

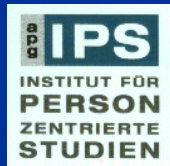


# Psychotherapy is dialogue or it is not psychotherapy

The personal and political challenge  
of being a person-centered psychotherapist

## Peter F. Schmid

Institute for Person-Centered Studies, Austria  
Sigmund Freud University, Vienna  
Saybrook Graduate School, San Francisco

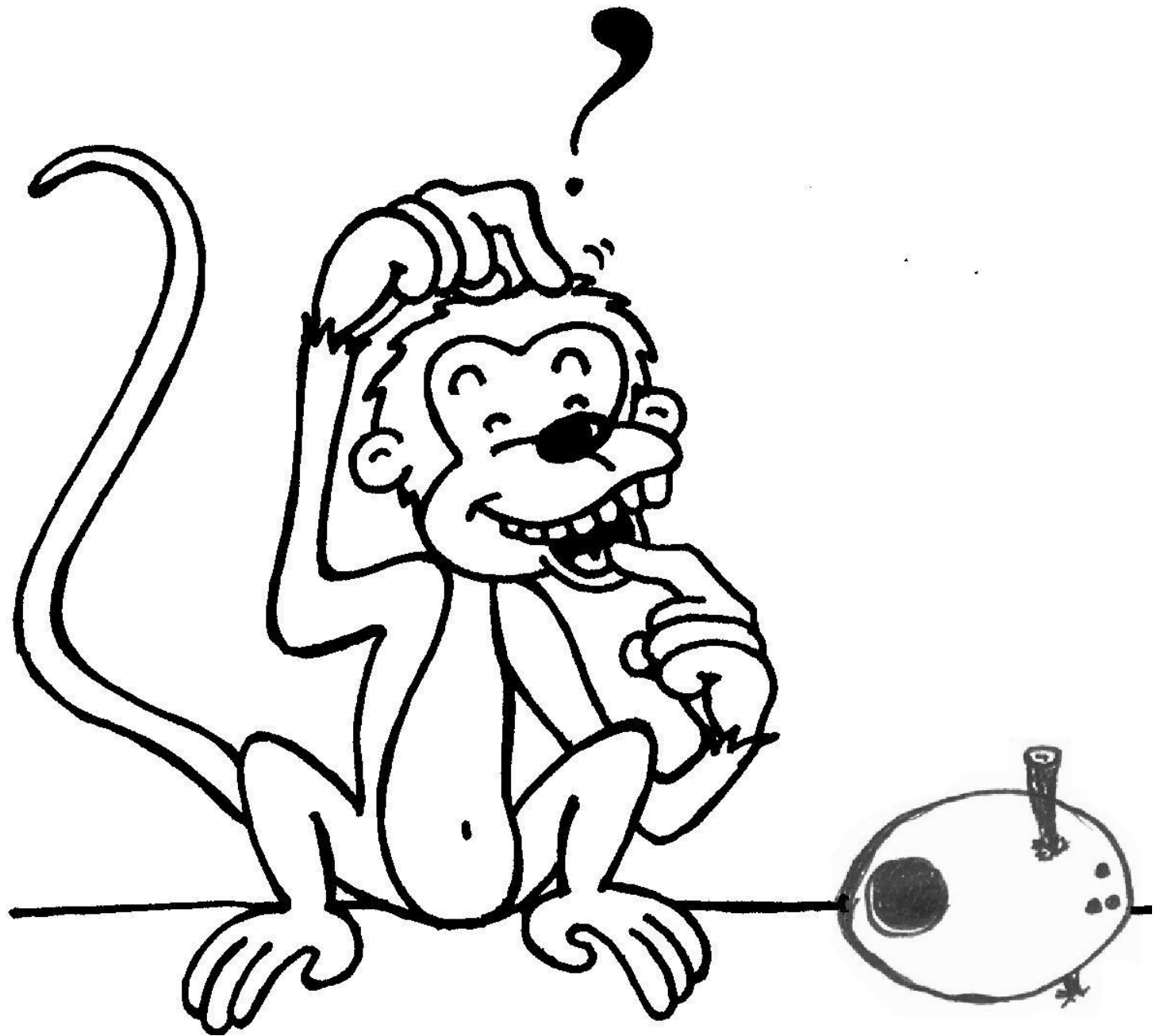


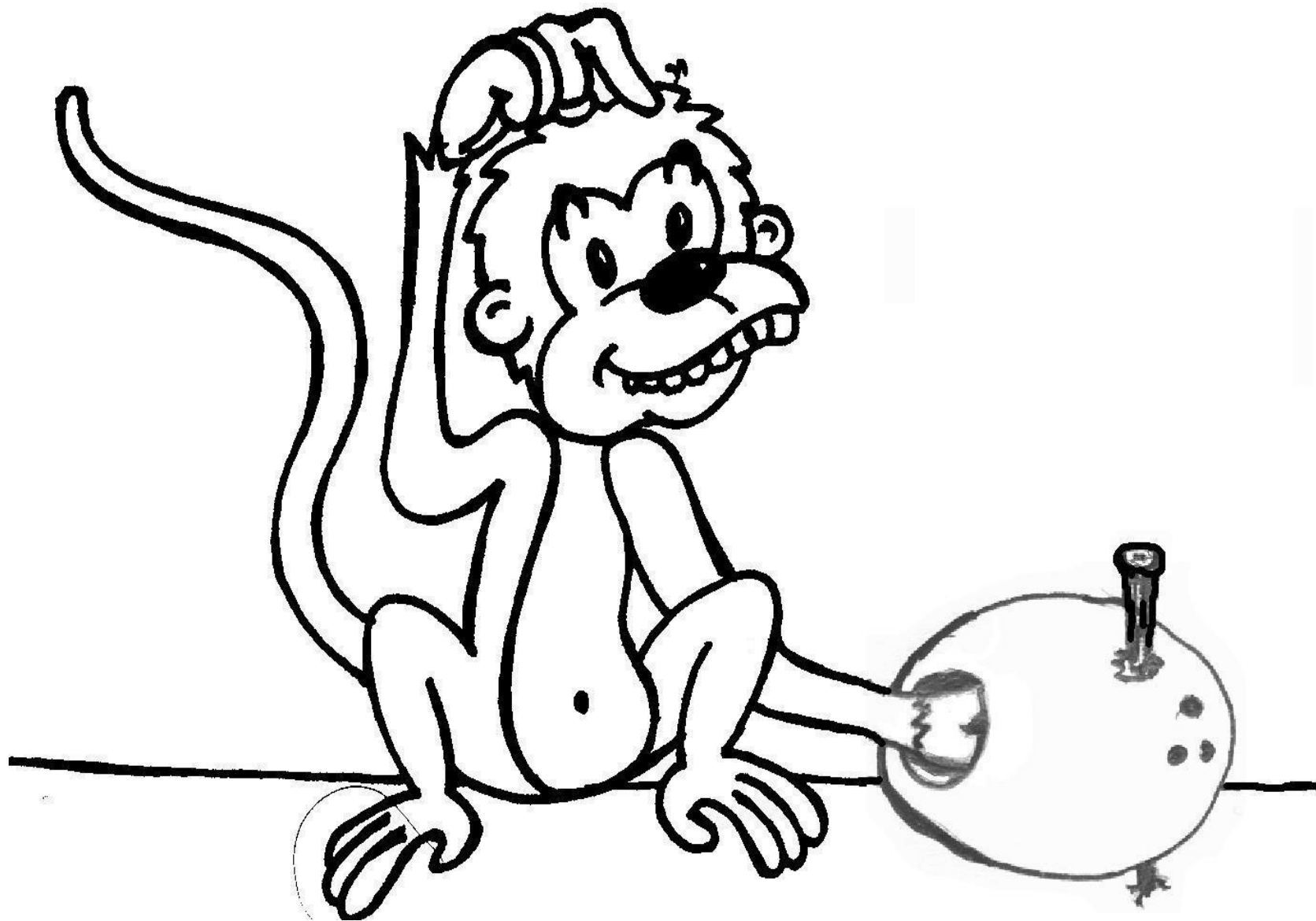
What we have in common  
is that we are all different from each other.

