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The Relevance of Martin Buber's Theory of Dialogue in Contemporary Religious Organization Leadership in Tanzania

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In intention of this paper is to outline Martin Buber's ontological turning to the other through the development of his dialogical theory. This outline substantiates dialogue as an important element of religious leadership. Dialogue fosters the development of genuine relationships with others and with the world. It is the uncovering and creation of meaning through awareness of what is sacred in us, others, and the world. Buber's theory provides us with the specific details of the art of turning to the other which can help us navigate our ways into dialogue. Human being must accept the fact of the existence of broken leadership which is caused by human beings themselves. Hence, the solution goes back to human being's relationship. Since, society is grounded through relationships; therefore, human relationship must be restored to heal the broken religious leadership. I-Thou or subject to subject is the kind of relationship which can restore unity in an organization. The crisis of organization is caused by I-It or subject to object relationship, in which another person is treated as an object, and hence conflicts, mistrust, self-centred are caused to the organization. The peace of an advice which Martin Buber gives to all leaders is that the dignity of human person should be respected by being open to one another and by being treated equally as human being. Therefore, honest and sincere dialogue between man and man is a prerequisite to build an organization or society for the common good.

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INTRODUCTION

Martin Buber was a prominent twentieth century philosopher, religious thinker, political activist, and educator. Born in Austria in 1878, he spent most of his life in German and Israel. He died in 1965. He is best known for his book titled *I and Thou* which distinguishes between I-Thou and I-It modes of existence. All his works are written in German and Hebrew. Because his ideas are mainly based on the question of dialogue, Buber is regarded as the father of philosophy of dialogue, as his writings contain the foundations of dialogic philosophy.¹ In his philosophical thought, Buber pays a particular attention on communication aspects of human existence. His philosophy is always characterised as existential philosophy which emphasizes on the whole person and dialogue.

The research on Buber's dialogic communication has been important and relevant to religious institutions or organizational leadership today. The importance of Buber's dialogical theory is that brings a great impact to all leaders in relation with their subjects. These investigations point to the authentic human dialogue, open a new glimpse at the importance, and meaning of dialogue in people's life in leadership especially during this period whereby there is high technological development. The advancement of science and technology has resulted to the increased crisis of relationship among the organizations in Tanzania. Relationship between employees and employers; organizations

are realizing the need for dialogue. The need for communicative skills of a variety of employees and to use these skills in order to improve policies, products, and customer experience.

The philosophical approach of Martin Buber on dialogue which basically is centred on the I-Thou communication perspective is crucial in human existence. In this context the importance and relevance of Buber's insights into contemporary media and technology society, which is gradually moving away from the authentic dialogue, interpersonal relations are replaced by virtual communication, where an individual hide behind an externally created image.²

Another important aspect that arises from analysis of Buber's dialogic communication is related to the duality laying in the human existence, that is, an individual is always exposed to a choice: either he steps into authentic existence, opening up to another individual through the relation, or turns away from another individual and will remain in the restricted and egoistic world, that is in inauthentic existence.³ The dialogue, which is referred to by Buber, is a life dialogue distinguished by its uniqueness and individuality.

Buber's dialogic communication opens up a dialogue as a mystery of human existence. The essence and goal of this dialogue is the very being of two individuals' together, closeness of their souls rather than a certain overall achieved result.

¹Gorzna, Sylvia. "Martin Buber: Father of the Philosophy of Dialogue." *European Journal of Science and Theology* 10, no. 5 (2014): 45-53.

² Gorzna, Sylvia. "Martin Buber: Father of the Philosophy of Dialogue." *European Journal of Science and Theology* 10, no. 5 (2014): 6

³ Fife, Stephen T. "Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue and implications for qualitative family research." *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 7, no. 3 (2015): 208-224, 1

Dialogue thus becomes a central element of any model of an organizational transformation.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- To examine the role of leadership in organization in Tanzanian context within the leadership of the Stigmatine.
- To describe Martin Buber's theory of dialogue and its contemporary relevance
- To discuss the role and relevance of Martin Buber's theory of dialogue in religious leadership in Tanzania.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In this paper, analytical and critical methods were used. The analytical method comes from analytic philosophy which emphasizes on the study of language and the logical analysis of concepts. The analytical method aims at breaking the concepts down in order to understand them and differentiate them from other concepts. The method involves critical thinking skills and the evaluation of facts and information relative to the research to be conducted. In the study, thus I have used critical thinking skills and evaluation of Buber's facts and information in relation to the organizational situations on the aspect of leadership and see to how dialogue maybe influenced in the organizations.

