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"I-I" AND "I-ME": TRANSPOSING BUBER'S INTERPERSONAL ATTITUDES TO THE INTRAPERSONAL PLANE

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Hermans' polyphonic model of the self proposes that dialogical relationships can be established between multiple I-positions[1] (e.g., Hermans, 2001a). There have been few attempts, however, to explicitly characterize the forms that these intrapersonal relationships may take. Drawing on Buber's (1958) distinction between the "I-Thou" and "I-It" attitude, it is proposed that intrapersonal relationships can take one of two forms: an "I-I" form, in which one I-position encounters and confirms another I-position in its uniqueness and wholeness; and an "I-Me" form, in which one I-position experiences another I-position in a detached and objectifying way. This article argues that this I-Me form of intrapersonal relating is associated with psychological distress, and that this is so for a number of reasons: Most notably, because an individual who objectifies and subjugates certain I-position cannot re-connect with more central I-positions when dominance reversal (Hermans, 2001a) takes place. On this basis, it is suggested that a key role of the therapeutic process is to help clients become more able to experience moments of I-I intrapersonal encounter, and it is argued that this requires the therapist to confirm the client both as a whole and in terms of each of his or her different voices.

As Hermans' article (this issue) outlines, the previous decade has witnessed substantial developments in a polyphonic model of the self (e.g., Hermans, Kempen and Van Loon, 1992; Hermans, 2001a). In this model, the self is conceptualized as a "dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous *I* positions in an imaginal landscape" in which "the *I* has

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[1] The term "I-positions" is used throughout this article to refer to the semiautonomous and semi-permanent ways of being that a person may adopt or inhabit. Rowan (1990) lists over 30 different terms that have been used to refer to such phenomena, amongst them "subselves" (Shapiro, 1976), "ego states" (Berne, 1961), "subpersonalities" (Vargiu, 1974) and "modes of Being" (Cooper, 1999).

the possibility to move from one position to the other in accordance with changes in situation and time" (Hermans, Rijks, & Kempen, 1993, p. 215).

On the basis of this polyphonic model of the self, Hermans and colleagues (1993)—like numerous other self-pluralistic theorists (e.g., Berne, 1961; Stone and Winkelman, 1985)—have argued that dialogical relationships between different I-positions can be established. "The *I* in the one position" writes Hermans (2001a), "can agree, disagree, understand, misunderstand, oppose, contradict, question, challenge and ridicule the *I* in another position" (p. 249). Within the self-pluralistic literature, however, few attempts have been made to explicitly characterize, or examine in detail, the types of relationships that may exist between the different I-positions. Hermans and Kempen (1993) are an exception to this, and have distinguished between "symmetrical" and "asymmetrical" intrapersonal relationships. However, their work focuses primarily on the issue of power, and does not go on to consider other aspects of the intrapersonal dynamic.

This question of intrapersonal relationships may be of particular importance when considering the psychotherapeutic process from a polyphonic perspective. Within the self-pluralistic literature, numerous theorists and therapists have argued, either implicitly or explicitly, that psychological well-being is closely associated with the kinds of relationships that exist between the different I-positions. Moreover, there is a great deal of agreement as to the kinds of intrapersonal relationships that are associated with psychological well-being and psychological distress. Specifically, psychological well-being has been associated with clear, open, and fluid communication between the different I-positions (e.g., Cooper & Cruthers, 1999; Elliot & Greenberg, 1997; Hermans, 2001a; Shapiro, 1976; Vargiu, 1974; Watkins & Watkins, 1979); and with intrapersonal relationships that are harmonious (Shapiro, 1976; Vargiu, 1974), respectful (Cooper & Cruthers, 1999), compassionate (Schwartz, 1999), accepting (Stone & Winkelman, 1985; Vargiu, 1974), empathic (Elliot & Greenberg, 1997; Vargiu, 1974), cooperative (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Vargiu, 1974; Shapiro, 1976), democratic (Hermans & Kempen, 1993) and symmetrical (Hermans & Kempen, 1993). At the same time, several self-pluralistic theorists (e.g., Shapiro, 1976; Berne, 1961) have argued that healthy intrapersonal relationships are those in which each of the I-positions maintains a certain individuality, and does not fuse with, overlap into, or contaminate others. Several self-pluralistic therapists and theorists have also argued that psychological well-being is associated with the existence of a "central" or "meta-" I-position that is able to communicate openly and effectively with other I-positions, serving a coordinating and managerial role (e.g., Ferrucci,

1982; Hermans, this volume; Schwartz, 1999; Shapiro, 1976; Sliker, 1992; Stone & Winkelman, 1985).

Psychological distress, on the other hand, has been associated with the existence of conflicting relationships between the different I-positions (Elliot & Greenberg, 1997; Ferrucci, 1982; Shapiro, 1976; Vargiu, 1974). These are intrapersonal relationships in which the I-positions battle for dominance and control (Sliker, 1992; Vargiu, 1974) to such an extent that they may try to dissociate entirely from, or obliterate, each other (Elliot & Greenberg, 1997; Shapiro, 1976). For self-pluralistic theorists, then, distress-related intrapersonal relationships are characterized by a lack of dialogue and communication between the various I-positions (Shapiro, 1962; Watkins, 1985), and by the existence of competitive, defensive (Redfearn, 1985), dismissive (Shapiro, 1976; Watkins, 1985), derogatory (Watkins, 1985), manipulative (Vargiu, 1974), unempathic (Watkins, 1985), and dominating/controlling (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Watkins, 1985) modes of relating. Fused or dependent modes of intrapersonal relating may also be seen as distress-related, particularly where a central I-position is "contaminated" by other I-positions, and is too weak to effectively implement a coordinating and managerial role (Shapiro, 1976; Berne, 1961).