*Proverb*

# The coconut trap



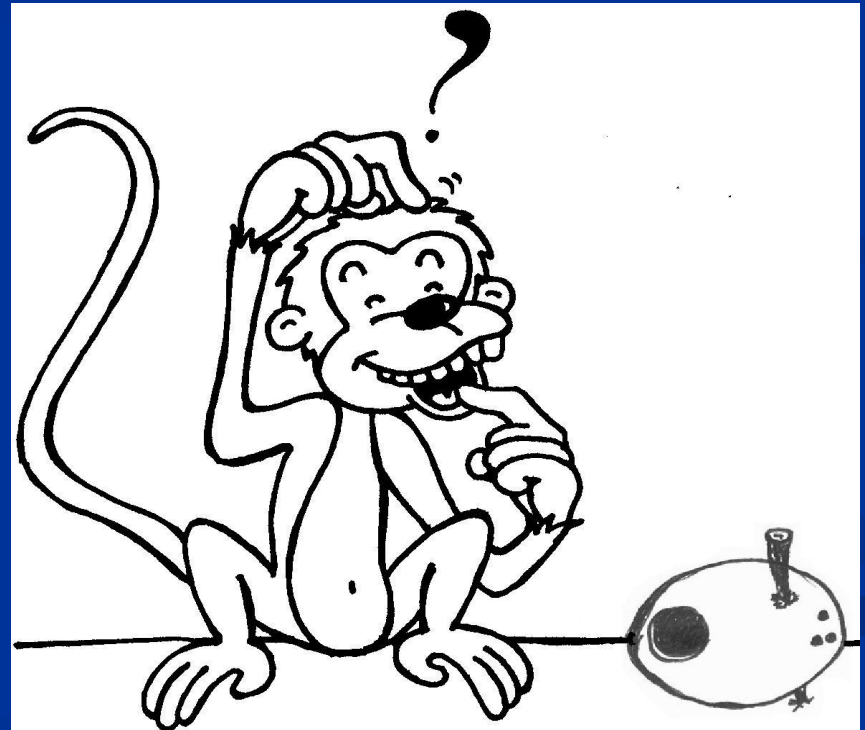






# The second grip

- pre-hensile hand
- ap-prehend  
com-prehend



# The trap of understanding

- $NEW = OLD + DIFFERENCE$

THE OTHER = I + DIFFERENCE

---

## Facing the otherness

- THE OTHER = **ESSENTIALLY** DIFFERENT,  
NOT-I



# The Challenge of the Other

## Towards Dialogic Psychotherapy & Counselling

### I. Alterity:

The need for a genuinely pc epistemology

### II. Dialogue:

The occurrence of the original We

### III. Co-presence:

The essential dialogical nature of therapy

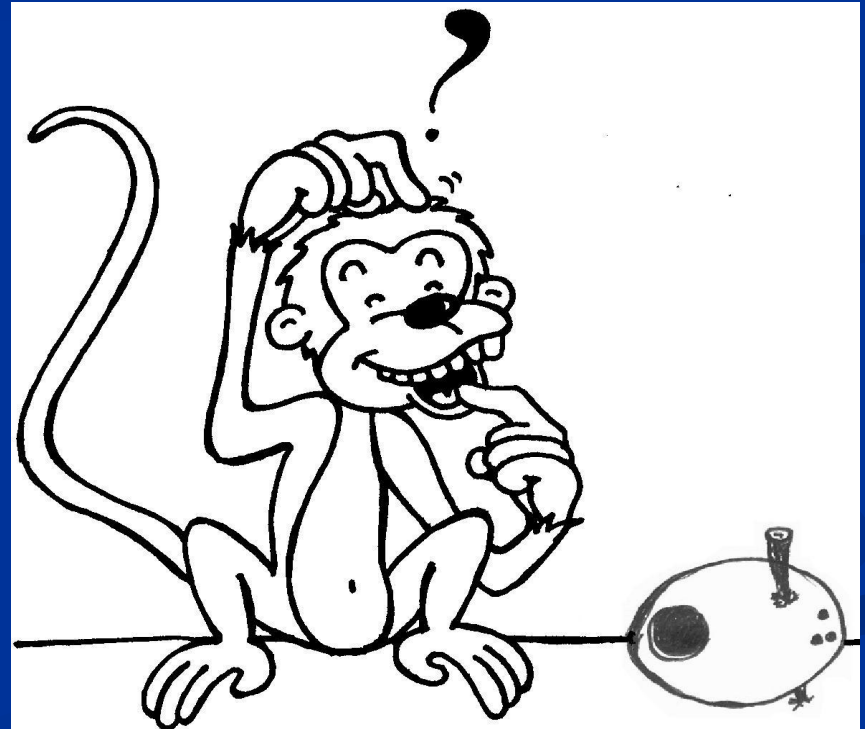
# I. Alterity:

## The need for a pc epistemology

... a theory of understanding  
that is congruent with our experience in  
therapy ...