Moreover, critical methodology is that which is based on intersubjectivity dialogue and egalitarian relationship between the research team and those being researched. Current societies are characterized for using dialogue in different domains; seeing it as necessary for social progress and for avoiding different social conflicts. It is a research methodology which explicitly concerned with the choices about linking theories and research methods in any given research context. Despite attempts to develop distinctly critical research methods, mentioned above, critical research is by no

means limited to those methods perceived as critical.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this research paper, I have used *Yankelovich theory of dialogue* which was given by Daniel Yankelovich. His theory is explained better in his book *The Magic of Dialogue*, as he notes that, as with so many of the significant thinkers on dialogue who have emerged from a wide range of professions, his discovery of the transformative power of dialogue grew directly out of work in his own field.⁴ Public opinion research showed him that, contrary to the conventional view, public opinion does not simply develop through the analysis of facts supplied by the media, but through a process of dialogue. Again, contrary to the conventional view, he found that the interplay of facts, values and feelings in this process often leads to considerable wisdom in public judgement. His experience on the boards of various organisations similarly showed that 'in the crunch, on the issues that really count, where the future of the institution is at stake... it is dialogue rather than factual analysis that most engages board members and shapes their judgement'.⁵ His experience in both contexts underlined a crucial insight: the better our dialogue skills the wiser the judgements we reach through dialogue. In his writings and practical endeavours, he has sought to elucidate and build capacity for skilful dialogue.

Yankelovich theory of dialogue has helped me in the study in explaining whether dialogue is helpful upon organizational leadership following the principles that were offered and explained by Yankelovich as he considers dialogue to have unique and highly valuable properties. According to the theory, dialogue can 'strengthen relationships and trust, forge alliances, find truths that bind us together, and bring people into alignment on goals and strategies'.⁶ He affirms Buber's insight that in dialogue we reach beyond the confines of self to an authentic encounter with the other.⁷ Dialogue is a way of being and a way of building relationship. He emphasises, though, that dialogue is not an arcane

⁴ Daniel Yankelovich, *The Magic of Dialogue*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 23ff.

⁵Yankelovich, *The Magic of Dialogue*, 27.

⁶Yankelovich, *The Magic of Dialogue*, 217.

⁷Yankelovich, *The Magic of Dialogue*, 14 f.

and esoteric form of intellectual exercise that only the few can play. It is a practical, everyday tool accessible to us all.⁸

ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP INTANZANIAN CONTEXT AND THE STIGMATINES LEADERSHIP

This paper categorises leadership into two areas: transactional and transformational leadership. The two leadership categories are important for effective and successful organization but depending on the nature of the organizational culture. The difference between the two is that while transactional leadership establishes the norms and measures of employee behaviour and then observes employees for any mistakes and deviation,⁹ transformational leadership is about relationships among people, and creating real significant change by emphasizing values and creating a shared vision among those in the organization.¹⁰ Transformational leaders view themselves as social engineers in some ways. In other words, the first priority of transformational leadership is to identify and understand the needs of the individuals in the organization. It is after identifying the needs of individuals, they elevate those needs. However, for transactional leadership, leaders set objectives, assign tasks, and clarify expectations so that employees can achieve the desired outcomes of the organization. This type of leadership looks like laissez faire leadership, a leadership whereby a leader acts when forced. However, it is not a bad form of leadership per se; rather it is part of the skill set needed of any effective leader.

