humanness (Wyschogrod 2006, 715). Rumi says in this regard, "Those loves which are for the sake of a colour (outward beauty) are not love: in the end they are a disgrace" (Rumi 1940, 1:205).

The opposite is also conceivable as one would come across "*I-Thou*" relation between man and lower creatures. Although establishing a mutual and opening relation with objects seems improbable, one can still find such an idea both in Buber and Rumi. Buber believes that "I" can engage with objects, plants, and animals in "*I-Thou*" form, though s/he could also tread the reverse track and treat them as just means to fulfill a goal or cause damages. As one can turn

to a tree, for example, and experience it as an instrument, Buber argues, s/he could develop a nobler relation with it too: "But it can also happen, if will and grace are joined, that as I contemplate the tree I am drawn into a relation, and the tree ceases to be an It. The power of exclusiveness has seized me....what I encounter is neither the soul of a tree nor a dryad, but the tree itself" (Buber 1970, 58-59). Rumi has also dealt with such relation in the story of the loving pillar drawing on Islamic traditions:

The moaning pillar was complaining of (its) separation from the prophet, just as rational beings (might do).

The prophet said, "O pillar, what dost thou want?" It said, "My soul is turned to blood because of parting from thee.

I was thy support; (now) thou hast run away from me; thou hast devised a place to lean against upon the pulpit.

"Dost thou desire," said he, "to be made a date- palm, (so that) the people of the East and the West shall gather fruit from thee?"

Or that He (God) should make thee a cypress in yonder world, so that thou wilt remain everlastingly fresh and flourishing?"

*It replied, "I desire that whereof the life is enduring forever."
Hearken, O heedless one! Be not thou less than a piece of wood!
(Rumi 1940, 1:2113)*

In this story, one can see a full-blown dialogue between "I" and a superficially inanimate object. Prophet Muhammad speaks to and listens to the moaning of the pillar against which he would lean on until yesterday. The pillar is moaning why the Prophet has turned it to an "It": "Until yesterday I was your throne, but today a charming pulpit has been prepared for you and you have almost forgotten me and got engaged in another relation? I seek an 'I-Thou' relation with you, as I always received your lean against me with open arms." There is a remarkable point in this story: one can communicate and develop a relation with and even speak to a superficially inanimate object, and, more importantly, one can engage with this object not in "I-It" form but rather in "I-Thou" form. In this dialogue, the mutuality and unconditional state of "I-Thou" relation have been fully explicated. The loving pillar is not asking for a noble status or condition, but it merely seeks to survive—that is, to remain by the beloved. Rumi challenges us and says that we should not be lesser than a piece of wood. The wood seeks to engage in an "I-Thou" relation and fears from being involved in an "I-It" relation. How then can humans be so neglectful of this vital point? In an "I-It" relation, it is not only the other who is regarded as "it," but you too as an "I" could turn to an

“it” and this leads to your solitude.

Engaging in an “*I-Thou*” relation is of importance from different aspects. Firstly, it is only by telling “*Thou*” that one could obtain knowledge of “*I*.” The “other” in “*I-Thou*” relation, according to Buber, informs the individual of her/his inner potential forces and persuades him/her to realize them. Buber interprets the standard of human relations on this basis. “*I*” not only receives the “other” as his/her friend, Buber argues, but s/he acknowledges him/her inside. It is in these conditions that the potential force could flourish and enter the reality of life. Buber's thought is grounded in the idea that every real life is an encounter between man and the other. To state the matter otherwise: a real life is an encounter with the other. This is an encounter in which both sides retain their independent existences (cf. Buber 1965, xv). The relation with the “other” is so important for the realization of the gifts of “*I*” that we see Rumi have always resorted to the “other” during his whole lifetime to create mystical works. This “other” was Shams at the beginning, it turned to be Salah al-Din Zarkub, and finally Husam al-Din Chalabi represented it. It was indeed after his meeting with Shams that Rumi became Rumi; before that, Rumi's gifts were potential and latent in him. It was Shams who turned him into a decent man of prayer-mat to the plaything of kids. The second reason for the importance of the “other” is related to the issue of establishing relation with God. Martin Buber and Rumi view the presence of the “other” as very crucial for developing relation with the eternal “*Thou*.” Both thinkers insist that the path to God has to be sought for in the relations we establish with the “other.” These relations must be pursued in “*I-Thou*” form; otherwise, they could not be the lighthouse to God. Since man is God's vicegerent on the earth, s/he can reach God through developing relations with His servants and creatures. This has been discussed in a story in *Mathnawi*:

A voice came from heaven to Moses, saying, “O’ Moses why didst thou not visit me when I was sick?” Moses inquired the meaning of this dark saying, and the answer was, “When one of God's saints is sick, God regards his sickness as His own; and, therefore, he who desires to hold companionship with God must not forsake the saints.”(Rumi 2001, 130-31)

He answered, “O lord, thou hast no imperfection. (My) understanding is lost: unfold (the meaning of) these words.” God said, “Yea; a favourite and chosen slave (of Mine) fell sick. I am he. Consider well! His excusability (infirmity) is My excusability, his sickness is My sickness.” Whoever wishes to sit with God, let him sit in the presence of the saints. (Rumi 1940, 2:2160)

This story indicates the point that to reach God and develop a

relation with Him, one does not have to make a journey to the terra incognita. Rather s/he needs to stay in this world to try to get related with God's creatures in an unconditional manner as they are manifestations of Divine Presence. Thus conceived, every mutual relation with a "Thou" is a station in the path to God; whenever one encounters a finite "Thou" s/he has encountered God, indeed.

Buber does also believe that human relation with the "other" tiles the path for his/her relation with God. The "*I-Thou*" relationship between individuals end up as eternal "Thou" relations. When man discovers some unique and hidden gifts through her/his relations with other beings, in fact, s/he touches divine spark, and this causes her/him to feel Divine Presence in the world (cf. Silberstin 2005, 2:1057). Bubre states, "I cannot answer the lifelong address of God to me without answering at the same time for the other" (Buber 2002, 71). Every finite "Thou," Buber argues, ends up in an infinite "Thou." Every finite "Thou" is in fact a manifestation and shadow of the infinite "Thou." It should be mentioned, of course, that this referral to the Divine becomes realized through establishing relation with the finite "Thou." Then the presence of the eternal "Thou" is possible only when the finite "Thou" reveals her/him/itself, and the finite "Thou" reveals her/him/itself only when the individual encounters the "other" in an unconditional manner. Engaging in an infinite and unique relation with God, according to Buber and Rumi, does not require one to turn a brown eye to the world's reality. It suffices only to view whatever exists in the context of "*I-Thou*" relation. One does not have to deny the world, but s/he must just relocate it to its real place. Trying to deny the world does not make the man nearer to God in the same way that trying to take possession of the world does not make the man nearer to God. Only the one who sees the whole world in God attends the Divine Presence directly. Having relation with God, according to Buber and Rumi, implies seeing nothing but God and seeing everything in God. That is seeking nothing else but God and finding everything in God: "That all "I's" and "thou's" should became one soul and at last should be submerged in the Beloved" (Rumi 1940, 1:1788).

Having relation with God implies seeking everything in the Eternal Thou. According to Buber, only when "I" engages in "*I-Thou*" relation with her/his whole existence and makes all world her/his company, the unsearchable emerges. He describes human relation with God in the following words: "It is the universal relation into which all rivers pour without drying up for that reason. Sea and rivers—who would make bold to separate here and define limits? There is only the one flood from I to You, ever more infinite, the one boundless flood

of actual life” (Buber 1970, 155-56).

The Stages of Relation with God

As it was mentioned before, it is only through “*I-Thou*” relation, according to Buber, that one can develop a relation with God, and one cannot reach God in the “*I-It*” domain because one cannot experience Him nor can one take possession of Him. Those who assume so live in negligence. The highest degree of relation is “I”’s relation with infinite “Thou,” Buber argues. But Rumi has a wider perspective, as he allows both “*I-It*” and “*I-Thou*” relations with God.