My aim is to draw these observations together and to deepen an understanding of the kinds of intrapersonal relationships that are associated with psychological well-being and psychological distress. To do so, I will draw on one of most enduring distinctions in the field of *interpersonal* relationships: Buber's (1958) distinction between the I-Thou and I-It attitude. Specifically, this article will argue that psychological well-being is associated with the experiencing of I-Thou-like moments of encounter between the multiple I-positions; whereas psychological distress is associated with the predominance of I-It-like relationships between the multiple I-positions. I begin, then, by examining Buber's distinction between the I-Thou and the I-It attitude.

I-THOU AND I-IT

There are a number of elements to Buber's (1958) distinction between the I-Thou and the I-It attitude. Buber's philosophy, however, was fundamentally holistic. Hence, these elements cannot be understood in isolation, each is fundamentally interrelated to, and implied by, the other. The differences outlined below, then, need to be understood as facets of a difference-as-a-whole, rather than as independent dimensions.

Experiencing Versus Relating

One of the first distinctions that Buber (1958) makes between the I-It attitude and the I-Thou attitude is that, in the former, an other person is *experienced*, whereas in the latter, the other is *related to*. That is, in the I-It attitude, I distance myself from the other and survey, study, measure, and observe him or her. The other becomes something apart from me, something to which I direct my attention and from which I extract knowledge. By contrast, "When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no *thing*; he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation" (p. 17). Here, I do not face the other, but stand alongside him or her. He or she is not the object of my experiencing, but an intrinsic part of my being-in-relation. "I do not experience the man to whom I say *Thou*" writes Buber, "But I take my stand in relation to him, in the sanctity of the primary word. Only when I step out of it do I experience him once more" (p. 22).

This *I-Thou* attitude also differs from an *I-It* attitude in that I have an immediate and direct encounter with the other. There is nothing that mediates the meeting; I do not meet my *idea* of the other, but confront him or her directly (Levinas, 1967). Furthermore, for Buber (1958) there are no "aims," "anticipations," or "lusts" that intervene between I and Thou. In this relationship, I am not encountering the other for some purpose or some need. I do not want anything from him or her—or, at least, those needs have been put to one side. "Only when every means has collapsed," writes Buber, "does the meeting come about" (p. 25).

"It-ifying" Versus Humanizing

In this objectifying, I-It attitude, the other is also experienced as a "thing," an object, an entity, an "it" (Buber, 1958). "He is then thought of as a being of size, surface area, weight, function, desire, consciousness, characteristics and capability of all sorts," writes von Weizsäcker (1964, p. 407). I may experience the other, for instance, as "a depressive" or as "a Jew." This "it-ification" of the other has parallels with Sartre's (1958) notion of "the look," in which the gaze of one human being constantly threatens to objectify—or to use Laing's (1960) term "petrify"—the being of the other. Whereas for Sartre this objectification is the primary mode of human relatedness, for Buber, "If I face my human being as my *Thou*, and say the primary word *I-Thou* to him, he is not a thing among things" (p. 21). That is, I also have the possibility of encountering the other as vibrant, dynamic humanity: a

"psychic stream" (Buber, 1965, p. 70) that can not be objectified or labeled, but which I can only relate to in its fluidity and spontaneity. In Bakhtinian (1973) terms, I have the capacity to affirm someone else's I, not as an object, but as another subject.

Fragmenting Versus Relating to Wholeness

For Buber (1958), a further distinction between the I-It and the I-Thou attitude is that the former fragments what it experiences, whereas the latter relates to the other in its wholeness. In the I-It attitude, things are divided into subthings: objects or people are analyzed, reduced, broken down into essences, laws, or such parts as id, ego, and superego (Freud, 1923). By contrast, in the I-Thou attitude, the other is beheld and revered in its totality. Buber (1958) gives the example of relating to a tree, in which

> everything, picture and movement, species and type, law and number, [is] indivisibly united in the event. Everything belonging to the tree is in this: its form and structure, its colors a chemical composition, its intercourse with the elements and with the stars, are all present in a single whole. (p. 20)

Construing as Determined Versus Acknowledging Freedom

Buber (1958) also describes the I-It attitude as one in which the other is construed in determined, mechanistic terms, rather than as an other that is freely choosing and deciding its way of being. He, she, or it is seen as something that is caused to be, that is driven by forces and mechanisms, rather than being encountered in his, her, or its freedom and spontaneity. For instance, I may construe a client's anger towards me as a consequence of his or her relationship with his or her father, rather than a choice that the client is making towards my immediate presence. "Causality," writes Buber, "has an unlimited reign in the world of *It*" (p. 71).

Experiencing in the Past or Future Versus Encountering in the Present

This leads on to a further distinction between the I-It and I-Thou attitudes. In the I-It attitude, the other is experienced in terms of predefined

schemata, in terms of what has previously been experienced and known. In addition, as discussed above, in the I-It attitude, the other may be experienced in terms of future projects and needs; the other becomes an instrument for the actualization of the I's possibilities. In the I-It attitude, then, the I is not really experiencing an other at all. Rather, it is experiencing a "mirror" of its own schemata and interests (Wood, 1969). In this attitude, the other only exists in as much as it is an object for the self. By contrast, in the I-Thou relationship, the other is met in the immediate present. Hence, there is a breaking-through of a true otherness into the I's world, a movement beyond a solipsistic engagement with the I's own past or future.