Being founded by St. Gaspar Bertoni, in Verona, Italy, Stigmatine Congregation was intended as a missionary and educational ministry. The congregation grew up throughout the world. "Father Gaspar Bertoni founded the Congregation of the

Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the particular charism received from God, he intended to be a group of religious, consecrated to the following of Christ sent by the Father".¹¹ The roles of leadership in which St. Gaspar established as a leader were intrinsic of religious leaders, also termed as shepherds. St. Gaspar was a living rule, in which all community members imitated him. He was very close to Jesus Christ through prayer, Eucharistic celebration, Eucharistic adoration, and devotion to Blessed Virgin Mary. Like St. Paul, Gaspar invited his followers to imitate him. "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ".¹² This implies that St. Gaspar meant that all his followers should lead the group of people or members of the congregation in the light of the leadership of Jesus Christ as the role model.

Religious leader should provide guidance in the call towards truth and rid of deviation by showing the true path and to discipline those who strayed from the teachings of Christianity. One's attitude should be in tandem with principles found in Holy Scripture. The Bible said, (Galatians 6:2), "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ"¹³. If religious leaders fail to perform his responsibility, then they fail to spread love and courtesy to their people, as the Bible put it (Proverbs 3: 12), "for the Lord reproved him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights".¹⁴

Religious leaders should serve as protector. That protection does not cater only the physical aspects, but most importantly is safeguarding the beliefs of those adherent from deviant teachings, insufficient teachings of Christ and from unclear and unverified sources. The Bible put it (Matthew 7: 15), Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

⁸Yankelovich, *The Magic of Dialogue*, 15.

⁹ Cf. Jason Martin, "Transformation and Transactional Leadership: An Exploration of Gender, Experience and Institution Type", in *Libraries and Academy*, Vol. 15, No 2, April 2015, (331-351), 3.

¹⁰ Martin, "Transformation and Transactional Leadership: An Exploration of Gender, Experience and Institution Type", 4.

¹¹ Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, *Constitutions and General Directory*, (Pretoria: The Most Holy Redeemer.) no 1

¹² Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, no 2

¹³ The Bible. (1980), New York: American Bible Society (containing the Old and New Testaments Revised Standard Version). 1015

¹⁴ The Bible. (1980), New York: American Bible Society (containing the Old and New Testaments Revised Standard Version).549.

Contemporary life of the Stigmatine Organization

The loving presence of the Lord keeps alive our decision to energize the charism and spirituality of our religious family for the sake of continuity and to update the project of St. Gaspar Bertoni. This is an invitation to all Stigmatines, especially living in Tanzania, to realise and develop the project of the father founder. “When we look back with pride the history of our mission what we see is heroism of our pioneers, their dedication, their creativity, their ability to interpret events, their mutual relationships, their interactions, and their response to the challenge of their era”.¹⁵

The question we need to ask ourselves as Stigmatines is that do our institutions answer to actual human needs, the needs of the congregation, or the needs of the organization or the needs of the society at large? Sometimes we think that we have their dedication, their creativity, their greatness, their interactions, and their good leadership. This may not necessarily be true.

Religious Institutes of the Stigmatine Congregation have lost the attentiveness of the history of the father founder St. Gaspar Bertoni. They forget that St. Gaspar continues to be the indispensable point of reference in order to remain faithful, over time, to the project inspired by God. Some confreres begin in the spiritual life from the opposite direction. There is no commitment, in other words, there is no involvement and belonging to the one who calls us, “Live in me as I live you”. Thus, even in our relationship with the Congregation, we must accept the invitation of St. Gaspar Bertoni to be very attached to it. “The disciple of Christ is not a person isolated in self-absorbed spirituality, but a person in a community, giving himself to others”.¹⁶

Stigmatines are or should be “one heart and soul”¹⁷. This identity does not erase the gifts or the uniqueness of each Stigmatine, but invites a commitment to a shared spirituality and a shared charisma. Concerning life of the c religious Buber

writes: “even those communities which call the spirit their master and salvation, their promised land, the religious communities, are community only if they serve their lord and master the midst of simple, unexalted, unselected reality, a reality not so much chosen by them as sent to them just as it is; they are community only if they prepare the way to the promised land through the thickest pathless hour. True it is not works that count but the work of faith does. A community of faith truly exists only when it is a community of work”.¹⁸

