

AN ONTOLOGICAL VIEW OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS: A PHILOSOPHY OF EXISTENCE

Omar S Alattas

We come to this world and find ourselves in relationships with other human beings. We find ourselves co-existing among parents, friends, lovers and the rest of the world. One could philosophically ask, how does a relationship come about? To answer this question, I would like to start with an existential presupposition, make the use of the thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gabriel Marcel, and conclude with the recent philosopher Sunnie Kidd.

To phenomenologically show an existential account of human relationships, I would like to start with the presupposition that existence precedes any human endeavors.¹ In this case, one is or is not. If one is, then the primordial ground here is being. A certain question arises here: how do we find ourselves involved with others? Or as Heidegger would say, how does *Dasein* as Being-in-the-world become Being-in-the-world-with-others?

To go further, I would like to utilize the views of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gabriel Marcel. For Merleau-Ponty, we are embodied existents. This gives possibility for accessing the world in which we are embodiments. This embodiment, nonetheless, is a conscious embodiment. Consciousness is consciousness of. Consciousness intends towards life. We are intentional beings oriented towards understanding, experience and shared meaningfulness. This gives the possibility of being open towards the other; the possibility for *Dasein* as Being-in-the-world-with-others.

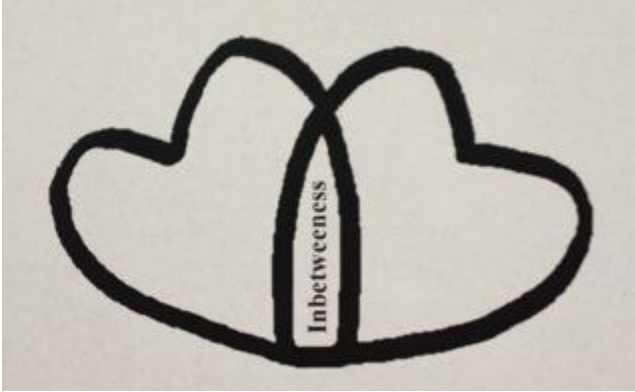
For Marcel, this openness is spiritual availability. Spiritual availability gives rise to disposability, which is a measure for one's availability towards the other. This sets precedent for the intersubjective ground shared between one and the other.

It is not impossible, however, for one to be spiritually available, disposable and meet someone who is not. This gives rise to reciprocity. Reciprocity is necessary, for the intersubjective relationship to take place, but cannot be demanded. In this manner, intersubjectivity is a co-constituted phenomenon. Thus, relationships, romantic or otherwise, are co-constituted phenomena. This is spiritual participation.

For Sunnie Kidd, the intersubjective heart represents the spiritual dimension of *Inbetweenness* and the spiritual participators within (human beings in relationships).² That which is between two people, in this view, is considered physical within this dimension of space and time. That which is inbetween is spiritual. *Inbetweenness* is, therefore, the encompassing all-pervading field where all existents are spiritually connected. This field is the cosmic connection of it all where existents spontaneously move and vibrate to participate through spiritual, reciprocal, and unnecessarily symmetrical relationships. It is through such relationships that each goes beyond oneself to transcend vertically and horizontally towards one's own most possibilities. When one and the other come together as an intersubjective heart within *Inbetweenness*, they can both go where neither of them alone could go.

1) For example, saying, “I think; therefore, I am” is philosophically fallacious.

2) The Intersubjective Heart, Sunnie D. Kidd.



NOTES:

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

Kidd, James, W. Ph.D. “Themes and the Thematic Field of the Dimensional Field Of *Inbetweenness*.” Inbetweenness.com (2008).

Kidd, Sunnie, D. “On the Philosophy of Sunnie D. Kidd, *Inbetweenness: Movement and Vibration*, compiled by James W. Kidd, Ph.D.” Inbetweenness.com (2006).

Marcel, Gabriel. *Creative Fidelity*, Trans., Intro. Robert Rosthal. New York: Noonday Press, 1970.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1962.