Generalizing Versus Individuating

"Every real relationship in the world is exclusive," writes Buber (1958), it "rests on individuation, this is its joy—for only in this way is mutual knowledge of different beings won" (p. 128). By this, Buber means that the I-Thou attitude takes the other as unique, distinctive, and inexchangeable. It is an encounter with *a* particular being at *a* particular now, which cannot be replicated or repeated. By contrast, the experiencing of an *It*, an entity that is stripped of its complexity and individuality and experienced as a we-remember-it or as a I'll-do-this-with-it, can be repeated over and over again. This exclusivity of the I-Thou relationship has parallels with Bakhtin's notion of the "once-occurrent event of being," the one-off, unique meeting of two "freedoms" which forms the basis for Bakhtin's dialogically structured model of human being (Shotter, 1999). In contrast to Bakhtin, however, Buber does not see such once-occurrent meetings as the basis for all human interactions, but as an extraordinary mode of relating. For Buber, much interpersonal relating remains in the realms of the *I-It*: formulaic, general, and endlessly repetitive.

Nonconfirming Versus Confirming

For Buber (1958), an I-Thou attitude also involves a fundamental *confirmation* of the other. Friedman (1985) defined this as "an act of love through which one acknowledges the other as one who exists in his own peculiar form and has the right to do so" (p. 134). There are clear parallels here with Rogers' (1957) notion of "acceptance" or "unconditional positive regard," particularly the emphasis on the acceptance of the other in his or her wholeness. However, Buber (in Anderson &

Cissna, 1997) makes it clear that confirmation involves an acceptance of the other in his or her potentiality—who he or she is meant to become—as well as in his or her present actuality, such that it may sometimes involve helping the person against him/herself. It is also important to note that confirmation involves an acceptance of the other in his or her "own peculiar form." In other words, it is an acceptance of the other in his or her otherness, and is clearly distinct from both absorbing the other into one's own schemata, and being absorbed by the other such that one's own position and uniqueness are lost. Indeed, as Buber (1958) points out, to fuse or merge with another person is not to encounter him or her: one can not encounter something that one is.

Relating in Fragments Versus Relating as Wholeness

As we have seen, Buber (1958) states that an *I-Thou* attitude is one in which an individual relates to the whole of the other. For Buber, however, such an *I-Thou* attitude also requires the I to bring his or her totality into the encounter. "[T]he primary word [I-Thou] can only be spoken with the whole being" writes Buber, "He who gives himself to it may withhold nothing of himself" (p. 23). The person who adopts an I-Thou attitude to the other, then, engages with the other in a transparent and open way, in which nothing is deliberately held back or obscured (though this does not necessarily entail a "universal un-reserve" (Buber, 1947)). Furthermore, such a relationship requires the I to transcend a purely cognitive mode of relating, and to encounter the other as a cognitive-affective-embodied whole (Cooper, 2001). This contrasts with the I-It attitude, in which an individual engages with another in only a partial, nontransparent, or superficial way.

Protectiveness Versus Willingness to Take Risks

As we have seen, for Buber (1958), an I-Thou attitude requires an I to engage with a Thou in an immediate and spontaneous way, a way that is open to the other's freedom, uniqueness and otherness. For Buber, then, an I-Thou meeting is a "perilous" and "unreliable" encounter, in which "the well-tried context" is "loosened" and one's "security shattered." Furthermore, because the I is engaging with the other with the whole of his or her being, he or she has no firm foothold from which to control or determine the encounter, no external position of certainty or safety. Everything he or she is is thrown into the

relationship, and this means that he or she may be changed by the encounter in ways that he or she cannot predict or control. As Buber writes:

> The human being who emerges from the act of pure relation that so involves his being has now in his being something more that has grown in him, of which he did not know before and whose origin he is not rightly able to indicate. (p. 140)

This contrasts with the I-It relationship, in which the other is experienced in a predictable and controllable, that is, safe way, in which a part of the self is always held back, so that there is never a full commitment to, or involvement with, the other.

Whereas Buber rarely discusses the issue of power, there are clear parallels between the kind of I-Thou mutuality outlined here and above, and the notion of symmetrical relationships discussed by Hermans and Kempen (1993). In both cases, there is a willingness to engage in a reciprocal way, to allow oneself to be affected by, as well as to affect, the other. This contrasts with an asymmetrical relationship, in which one voice tends towards dominating and controlling the other.

Monologue Versus Dialogue

One of the most useful ways, perhaps, of drawing together the distinctions that Buber makes between the I-It and I-Thou attitudes is by relating them, as Buber does, to monologue and dialogue. In his 1929 essay *Dialogue* (published in English in 1947), Buber distinguishes between three realms of communication: "genuine dialogue," "technical dialogue," and "monologue disguised as dialogue." Genuine dialogue, corresponds most closely to Buber's (1958) notion of the I-Thou attitude. For Buber (1947, 1965), genuine dialogue involves a turning towards the other, an openness to being addressed by the other in his, her or its present and particular otherness, and a confirmation of the otherness of the other. This is similar to the model of dialogue outlined by Linell and Marková (1993), in which a person's position or formulation is modified in and through the dialogic exchange. For Buber, such genuine dialogue requires each respondent to bring what is really in his or her head to the dialogue, without artifice, seeming or pretense. However, as Buber emphasizes, such dialogue does not require all of those involved to necessarily speak. For Buber, true dialogue and exchange can take place in silence.

In contrast to Linell and Marková (1993), however, Buber (1947)

does not consider all forms of discursive interaction to be based on a dialogic form. Rather, he argues that the kind of dialogue in which interactants genuinely respond to each others utterances are becomingly increasingly rare. Instead, he suggests, much modern communication takes the form of "technical dialogue," "which is prompted solely by the need of objective understanding" (p. 37). This is utilitarian, goal-focused communication, but communication in which real dialogue remains hidden away in "odd corners," occasionally breaking through to the surface, "as in the tone of a railway guard's voice, in the glance of an old newspaper vendor, in the smile of the chimney-sweeper" (p. 37).