Moreover, the noblest type of relation in Buber’s eyes is the “*I-Thou*” relation in which “I” encounters the eternal “Thou,” while according to Rumi, the most transcendent relation does not end up in the “*I-Thou*” relation. Rumi argues that man can establish relation with God in four stages: “*I-It*,” “*I-He*,” “*I-Thou*,” and “*I-I*.” The two “*I-It*” and “*I-Thou*” relations which relatively match with Buber’s ideas were discussed already. Then we turn to the two other relations which are not found in Buber’s thought. In his debates of human relation with God, Rumi speaks of “*I-He*” relation, which stands between “*I-It*” and “*I-Thou*” relations. Then, it holds a higher rank compared to “*I-It*” relation, as it has a lower rank compared to “*I-Thou*” relation. In some verses of Rumi, one can see that he addresses God as “He,” and we know that “He” in literature stands for the singular third person form. This type of address prepares the ground for dialogue and establishing relation while also indicating a distance.

In some of his love poems, Rumi says that the whole world is a radiation of “His” (Divine) Existence, but by using the word “His,” he shows that there is a distance between God and His servant (Rumi 1372 Sh., 1417). It is not God who should take the blame for this distance, but it is human being who is to blame. As a free being, man himself decides what kind of relation to establish with God. Needless to say, there is no instrumentalism in this relation, like the “*I-It*” relation, but it lacks the necessary conditions to help the man develop a love and cordial relation with God. It is noteworthy that the “*I-Thou*” relation is a mutual relation with openness and cordiality, yet there is still a distance to be overcome. However beautiful this relation may sound, it does not fully succeed to catch the eyes of Rumi. Then, he ascends to a higher stage and engages in the “*I-I*” relation, which is the most cherished and transcendent stage of human relation with God—a relation in which there is no room for distance and duality. In *Diwan-i Shams*, Rumi says that using “I” and “Thou” as appellations for man and God is itself a source of duality, which brings about distance. If we do not use “I” and “Thou,” we will reach a point where

“I” changes to “Thou,” in turn changing “Thou” to “I,” and there will be no duality and distance anymore (cf. Rumi 1372 Sh., 1930).

In this stage, there is no sign of the “Thou” who determines the limits; rather, this “Thou” evaporates and only “I” remains. Rumi has depicted the “*I-I*” relation so beautifully in the story of the one who knocked a friend’s door: One came up and knocked the beloved’s door. “Who are you?” the beloved asked. “It is me,” he answered. “Go back,” the beloved answered, “for you are still naïve and speak of ‘Me’ and claim to be a lover!” That person turned back and left his homeland and was wondering for one year. He came to the beloved’s door after one year and knocked it. “Who are you,” asked the beloved. “You,” answered the lover. “Now that you are ‘I’ enter the house,” the beloved said, “Do you know why I didn’t allow you in last year? Because there is no room for two ‘I’s in the house.” (Zamani 1378 Sh, 1:889)

In this story Rumi explains overcoming duality and engaging in the “*I-I*” relation in a very clear and beautiful manner. This story is one of the points where the debacle of I-ness as the requirement of union is well-demonstrated. Rumi believes that we have to leave the debate of “*I-Thou*” aside as the “*I-Thou*” relation itself is a sign of duality and distance though it is not such a far removed distance:

His friend called to him, “Who is at the door?” He answered, “Tis thou art at the door. O charmer of hearts.” “Now,” said the friend, “since thou art I, come in, O myself: there is not room in the house for two I’s. The double end of thread is not for the needle: inasmuch as thou art single, come into this needle.” (Rumi 1940, 1:3062)

Conclusion

The picture that Rumi and Buber offer of human relation with God is one which can be realized. Buber initiates a paradigm of relation according to which man cannot help but engage in either “*I-It*” or “*I-Thou*” relations. Man has been designed in a way that her/his humanity is hinged upon establishing relation with the “other.” Man can discover her/his being as an “I” when s/he develops a relation with the “other.” This relation can be varied according to the attitudes of “I.” Man could have a utilitarian and instrumentalist relation with the “other.” This being the case, s/he engages in “*I-It*” relation where the individual does not involve with her/his whole being and consequently cannot have a genuine knowledge of her/him. To touch the true “I” and have the gifts flourished, one needs to engage in a mutual and unconditional relation which is associated with openness—the “*I-Thou*” relation. This is a relation which Buber and Rumi themselves have experienced for many times to reach true “I.”