Leaders are not able to play their roles of animating people especially the spirit of being a servant. Not only leaders who are not able to play their roles but also many members of the congregation are self-centred, have no common vision, obedient, and skills of listening to the leadership has decelerated contrary to the previous religious life. Most of us as Stigmatines have been associated with beginnings of some institutions of the congregation in Tanzania. The pioneering days were exiting. There were times of severe testing, storms of life and other difficulties the congregation encountered. In spite of all these challenges times, there were also moments of triumphs. Our whole hearts were in our work for the betterment of the growth of the congregation. There were no dull moments. Leadership of the congregation animated members well. As St. Gaspar Bertoni says, “the members of the congregation will have one mind and heart”.¹⁹

Roles of Leadership

Religious Leader is someone who follows Christ and inspires others to follow him as well. Transformational leaders view themselves as social engineers in some ways. Religious leaders play a great role of creating real significant change by emphasizing values and creating a shared vision among those in the organization or institution.²⁰

In this paper, the characteristics of the leader are identified as: the leader who knows his followers through knowing them by understanding their needs. The religious owns the soul and character to

¹⁵ Thomas Menampampil as db, *Never Grow Tired*: (Pauline Sisters: Bumbai, 2008), 63.

¹⁶ Francesco Discorsa in Brazil, *Gionarta Mondiale della Gioventu*, 2013. 5

¹⁷ Constitution of the Founder, no 25.

¹⁸ Herberg, *The writings of Martin Buber*, 128.

¹⁹ Cf. Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, no. 25

²⁰ Martin, “Transformation and Transactional Leadership: An Exploration of Gender, Experience and Institution Type”, 4.

nurture and nourish followers with spiritual feed of God's words so as to produce a competent Christian.

A leader is called to play a role of organizing the group of people into task which they can perform effectively. They should know how to assign the roles to the individuals as per their ability to bring out the best from them. This function is vital to increase the team's and individual's productivity.²¹

Traits of Good Leadership within a Religious Organization

Passionate leaders have a strong, uncontrollable desire that pushes them forward. The amount of passion one has directly affects one's attitude, energy, and that of your followers as well. The following are the traits of a good leader in the religious organisation. Integrity which is an act of having strong moral values is an important leadership trait. Discipline in leadership is less about punishing and rewarding others, but rather having self-control. A high level of determination and willpower play a significant part in your ability to be self-disciplined. As a leader, it is your responsibility to maintain the team morale and keep moving forward. The most difficult job for a leader is to persuade others to follow. Empathetic leaders use this trait to power the business, as well. Empowered team members are more likely to make decisions that are in the best interest of the company and the customer. A leader should have the ability to take the right decision at the right time. A leader should think long and hard before taking a decision but once the decision is taken, stand by it. Putting together strong teams that work well is another trait of great leaders.²²

²¹ Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, no. 27

²² Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, no. 27

²³ Gordon, Mordechai. "Listening as Embracing the other: Martin Buber's Philosophy of dialogue". *Educational Theory* 61, 2(2011), 1.

MARTIN BUBER'S THEORY OF DIALOGUE AND ITS CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Martin Buber's Theory of Dialogue

According to Martin Buber, dialogue is defined as being present to the other and creating a space in which the other can speak his or her own words and meaning. Buber argues that genuine listening involves encouraging the other in order to create his/her own meanings, which may be different from one's own.²³

In Buber's view, dialogue can only be grasped as an ontological phenomenon- a meeting of one whole being with another whole being. I-Thou relating points to the quality of genuine relationship in which partners are mutually unique and whole. The alternative mode, he terms I-It, bespeaks fragmentedness and personal incompleteness.²⁴

The mode of being in relation is affirming the other not as an object, but as another subject that cannot be objectified or labelled. In a recruitment process, for example, an HR manager might engage in a genuine dialogue with the job candidate without objectifying her or him.²⁵

Moreover, Buber argues that we tend to organize our everyday around the I-It to reduce our existential anxieties, which is neither necessarily wrong nor evil. Many great scientific and organizational achievements can be credited to this organizing principle. But it comes with a price, as the profound limitations leave us alienated from each other, and even from ourselves.²⁶

According to Buber, as noted by Moderchai, we are either in the mode of I-It or I-Thou. Switching between modes allows for a dynamic turning to the other as an act of inclusion. As I meets, Thou, the

²⁴ Martin Buber, *Knowledge of Man; selected Essays* (New York: Humanity Books, 1998),59.