It is the third form of communication, "monologue disguised as dialogue," however, that Buber (1947) seems to consider most prevalent in the contemporary world. By this, Buber means a form of communication that has a semblance of interpersonal openness and receptivity, but is essentially a turning towards, and concern with, oneself: a "reflexivity," rather than a reaching out to an other. Here, "two or more men, meeting in space, speak each with himself in strangely torturous and circuitous ways and yet imagine they have escaped the torment of being thrown back on their own resources" (p. 37). In this form of communication, each individual's concerns are not with learning from the other, but with self-presentation and self-enhancement. Hence, spontaneity and transparency are replaced with artifice, phoniness, and manipulation. Buber describes a number of forms of communication that make up this "underworld of faceless spectres of dialogue" (p. 38). In *debate*, for instance, points are not made as they exist in the protagonist's mind, but are designed to strike home as sharply as possible, a "word duel" that is far more about self-aggrandizement than about any genuine learning. In *speechifying*, on the other hand, "people do not really speak to one another, but each, although turned to the other, really speaks to a fictitious court of appeal whose life consists of nothing but listening to him" (1965, p. 69).

Moments of I-Thou and Dialogue

In concluding this section, two important points need to be noted. First, in drawing this distinction between I-Thou and I-It modes of relating, Buber (1958) is not suggesting that we can consistently relate to others in an I-Thou, dialogic way. "It is not possible to live in the bare present" (p. 51), he writes. For Buber, then, it is inevitable that we will sometimes relate to others and the world in an I-It manner. In this respect, the I-Thou attitude is best understood as something that

we can experience moments of, rather than as something that we can experience on an ongoing basis (Anderson & Cissna, 1997). Furthermore, Buber does not see the I-It attitude as inherently negative. For him, it is through objectifying and separating from entities and people that human beings can progress from an undifferentiated state of connectivity towards a deeper and more profound encounter (Woods, 1969). The I-Thou and I-It attitudes, then, are seen as dialectically related. Hence, as with Heidegger (1966), Buber's concern is not that we should consistently maintain an attitude of *Gelassenheit* (openness) towards the world. Rather, it is that we should not become so seduced by a technical and manipulative way of experiencing the world that we forget a more contemplative and relational possibility. As Buber writes: "without *It* man cannot live. But he who lives with *It* alone is not a man" (p. 52).

FROM EXTERNAL DIALOGUE TO INTERNAL DIALOGUE

The basic premise of this article, then, is that we can usefully transpose this interpersonal distinction to the intrapersonal plane. That is, that we can meaningfully distinguish between two particular modes of intrapersonal relating. In the first of these, one I-position experiences another I-position in an it-ifying, fragmenting, generalized, nonconfirming, fragmentary, protective, and monologic way, construing the other I-position as determined, and on the basis of past experiences or future desires. In the second form of intrapersonal relating, by contrast, one I-position relates to another I-position in a humanizing, individualizing, confirming, holistic, risk-taking, dialogic manner, in a way that takes the other as a present, choice-making whole. Drawing on James's (1890) distinction between the "I," the active self-as-knower which has the features of continuity, distinctness and volition (Hermans, 2001a), and the "me," the empirical self-as-known, this former mode of intrapersonal relating can be referred to as an "I-Me" self-relational stance, whereas the latter mode can be referred to as an "I-I" self-relational stance. In other words, in the I-I self-relational stance, the I in one position relates to the I in another position as an *I*, an active, phenomenologically-experiencing, meaning-orientated being. By contrast, in the I-Me self-relational stance, the I in one position experiences the I in another position as a *me*, an empirical, object-like entity. As with the I-Thou attitude, the suggestion here is not that human beings can consistently relate to themselves in an I-I manner. Rather, the suggestion is that people may be able to experience moments of

I-I relating to themselves, and that, as will be argued later, these moments of I-I encounter are of crucial importance in determining their psychological well-being.

An example may help to illustrate this distinction between I-I and I-Me forms of self-relating, and how the various differences between an I-Thou and I-It attitude, as previously outlined, can be transposed to the intrapersonal plane. Martha was a 25-year-old female client who experienced intense and terrifying panic attacks, often in social situations where she felt an enormous pressure "not to put a foot wrong."[2] Martha's relationship to this panicking, vulnerable I-position—from the adult, rational I-position that she tended to inhabit during the psychotherapy sessions—is a good example of an I-Me mode of intrapersonal relating. First, from her adult I-position, she tended to talk *about* her experiences of panic and terror, rather than relating to these experiences in an immediate and direct way. There was a sense of her surveying and studying this mode of experience from a distance, from the position of an "objective," disconnected observer, rather than standing alongside her terrors and fears and allowing herself to fully connect with them. Second, from her adult I-position, there was a tendency to "it-ify" her vulnerable I-position. She described it as something that took her over, something that came from outside, rather than a fluid, meaning-orientated phenomenological stream of experiencing. Third, her adult I-position did not relate to the totality of her vulnerable I-position, but focused primarily on its behavioral and physical manifestations, to the exclusion of its intentional, meaning-orientated facets. Fourth, from her adult I-position, Martha had a great tendency to look for explanations as to why she was experiencing such panic and terror, rather than considering the possibility that, in the midst of that vulnerable mode of being, she might be experiencing freedom and choice. Fifth, as touched on earlier, Martha, from her adult I-position, did not invoke a meeting with her vulnerable I-position in the present. Rather, it was something that she talked about in the past—how she *had* panicked, *had* felt afraid—and also something that she experienced in terms of her future, specifically, as a block to becoming the person she wanted to be. Sixth, from her adult I-position, her experiences of panic were construed in generalized terms: her panic attacks were manifestations of a transpersonal disorder, rather than *a* particular mode by which she, as the individual she was, encountered her world. Seventh, from her adult I-position, Martha was entirely disconfirming of her vulnerable I-position. It was something she hated, detested, and