# Cogito ...

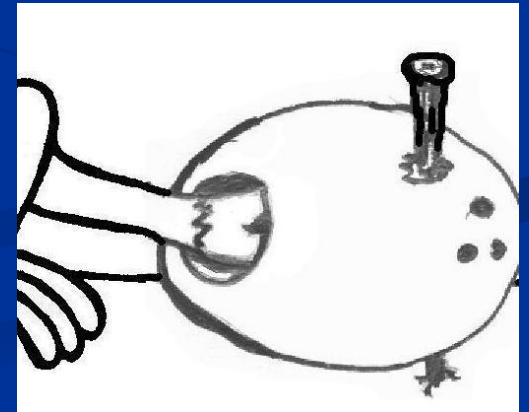
- ap-prehend: \* ad
- com-prehend: \* cum



# Cogito ...

- ap-prehend: \* ad
- com-prehend: \* con
- con-cept: \* con+capere (“to take”)
- term: \* terminus (“boundary stone, finishing post”)

... the trap of the same



# Epistemology of transcendence

- Ulysses
- homecoming
- TOTALITY
- sameness
- I - THOU
- egology
- Abraham
- mouvement sans retour
- INFINITY
- otherness
- THOU - I
- alterity

What we have in common  
is that we are all different from each other.

# Epistemology of transcendence

As a consequence of the paradigm change  
from egology to alterity,  
as opposed to the epistemology  
of understanding oneself by oneself,

**we need an epistemology of dialogue.**

# The Challenge of the Other

## Towards Dialogic Psychotherapy & Counselling

### I. Alterity:

The need for a genuinely pc epistemology

### II. Dialogue:

The occurrence of the original We

### III. Co-presence:

The essential dialogical nature of therapy



## II. Dialogue:

# The occurrence of the original

## We

“dialogue”

mutual conversation, interchange in talking,  
discourse

\* Greek “δια-λεγειν”

to put something apart by thinking over it  
(λεγειν = pick up, gather, collect; talk, speak)

# Dialogue

## conventional meaning

“dialogue”

= human conversation face to face,  
mutual exchange,  
message and contradiction

→ symmetry and equality

a meeting of the one with the other

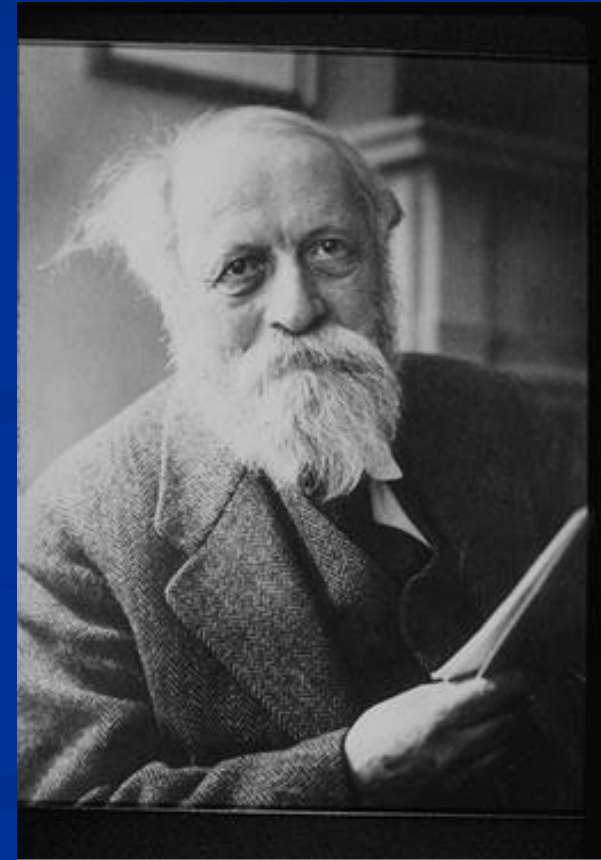
# Dialogue

## Martin Buber

Interpersonality → Dialogue

“The sphere of the interpersonal is the opposite-to-each-other; its unfolding is what we call dialogue.”