²⁵ Mordechai. "Listening as Embracing the other, 2.

²⁶ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans, Walter Kaufmann (New York, Touchstone, 1970),54

connection is defined "in between" both, as self and other are reciprocal partners.²⁷

Buber argues that genuine dialogue requires participants to bring what is really in their heads to the dialogue, "without artifice, seeming, or pretence". In I-Thou a person becomes whole through a relation to another self. Buber emphasizes the importance of embracing and revealing one's personhood.²⁸

For Buber, "The Thou encounters me by grace - it cannot be found by seeking" No person can permanently stay in an I-Thou relation. We must find ways to nurture and renew those moments of direct, genuine, and spontaneous encounters if we are to cultivate generative relationship.²⁹

Dialogue as Relation

In his classic work *I and Thou*, Buber distinguished between the "I-Thou" relationship that is direct, mutual, present, and open, and the "subject-It" relation. What is essential is not what goes on within the minds of the partners in a relationship but what happens between them.

I-Thou Relationship

I-Thou is the mode of human relationship in which one beholds the other person in the fullness of his/her being and with regard for his/their inalienable human dignity, according to Kierkegaard's *Metaphysics*.³⁰ Pope John Paul II's thinking in human relation adopted Buber's theory of dialogue, however his point of departure was from ethical point of view. In his view, the dignity of the human person, human rights language, and an

objective moral order all depend on the universality of human nature.³¹

For Martin Buber, the primary mode of relating is the dialogic I-Thou relation. This implies that when one is in the mode of I-It relationship is not fully living. Buber's interests are in asserting the inherently dialogical nature of our being. I-Thou is the relationship of subject to subject, is a relationship of mutuality and reciprocity. This mode of being in relation is characterized by "mutuality, directness, presentness, intensity, and ineffability affirming the other not as an object, but as another subject".³²

I-Thou relation is the encounter of one whole unique entity with another in such a way that the other is known without being subsumed under a universal. In contrast, I-It relations view the other as something which can be used to serve our own purposes and thus has the nature of one-sidedness.³³

I-it Relationship

I-It is the mode of relating in which we experience others as an object with certain characteristics and capabilities, with some functional motivation driving the exchange. Buber writes that the I-It self-consciousness "knows himself as a subject, but this subject can appropriate as much as it wants to".³⁴ I-It is monologic and produces one-way relationships with objects and object-like persons. It takes place within a man and not between him and the world. Buber said, "If true self-sufficiency requires I-Thou recognition, then the I-It self-consciousness must be limited."³⁵

²⁷ Gordon, Mordechai. "Listening as Embracing the other: Martin Buber's Philosophy of dialogue." *Educational Theory* 61, 2(2011), 1.

²⁸ Reitz, Megan. "How does Martin Buber's concept of I-Thou dialogue inform the theory and practice of relational leadership? (2014) 7

²⁹ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*. 2nd edition, Ronald Gregor Smith(trans), (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons,1958),89.

³⁰ Megan. "How does Martin Buber's concept of I-Thou dialogue inform the theory and practice of relational leadership? 20.

³¹ Megan. "How does Martin Buber's concept of I-Thou dialogue inform the theory and practice of relational leadership? 20.

³² Megan. "How does Martin Buber's concept of I-Thou dialogue inform the theory and practice of relational leadership?." 55.

³³ Megan. "How does Martin Buber's concept of I-Thou dialogue inform the theory and practice of relational leadership? 20.

³⁴ Hudson, Stephen. "Intersubjectivity of Mutual Recognition and the I-Thou: A Comparative Analysis of Hegel and Buber." *Minerva: An Internet Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2010) 14.

³⁵ Martin Buber, *The Knowledge of Man*, 12.

Levels of Buber's Dialogic Communication

From Buber's dialogic communication a number of levels can be identified. In this paper, two levels of monologue and dialogue are identified and discussed.