[2]To ensure complete confidentiality, some details in the case examples used in this article have been changed.

was desperate to get rid of; in no way did she confirm or validate her vulnerability and fear. Eighth, Martha's relationship to her vulnerable I-position, from her adult I-position, was an exclusively cognitive one. She analyzed and deconstructed it, but did not allow herself to also engage with it in an emotional and embodied way. Ninth, from her adult I-position, Martha had no intention of allowing herself to open up to her fears and vulnerabilities, and to let herself be touched or affected by this way of being. In summary, then, we can say that Martha, from her adult I-position, was in no way willing to enter into a dialogue with her vulnerable I-position. She was willing to "speechify" to it, to tell her fears that they were "stupid" and "unfounded," but she was not willing to engage with them in a mutual and symmetrical way.

As the therapy progressed, however, Martha was increasingly able to experience moments of I-I encounter between her adult and vulnerable I-positions. Here, Martha, from her adult I-position, was able to temporarily stand in the shoes of her vulnerable self, and to remind herself of just how terrifying those moments of social anxiety were. She also became increasingly able to acknowledge that she was not "stupid" or "cowardly" for running away from social situations at these times, but that, from this I-position, this action seemed like the best way of dealing with her immediate situation. In this I-I mode of relating, then, Martha became increasingly able to confirm her vulnerable I-position, and to accept its legitimacy within her intrapersonal world, rather than seeing it as a foe to be eliminated at all costs.

This distinction between an I-I and I-Me self-relational stance is both supported and challenged by the work of dialogical theorists. If, as Shotter (1999) suggests, our internal dialogue reflects essentially the same features as those exhibited in the transactions between people, and if we accept the distinction between the I-Thou and I-It attitude on the interpersonal plane, then it would seem legitimate to transpose this distinction to the intrapersonal plane. Indeed, from a Vygotskian (1962) developmental perspective, it could be argued that I-I and I-Me modes of self-relating are essentially internalization of I-Thou and I-It interpersonal relationships. That is, a child who is confirmed in his or her uniqueness by others learns to confirm and validate his or her I-positions; whereas a child who is it-ified and treated as a thing learns to relate to his or her I-positions in a similar way.

From a Vygotskian (1962) standpoint, however, one needs to be very careful about transposing external functions to the intrapersonal plane. As Vygotsky argues, the process of internalization leads to a transformation in the structure and function of a process, such that internal and external functions can never be seen as isomorphic. Moreover, Buber (in Anderson & Cissna, 1997) explicitly rejects the proposition

that intrapersonal dialogue, however self-confirming, can ever be equivalent to interpersonal dialogue. This is on two accounts. First, because intrapersonal dialogue lacks the element of surprise; and second, because intrapersonal dialogue does not involve the *prizing* of another. Nevertheless, Buber acknowledges that there is a form of self-meeting that sits somewhere between interpersonal dialogue and intrapersonal monologue, and displays much agreement with Rogers' suggestion (in Anderson and Cissna, 1997) that, in therapy, a client may have a "real meeting" with aspects of himself or herself that he or she has never met before.

At other points in his writings, however, Buber (1947) suggests that any form of self-dialogue is, by its very nature, impoverished and dysfunctional, a turning inwards from one's originary being-with-others. He writes:

> If a man does not represent the *a priori* of relation in his living with the world, if he does not work out and realize the inborn *Thou* on what meets it, then it strikes inward. It develops on the unnatural, impossible object of the *I*, that is, it develops where there is no place at all for it to develop. Thus confrontation of what is over against him takes place within himself, and this cannot be relation, or presence, or streaming interaction, but only self-contradiction. (pp. 93-94)

Such ideas have been developed by existential psychiatrists like von Weizsäcker (1964), who assert that "The mentally ill person has no Thou for his I" (p. 409). With respect to schizophrenia, for instance, von Weizsäcker has argued that the schizophrenic develops a hallucinatory double as a way of out of the unbearable loneliness of Thou-less-ness. As Rotenstreich (1967) points out, however, Buber (and his followers) tend to dichotomize self-relating and other-relating: such that a "bending back to oneself" necessitates a turning away from others, and vice versa. In contrast, however, many psychologists and psychotherapists (e.g., Fromm, 1963; Yalom, 1980) have argued that a close correlation exists between an individual's attitude towards him or herself, and his or her attitude towards others. An individual, for instance, who values him or herself, is seen as being more likely to value others than an individual who hates him or herself. Indeed, there are times when Buber also approximates this position; writing, for instance, that, "in order to be able to go out to the other, you must have the starting place, you must have been, you must be, with yourself" (1947, p. 39). Although a move towards internal dialogue, then, might necessitate a move away from external dialogue, this does not necessarily mean that the internal dialogue is thereby dysfunctional and impoverished. Rather, if a person is able to openly dialogue with him/herself, this may contribute to a greater openness at the interper-

sonal level, and hence, in Buberian terms, a greater level of psycho-logical well-being.