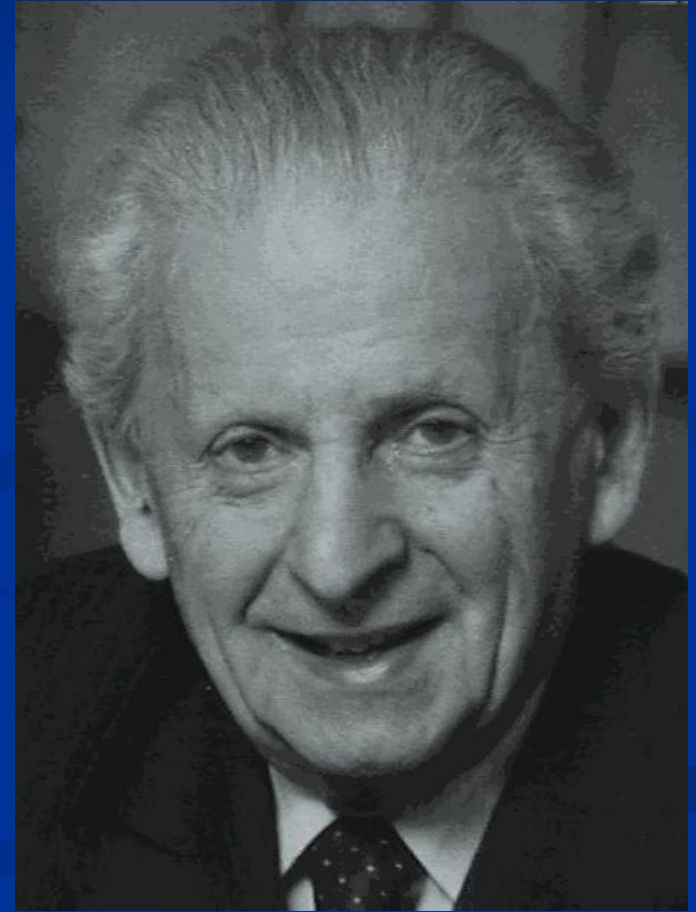
*Buber, 1948*



# Dialogue

## Emmanuel Levinas

- where transcendence happens
  - of original im-media-cy
  - not a consequence of experience
- primary occurrence
- original sociality occurs in dialogue
- dissymmetric:  
The other comes first



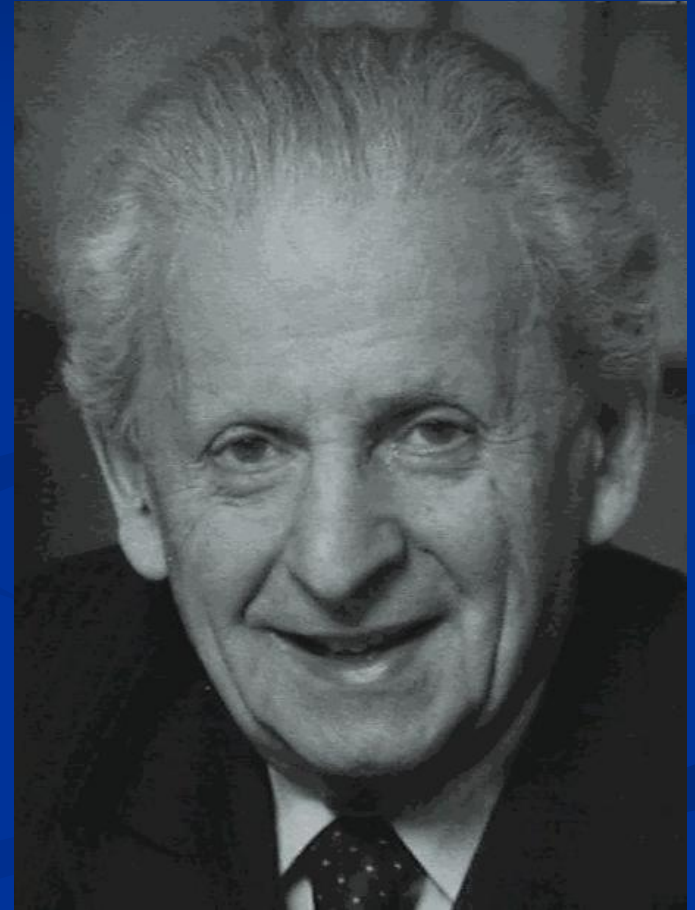
# Dialogue

## Emmanuel Levinas

Dialogue → Interpersonality

“It is precisely because the Thou is absolutely different from the I that there is - from the one to the other - dialogue.”