One of the differences between Rumi and Buber lies in the domains of relation. Martin Buber insists that man can never establish an “*I-It*” relation with God, but Rumi believes that God has permitted man to engage in such a relation. The other difference lies in the stances that these thinkers have taken on the stages of relation. The lowest stage of relation, according to Rumi, is the “*I-It*” relation where “I” does not think but of her/his own losses, benefits, prosperity, and perfection, seeing the “other” just as a means to reach their goals. This relation is temporary due to its generic nature. Then, a higher relation is the “*I-Thou*” relation, in which “Thou” may be finite or infinite. The prerequisite of reaching the infinite “Thou” (God) is developing relation with the finite “Thou.” The noblest stage of relation, according to Buber, is “I”’s relation with the infinite “Thou.” This relation is considered by him as the most cherished and transcendent type of relation, a relation which, despite the independence of both sides, includes openness and mutuality. However, Rumi does not regard the “*I-Thou*” relation as the highest stage of relation. The apex of relation is where “I” and “Thou” do not independently engage with each other; rather, both sides of the relation become “I” and touch existential union. Generally speaking, in western thought, the highest degree of relation is sought for survival, while in eastern thought, the noblest stage of relation is extinction. Relation as understood by Buber is in fact reduced to two stages, and human relation with God is only narrowed down to the second stage. On the other hand, Rumi gives a quadruple taxonomy of relation and believes that man can reach the Divine in all four stages.

Martin Buber offers new and applicable ideas of relation, and this is why his philosophy of relation serves as a paradigm for other thinkers. However, when we compare Buberian paradigm with Rumi's ideas, we come across a new paradigm which is deeper and more extensive than Buber's “*I-Thou*” paradigm.

Bibliography

- Buber, Martin. 1965. *The Knowledge of Man*. Translated by Maurice Friedman and Ronal Gregore Smith. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International.
- . 1970. *I and Thou*. Translated by Walter Kaufman. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.
- . 1988. *Eclipse of God*. Translated by Gottesfins Ternis. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International.
- . 2002. *Between Man and Man*. Translated by Ronald G smith. New York: Routledge.

A Comparative Study of Martin Buber and Rumi on God-Man Relation / 95

- Gilman, Neil. 2000. "Contemporary Jewish Theology." In *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, edited by Jacob Neusher. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Jones, Paul W. 2000. "Buber, Martin." In *World Philosophers and Their Work*, edited by John K. Roth. Pasadena, CA: Salem Press.
- Rotenstreich, Nathan. 2009. *Immediacy and Its Limits: A Study in Martin Buber's Thought*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Rumi, Jalal al-Din Muhammad. 2001. *Masnawi i Ma'navi: Teachings of Rumi*. Translated by E. H. Whinfield. Ames, IA: Omphaloskepsis.
- . 1372 Sh. *Diwan-i Shams*, edited by Furuzanfar. Tehran: Amir Kabir Publishing House.
- . 1940. *Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi*. Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Silberstein, Laurence J. 2005. "Buber, Martin." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Lindsay Jones. Detroit: Thomson Gale.
- Simmon, A. E. 2005. "Martin Buber." In *The New Encyclopedia of Britannica*. Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.
- Wigoder, Geoffrey, ed. 1989. "Buber, Martin." In *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism*. New York: New York University Press.
- Wood, Robert E. 1969. *Martin Buber Ontology*. Evanston: North Western University Press.
- Wright, Tamra. 1998. "Buber, Martin (1878-1965)." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward Craig. New York: Routledge.
- Wyschogrod, Michael. 2006. "Buber, Martin." In *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Donald. M. Borchert. Detroit: Thomson Gale.
- Zamani, Karim. 1378 Sh. *The Comprehensive Exposition of Mathnawi*. Etela'at Publishers: Tehran.