From a Buberian standpoint, however, a further objection can be raised to the notion of I-I self-relating. For Buber (1958), an I-Thou attitude requires a confirmation of the other in his or her wholeness. An I-I attitude, on the other hand, is a relationship to just one aspect of the person. On this basis, it could be argued that any form of relat-ing to one I-position is fundamentally it-ifying to the person-as-a-whole. An I-I stance towards one I-position, however, need not involve a turn-ing away from other I-positions. Indeed, to the extent that an I-I self-relational stance confirms I-positions that are usually subjugated or disowned (see below), such a stance can involve a more holistic con-firmation of the self. This means, however, that an I-I self-relational stance can be understood not only as one in which another I-position is encountered in terms of its exclusivity, but also as one in which it is encountered as part of a greater whole. This is part of the reason for using the term "I-I": it is the I confirming that another I is part of the same I, rather than as a separate and distinct "me."

As a final point in this section: the distinction between dialogic, I-I forms of self-relating and monologic I-Me forms of self-relating raises some interesting questions about a dialogical model of the self (e.g., Hermans, 2001a). If, as Shotter (1999) suggests, our internal dialogue reflects similar features to those exhibited in the transactions between people, then I-Me, monologic forms of self-talk may be much more prevalent in the intrapersonal world than I-I, dialogic forms. Hermans' and Kempen's (1993) fundamental assertion, then, that "the individual consists of multiple authors entering into *dialogical* relationships with each other" (p. 213, italics added) may be overly-optimistic—at least, if "dialogue" is used in the way that Buber intends it. On this basis, it may be more appropriate to refer to the self as "polyphonic" or "multi-voiced" rather than as "dialogical," terms that allow for the whole spectrum of dialogic and monologic (in Buberian terms) possibilities. At the very least, if Hermans and colleagues wish to retain the term "dialogical," they will need to find a way of defining it so that it can incorporate the most objectifying and detached forms of self-talk, or, alternatively, demonstrate that such forms of self-talk are not present in the intrapersonal world.

THE I-ME SELF-RELATIONAL STANCE
AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

I propose, as a provisional hypothesis, that a person's psychological well-being is positively correlated with the prevalence of moments of

I-I encounter between his or her multiple I-positions. As with the I-It relationship, this is not to suggest that all moments of I-Me relating are necessarily distress-related. Indeed, at times they may be of positive benefit; for instance, when a person needs to assess quickly his or her capabilities for a task at hand. Nevertheless, as with the I-Thou and I-It relationship, it is proposed that, when a person experiences the self predominantly or wholly in an I-It way, then he or she is likely to experience high levels of psychological distress. This is due to a number of reasons.

First, if the different I-positions are able to communicate with each other and acknowledge each other's needs, then they are more likely to be able to work together to achieve the person's goals. If, on the other hand, the I-positions refuse to confirm each other, then the resulting conflict is likely to absorb much of the individual's attention, making that individual less able to fulfill his or her in-the-world projects. Cooper and Rowan (1999) sum this up:

> Where there is a lack of communication, where selves disown each other or where one self dominates to the exclusion of all others, then the result tends toward a cacophony of monologues—a discordant wail which will always be less than the sum of the individual parts. But where selves talk to selves, where there is an acceptance and understanding between the different voices and an appreciation of diversity and difference, then there is the potential for working together and co-operation—an interwoven harmony of voices which may transcend the sum of the parts alone. (p. 8)

Second, an I-I self-relational stance is associated with the experiencing of positive feelings towards oneself, such as acceptance, confirmation, openness, harmony, and a belief in one's uniqueness, wholeness, and humanity. By contrast, an I-Me self-relational stance is associated with derogatory, objectifying, rejecting, disconfirming feelings towards one self. An I-I self-relational stance, then, is more likely to be associated with a positive mood state than is an I-Me self-relational stance.

Third, the existence of I-Me self-relational stances is likely to be closely associated with the creation and maintenance of "subjugated" (Hermans & Kempen, 1993), or what have also been termed "disowned" (Stone and Winkelman, 1985), "shadow" (Cooper, 1999), "neglected," "subdued," and "suppressed" (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, 2001b), I-positions. There are the voices that are banished, ignored and rejected within the intrapersonal community (Satir, 1978), the I-positions that are consistently it-ified, disconfirmed, and talked at, rather than with. As in the case of Martha, Stone and Winkelman (1989) suggest that the "vulnerable child" is one of the voices that is most

consistently disowned, alongside other voices that an individual may have been taught were unacceptable, such as the "daimons" (May, 1969) of rage and sexuality.

Such subjugation of internal voices is likely to lead to a number of psychological difficulties. First, from a humanistic perspective (e.g., Rogers, 1959), each aspect of a person's being is seen as having a positive potentiality. In other words, as Ferrucci (1982) writes, "All subpersonalities are expressions of vital elements of our being, however negative they may seem to us at first" (p. 52). This means that, in subjugating certain aspects of his or her being, an individual locks up part of his or her full potentiality, losing touch with "some very beautiful, useful qualities" (Vargiu, 1974, p. 54). A young woman, for instance, who silences her angry voice, then surrenders her ability to stand up for her own needs and demands. Moreover, the positive potentiality of each voice consists of, not only what it can contribute alone, but what it can contribute in dialogue with other voices. Hence, where particular voices are subjugated, the person's ability to think creatively and innovatively through open intrapersonal communication is also likely to be attenuated.