Monologue Communication

Monologue communication, is that communication which is employed by a person for a reason of seeking to command, coerce, manipulate, conquer, dazzle, deceive, or exploit. In his work, *I and Thou*, Buber raised the issue of the superiority of the relation of 'I and Thou', which is the foundation of the philosophy of dialogue, over I and It. The border between these two fundamental relations: I-It and I-Thou is marked by two fundamental attitudes: withdrawal and openness. Buber considered encounter, means creating a real relation between a person and the world, as the most important notion. Encounter is the only proper way of getting acquainted with man. Even encounter of man with man cannot be planned and caused because it is connected with freedom and favour.³⁶

Dialogic Communication

In terms of process and attitude, dialogic communication is the polar opposite of monologic communication and may well be the foundation of the higher standards for ethical business communication and ethical religious communication. Dialogue communication is characterised by the relationships and attitudes the participants have towards each other. Dialogue communication, therefore leads to genuine conversation between the two parties. In an I-Thou mode of relation both participants exist as polarities of relation whose centre lies in between. Communication is not one-way transmission, but a two-way dialogic transaction.³⁷

Distance Relation

For Buber, distance is the precondition for the emergence of relation whether I-Thou or I-It. He

took anthropological and ontological perspectives as his point of departure. According to Buber, the principle of human life is of twofold and being built up in twofold movements, which is of such kind that the one movement is the presupposition of the other. The first movement is called primal setting at distance and the second movement is entering into relation.³⁸

Confirmation and Inclusion

Confirmation simply means interhuman, but it is not simply social or interpersonal. Unless one is confirmed in one's uniqueness as the person one can become, one is only seemingly confirmed. The confirmation of the other must include an actual experiencing of the other side of the relationship so that one can imagine quite concretely what another is feeling, thinking, and knowing. Inclusion, or "imagining the real," does not abolish the basic distance between oneself and the other. It is rather a bold swinging over into the life of the person one confronts. I can alone make that person present in his or her wholeness, unity, and uniqueness.³⁹

Dialogue as Being

Martin Buber's understanding of dialogue is that it provides an ontological orientation to dialogue, that is to say, our felt sense of relationality. According to Buber, by nature man is a dialogue being, you cannot talk about person without discussing about dialogue, relationship, and communication. Dialogue is genuine in the sense that where two people meet with the mind that they receive each other, feel the presence of each other, and turn to each other. The whole being for Buber, is just that the response of the body, mind, and spirit.⁴⁰

³⁶ Cf. Gorzina, Sylvia. "Martin Buber: Father of the Philosophy of Dialogue." 47.

³⁷ Buber, *The Knowledge of Man*, 68.

³⁸ Cf. Buber, *The Knowledge of Man*, 59.

³⁹ Maurice Friedmann, *Buber and Dialogical Psychotherapy*, 3.

⁴⁰ Buber, *I and Thou*, 6.

BUBER'S THEORY OF DIALOGUE AND RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP IN TANZANIA

Buber's Theory of Dialogue in Religious Leadership

Subjectivity

“Intersubjectivity Theory sees human identity as an emergent property of the relational field itself. It is a system theory “in which experiential worlds and intersubjectivity fields are seen as equiprimordially, mutually constituting one another in circular fashion”.⁴¹ Theory sees human identity as an emergent property of the relational field itself. In I-Thou encounter, people relate to each other as authentic beings, without judgment, qualification, or objectification. "Spirit is not in the I but between I and Thou". In intersubjectivity people are called to relate to each other as authentic beings, without judgment, qualification, or objectification. Buber gave ontological status to the "between"-a mysterious force, "presence," or creative milieu, in which the experience of being a self-arises.⁴²

Leadership and Dialogue

Communication as it is understood from Buber's perspective, precludes the notion of a relationship that involves leader and follower. Intersubjectivity represents the overcoming of pure objectivity. The concept of dialogue is, of course, central to the analysis of leadership and communication. The I-It and the I-Thou are two modes of existence for Buber. Buber argues that when we adopt an I-It attitude in the presence of others we impoverish our experience of the world. The highest human challenge is to be guided in one's life by I-Thou encounters, he writes.⁴³