*Levinas, 1981*



# Dialogue

## Emmanuel Levinas

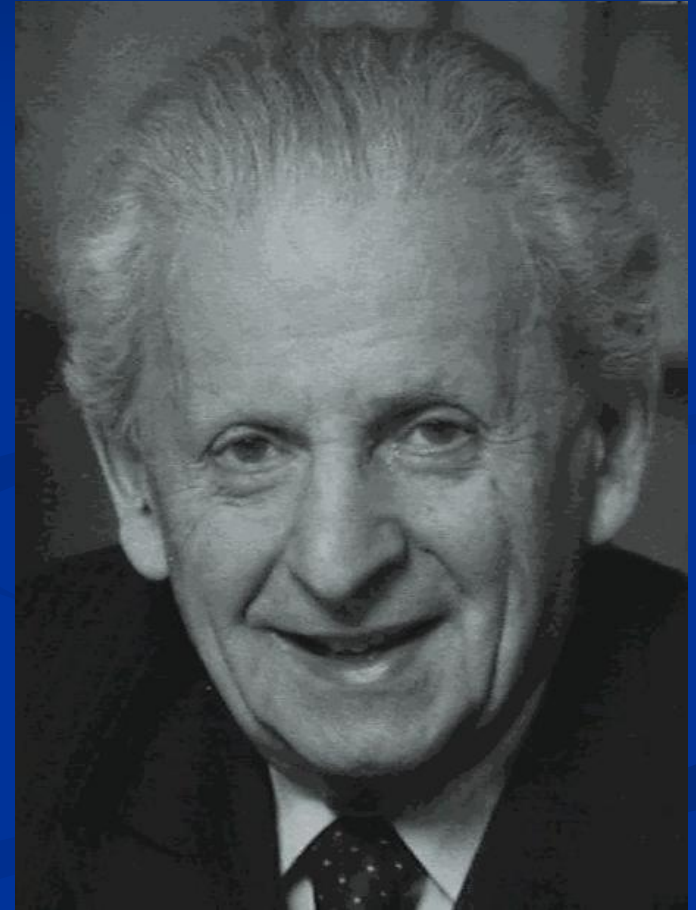
### Subject:

“I am sub-jected to the Other.”

*Levinas, 1986*



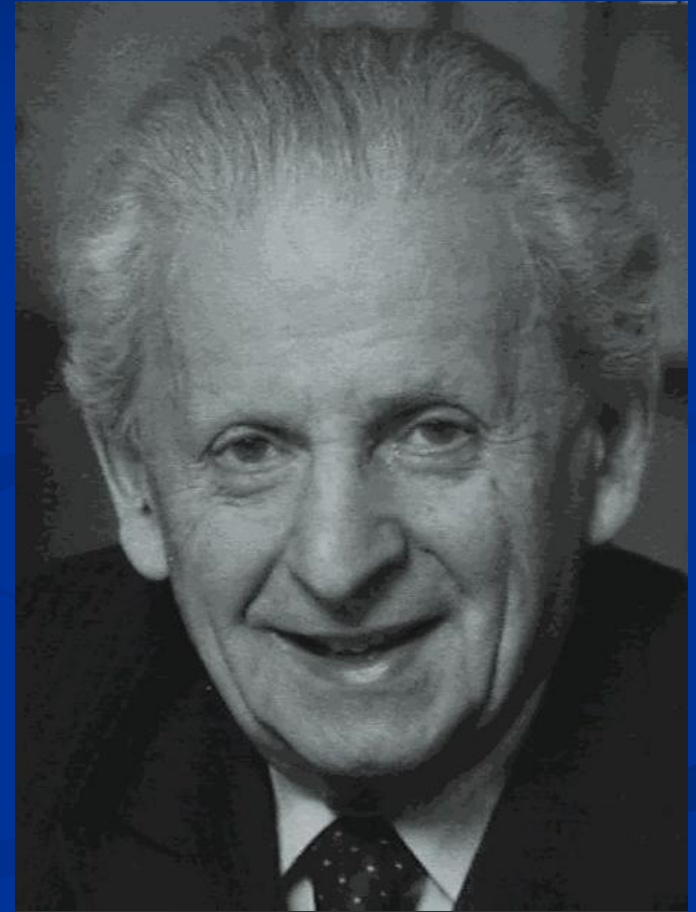
- Subjectivity itself is relational.
- Subjectivity is **I-for-Thou**.
- Substantiality and relationality coincide.
- Subjectivity is **Being-for-the-Other**.