Furthermore, because, as Ferrucci (1982) suggests, these subpersonalities or I-positions are expressions of vital elements of our being, they will not simply go away if attempts are made to silence them. Rather, like a young child, the more they are told to shut up, the more they are likely to shout and demand repatriation. This will inevitably lead to an increase in anxiety in the person, a constant sense of being threatened by something alien and undesirable. Moreover, because the individual, from the position of the dominant voices, refuses to dialogue with the subjugated voices, he or she then has little ability to mediate or control their expression. Martha, for instance, does not look her fears and anxieties in the face. She hopes that they will go away. In a social situation, then, she does little more than cling to the desperate hope that this time she will somehow, magically, not start to feel anxious. When the voice of terror does begin to emerge, therefore, she feels completely helpless in the face of it. She has no way of engaging with it, of retaining some sense of being in control.

This leads on to a further reason why the existence of I-Me intrapersonal relationships, and the creation and maintenance of subjugated I-positions, may be closely associated with psychological distress. Because the subjugated I-positions are vital elements of an individual's being, it is inevitable that at certain times a process of "dominance reversal" (Hermans, 1996) will take place. Here, "a hidden or suppressed position can (without therapy) become, quite suddenly, more dominant than the position that corresponds with the trait the person

considers as a prevalent and stable part of his or her personality" (Hermans, 1996, p. 46). The question, then, is what happens when an it-ified "me" becomes a dominant "I"? One answer may be that, because the usually dominant I-positions have not established a dialogical relationship with this I-position, then the subjugated I-position has no way of dialoguing back. In other words, no bridge has been created between the usually dominant I-positions and the usually subjugated I-position, so that, when the person comes to inhabit the latter, she or he has no way of connecting with the former. When Martha experiences extreme social anxiety, for instance, she is unable to connect with the adult, rational voice that "knows" that not everyone is staring at her. And because she is unable to connect with other voices, she is unable to stand back from her vulnerable I-position and regain some perspective on her situation. Rather, she experiences what Gersie (1994) refers to as an "intensificatory experience," in which she is caught up in one mode of experiencing, without any support or triangulation from other perspectives.

THERAPEUTIC IMPLICATIONS

Based on this analysis, it can be proposed that one of the central aims of therapy should be to help clients experience a greater prevalence of I-I intrapersonal encounters. Not only will such a development allow clients to experience more productive intrapersonal relationships, feel better about themselves, and more fully actualize their potential, but it will also help them to establish a dialogue with their subjugated selves so that, in the midst of their intensificatory experiences, they may be able to take a step back and connect with other voices.

Throughout the self-pluralistic therapies, numerous techniques and strategies have been developed to facilitate recognition and dialogue—and hence the possibility of a more I-I mode of relating—between the multiple I-positions. Cooper and Cruthers (1999) review these techniques and suggest that they can be broadly divided into three categories. First, there are "descriptive techniques" in which an individual is encouraged to talk or write about his or her different I-positions, usually from the perspective of an adult I-position. Second, there are "projective techniques" in which an individual is encouraged to dialogue with, and between, his or her different I-positions by projecting them on to such media as masks, paper, or the imagination. Third, there are "experiential techniques" in which an individual is encouraged to fully embody particular I-positions, and to dialogue from one mode to another. "Two-Chair dialogue" is one of the most well-known examples of this latter

category (e.g., Elliot and Greenberg, 1997), in which a client is encour-
aged to sit in one chair and talk from one I-position, and then to sit in
another chair and talk back as another.

From the psychotherapeutic literature, it would seem that such
techniques can be an effective means of facilitating the emergence of I-
I relationships between the various I-positions (Cooper and Cruthers,
1999). There are a number of reasons, however, why such techniques
may also be countertherapeutic, reducing the prevalence of I-I relating
rather than increasing it. First, these techniques, through encouraging
clients to identify and define certain I-positions, may lead them to
experience these I-positions in a more objectifying, fixed, and detached
way. The I-position becomes a definite thing, rather than a vague and
ill-defined voice that is simply encountered. Although it may be im-
portant for clients to go through a dialectical process of objectifying
different voices, separating from them, and then reencountering them
at a deeper level, there is always the danger that the voices will re-
main isolated and objectified. Second, and closely related to this, as a
client starts to identify and define certain voices, there is the danger
that these voices are taken out of the context of the dialogic whole,
such that the client develops an increasingly fragmented view of his
or her own being. In other words, at the level of the person-as-a-whole,
these techniques may lead to an increasing it-ification. Third, such
strategies may require the therapist to relate to his or her client in a
relatively technical, if not mechanistic way. And if, following a Vygotskian
(1962) line of reasoning, intrapersonal relationships emerge as the in-
ternalization of interpersonal relationships, then the establishment of
an I-It dialogue between therapist and client may ultimately increase
the prevalence of I-Me relating.

An alternative approach then might be for the therapist to aban-
don any attempts to bring about an I-I intrapersonal encounter, and
instead to concern him or herself with creating the conditions in which
an I-Thou encounter may emerge between therapist and client. The
rationale here would be that, through experiencing such an encounter,
the client may begin to develop a confirming, "thou-ifying" voice within
his or her own inner world. In other words, he or she may begin to
internalize the voice of the therapist, so that he or she can also begin
to relate to him/herself in this way. This is a process that I have cer-
tainly witnessed in my own therapeutic work, where several clients
have reported "hearing" my voice in their day to day activities, telling
them that it is "OK" to feel scared or angry. Even if, as Hermans
(2001a) points out, the internal voice is unlikely to be a direct replica
of the external voice, it is likely to retain many of the key ways of
relating associated with psychological well-being. There is also the

possibility that, although the client will not develop a new I-position as a consequence of being related to in an I-Thou way, preexisting I-positions may be modified and developed. In particular, the central I-position may begin to develop more confirming, dialogic ways of relating to other I-positions, or may feel that its central, coordinating role has been validated through experiencing the openness of the therapist.