Dialogue involves maintaining one's own position and accepting that of the other. This is different from empathy, which implies abandoning one's position in relation to another. For Buber dialogue

and communication are not dimensions of the self, rather they act as the reality in which the self comes into being. The question is whether it is possible for dialogue to occur between leader and follower. Buber's answer appears to be that such an acceptance is unlikely.⁴⁴

Leadership is an aspect of communication. According to Buber, a leader is the one who is open for dialogue. I-It relationship is that which one relates to the other only in directly non-mutually. At the end of the dialogue there is compromise or agreement to differ. Effective communication is necessary so that other things can occur such as effective performance, motivation, inspiration, and understanding the vision. This approach seeks to transmit the leader's vision to others in an orderly way. A leader who seeks to dominate or to control others, then is not a leader.⁴⁵

Intersubjectivity is the thing that creates the possibility of knowing the other. A person who relates dialogically may, in a moment of grace, encounter the other as Thou. The highest human challenge is to be guided in one's life by I-Thou encounters.

Buber's Theory of Dialogue and Religious Life in Congregations

Martin Buber's theory of dialogue can be applicable to all types of leadership. For him, human beings possess twofold attitude towards the world, I-It, and I-Thou. Buber criticises Jean Paul Sartre for his subject-object relationship.⁴⁶

Most of religious leaders apply I-It mode of relationship, probably this might be the reason as to why most of the religious congregations have lost the sense of belonging. It is an invitation to all leaders to apply Buber's theory in order to maintain

⁴¹ Buber, I and Thou, 6.

⁴²Hudson, Stephen. "Intersubjectivity of Mutual Recognition and the I-Thou: A Comparative Analysis of Hegel and Buber." *Minerva: An Internet Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2010) 9.

⁴³ Ian Ashman, "Communication and Leadership": Special edition of Leadership: (In Journal of Strategy of Innovation: University of Bradford, 2000), 1

⁴⁴ Cf. Blackstone, J. (2006). Intersubjectivity and Nonduality in the Psychotherapeutic Relationship.4

⁴⁵ Buber, The knowledge of Man, 12

⁴⁶The Knowledge of Man, 24.

peace, harmony, and unity in religious congregation.⁴⁷

The I-Thou relationship stresses the mutual and holistic existence of two entities. It is an encounter of equals, who recognise each other as such. A good leader should make a place enjoyable atmosphere to people so that they fully exercise their talents for God's glory.⁴⁸

Superiors in various congregations should be open for dialogue with community members. Religious leaders are called to encourage mutual inter-religious relations between the Christian and non-Christian communities. It is through involvement with confreres or members that the I-Thou mode of relationship is attained.

Christian leaders also have the role to play of recognizing the existence of other religion aside it, particularly Islam and the Muslims. Buber's theory of I-Thou relationship provides medium for building inter-faith relation. Religious leaders are called to incorporate Buber's theory in their leadership.

CONCLUSION

It is indeed reasonable to conclude that despite the cultural shift that has altered how people communicate, with interpersonal contact becoming increasingly digitized, objectified, and packaged in virtual platforms, Buber's theory of communication is still important and relevant to religious organizations and their members. Dialogue is fading, relationship is more objectified. Religious leaders need to ask themselves is that, will the next generation give the primacy to the sense of presence in the dialogue?

Martin Buber detailed the qualities that characterize a real encounter or I-Thou meeting, between two people. Martin Buber's theory of dialogue gives the solution of the contemporary religious life today. Every day we encounter other people and we

communicate. Through this communication we develop a relationship and form community.

Buber saw the essential of I-Thou mode of relationship, but at the same time thought humanity was losing its ability to orient toward the Thou. The I-It attitude is increasingly depersonalizing and alienating as it becomes structuralized in human institutions.

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⁴⁷ Buber, *The Knowledge of Man*, 27.

⁴⁸ Henchey, Joseph. "Abandonment to God and Availability to the Church St. Gaspar Bertoní (1777-1853)." *Angelicum* 67, no. 1 (1990): 87-107.

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