# Dialogue

## Emmanuel Levinas

- Solidarity is a basic human condition.
- It means to say: “Here I am.”
- The dissymmetry is the origin of ethics.
- The I is constituted by his/her responsibility to the call of the Other.



# Dialogue

~~Self-consciousness → dialogue~~

Dialogue → self-consciousness



# Dialogue

The human person *is* dialogue.

# The Challenge of the Other

## Towards Dialogic Psychotherapy & Counselling

### I. Alterity:

The need for a genuinely *pc* epistemology

### II. Dialogue:

The occurrence of the original *We*

### III. Co-presence:

The essential dialogical nature of therapy

# III. Co-presence: The essential dialogical nature of therapy

**Psychotherapy:**

the challenge to deal with the contradictory phenomena of togetherness and separateness.

What does dialogue in therapy  
actually mean?

# Therapy as dialogue ?

- **Martin Buber → Hans Trüb, Ludwig Binwanger, Viktor von Weizsäcker, Rollo May, Irving Yalom, James Bugental, Carl Rogers:**  
**Existential and humanistic therapies**
- **Intersubjective psychoanalysis**  
(interplay of transference-countertransference liaison ...)
- **Systemic therapies** (negotiating ...)

# Therapy as dialogue ?

## ■ PCT

- **W. Pfeiffer:** therapy as a basically dialogic process
- **R. van Balen:** Rogers' development towards dialogue
- **D. Brazier:** the person is other-oriented, not self-oriented
- **Bohart & Tallman:** therapy as co-constructive dialogue
- **D. Mearns:** dialogical model of the Self
- **Mearns & Cooper:** meeting at relational depth

# Therapy as dialogue?

- The persons engaged in therapy *are* dialogue.
- Dialog is in the very beginning of therapy.

# Therapy as dialogue?

~~Psychotherapy → dialogue~~

Dialogue → psychotherapy



# Therapy as realization of the fundamental We

- Therapeutic dialogue is not about making community,  
it is about realizing the preceding We.
- To encounter a person is to realize to be in dialogue.
- Psychotherapy substantially is dialogue.

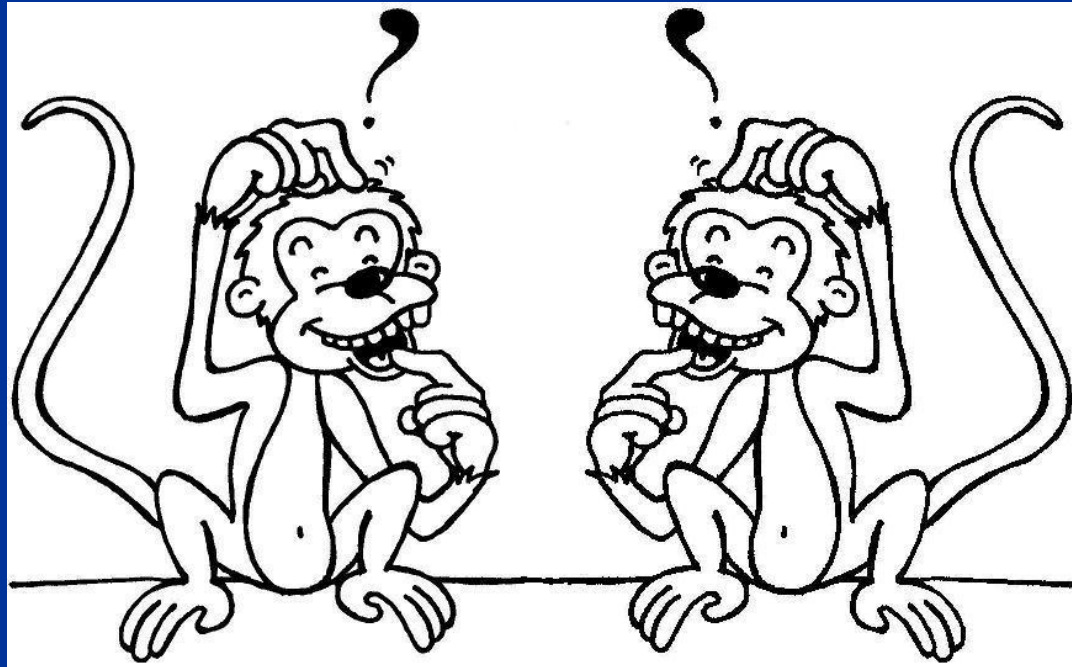
# Therapy as realization of the fundamental We