Such a dialogical approach to therapy has been outlined by a number of clinicians, amongst them Friedman (1985), Hycner (1991), Jourard (1971), Mackewn (1997), Rogers (1957) and von Weizsäcker (1964). Here, the therapist, partially or wholly, attempts to put to one side all desires on the client and all attempts to categorize, judge, objectify, or analyze, and instead opens up to and is willing to confirm the client as a unique, present totality. For Buber (1958), such an I-Thou therapeutic relationship also requires the therapist to practice the art of "inclusion." This is defined by Friedman (1985) as

> a bold imaginative swinging "with the intensest stirrings of one's being" into the life of the other so that one can, to some extent, concretely imagine what the other person is thinking, willing and feeling and so that one adds something of one's own will to what is thus apprehended. (p. 198)

Clearly, this is very close to Rogers' (1957) notion of empathy, but Friedman emphasizes the fact that inclusion does not involve fully immersing one's self in the world of the other, but being able to stand in both the other's world and one's own world at the same time. In attempting to facilitate the emergence of an I-Thou relationship, it is also necessary for the therapist to enter into the therapeutic relationship with the whole of his or her being, including his or her vulnerabilities and uncertainties (Farber, 1967), and to open him or herself up to the possibility of being irrevocably changed by the client.

From a polyphonic standpoint, however, such an approach also has its limitations. As Cooper (1996) points out, many clients tend to inhabit a relatively constant I-position within the therapeutic relationship, generally the one of the rational, observing adult. Hence, although an I-Thou attitude from therapist to client may confirm this I-position; the client's more subjugated I-positions, those that do not emerge within the therapeutic relationship, may fail to experience confirmation. Hence, the client may not internalize a thou-ifying relationship to those I-positions that most need it, such as the vulnerable or raging I-position, but may learn only to confirm those I-positions that are already relatively acceptable.

It would seem important, therefore, that a therapist find a way of

helping his or her client bring their subjugated I-positions into the therapeutic relationship, so that the therapist can encounter and confirm the client in these particular I-positions. If this can take place, then there is the possibility that the client will internalize I-I relationships towards his or her subjugated I-positions, thus establishing a bridge which may allow some way out of intensificatory experiences. Given the earlier discussion about technical approaches, however, the therapist needs to find a way of doing this that does not further it-ify the subjugated voices and the person-as-a-whole. From a Rogerian (1957) standpoint, one answer might be that the therapist simply needs to be patient, and that by creating the core conditions of warmth, empathy, and congruence, the client will bring in his or her subjugated voices when he or she feels ready. It may be particularly useful, however, for therapist and client to focus on the dynamics of the therapeutic relationship, for it is often here that the client most directly occupies a subjugated I-position. Whereas Martha, for instance, occupied a very adult I-position in relationship to her social anxieties, her relationship to me came from a much more vulnerable position. It soon emerged that she was very afraid that I would judge and criticize her, and by my giving her an opportunity to express these fears, and empathizing with, and confirming them, she gradually internalized a more accepting attitude towards them herself. Another useful approach may be to encourage clients to "unpack," that is, to describe in increasing levels of detail the times in which they have occupied their subjugated I-positions. Through such a process, the many different facets of the subjugated I-position can be expressed, and confirmation by the therapist of these different facets can allow the client to internalize such a relationship for themselves.

CONCLUSION

This article makes a number of contributions to a dialogic understanding of the self. First, building on the work of Hermans and Kempen (1993), it encourages researchers and practitioners in the self-pluralistic field to move beyond an exploration of the I-positions, per se, to develop a deeper understanding of the relationships between the different voices. This would seem to be a logical next step for the self-pluralistic field, and an important one with respect to the development of psychotherapeutic theory and practice.

Second, it draws together a number of disparate ideas about the kinds of relationships that may exist between different I-positions, to develop a more embracing typology of intrapersonal relationships. Without

doubt, there may be many alternate ways of characterizing the relationships between I-positions, but the distinction between I-I and I-Me modes of self-relating may be a valuable starting point, and a distinction that is of particular relevance to the clinical field. Its value is also that it introduces into the field of dialogical self theory the possibility that some intrapersonal relationships may be much more dialogic than others.

Third, this study outlines a means whereby psychological well-being and psychological distress can be understood in dialogic terms. Psychological well-being is construed as the ability to relate to oneself, as well as to others, in an open, confirming, and dialogic manner, and this proposal is as important to the field of clinical practice as a whole as it is to the field of dialogical self theory. In particular, it challenges the assumption that psychological well-being is equivalent to being happy; proposing, instead, that psychological well-being is an openness to all facets of our being, as well as the being of others.

Fourth, this work outlines a number of means whereby a clinician can help his or her clients towards greater psychological well-being as understood in dialogic terms. Most importantly, perhaps, it suggests that a clinician needs to find ways of helping his or her clients bring their subjugated I-positions into the therapeutic encounter so that the therapist can model a confirming relationship towards them. It also suggests, however, that this is by no means an easy task, and requires the therapist to achieve a delicate balance between connecting with the subjugated I-positions, and engaging with the client as a nonfragmented whole.

Finally, this study draws one of the great philosophers of dialogue, Martin Buber, into the field of self-dialogicity. Buber's work has been a notable absence in this field, and has much to contribute to an understanding of both interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Although Buber's philosophy raises some important challenges to the work of other dialogical theorists (e.g., Linell & Marková, 1993), most notably, the idea that not all interpersonal or intrapersonal communication takes a truly dialogic form, in essence, it is entirely consistent with a dialogic outlook. It fiercely rejects the notion of a self-contained, Cartesian self, and emphasizes the vital significance of human beings' dialogic capabilities.

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