- The therapeutic is the transcendence of the same.
- “Here I am.” (Presence)
- In the beginning there is dialogue.
- This is a political statement.

# A political statement

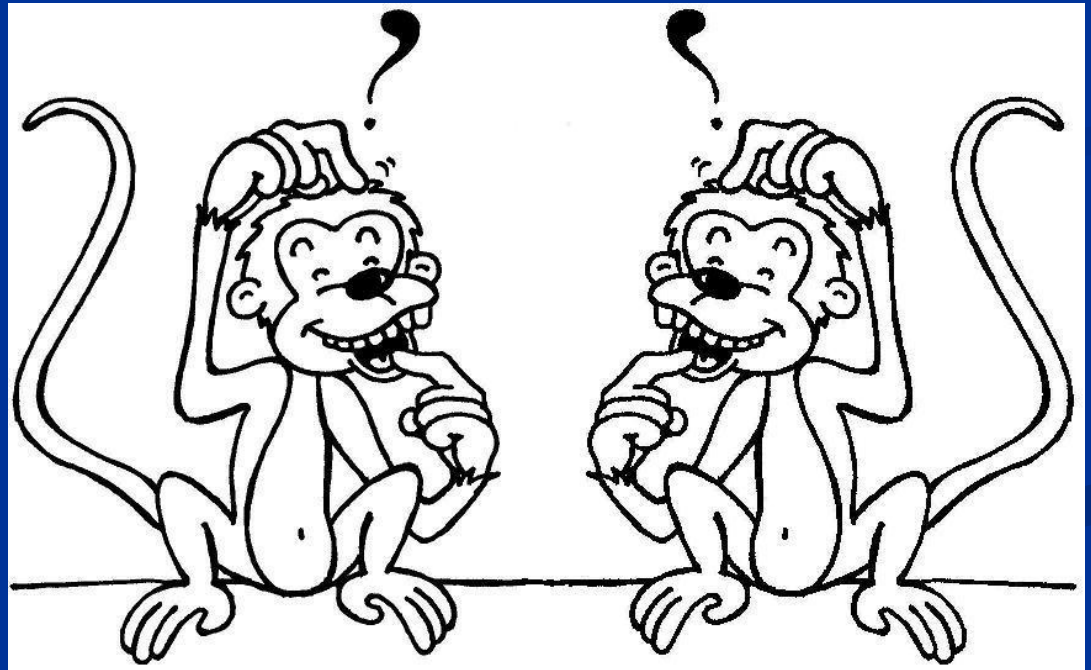
- To be existentially challenged as a professional and as a person.
- To resist problem- and solution-centeredness.
- To avoid the trap of the customary politics of the helping professions.

Psychotherapy is dialogue  
or it is not psychotherapy.



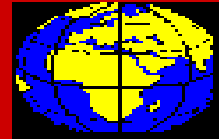
# Therapy as realization of the fundamental We

- In the beginning there is dialogue.





welcome to



**pca-online.net**

## The Person-Centered Website by Peter F. Schmid

Die personzentrierte Site

Le site centré sur la personne

De Persoonsgerichte Site

Site da Abordagem Centrada na Pessoa

Página Web Centrada en la Persona