

Three dimensions of dialogical movement

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A B S T R A C T

After recalling historical and current approaches, I propose a semiotic approach to dialogicality, with a specific focus on cultural elements as markers in the flow of thinking or discourse. My core proposition is to consider dialogical dynamics as taking place in a space organised along three dimensions: 1) a temporal orientation, 2) degrees of fiction, and 3) degrees of generalization. I support my presentation with examples taken from a young woman's diary. Altogether, this raises the question of the possibility of inner dialogicality, and calls for a closer attention to the ethical underpinning of dialogical approaches.

Keywords: Dialogism, Dialogicality, Symbolic resources, Diary

The idea of dialogicality in human experience is an ancient one. A counterpoint to a scientific and epistemological tendency to isolate the person from his environment, it has recently stimulated a great abundance of work (Gillespie, 2011). A dialogical approach can thus contribute to a better understanding of the relational, social and cultural nature of the person. Yet such emphasis raises the reverse question: if the person is constituted by and through dialogues with the world, how can he or she develop as unique being, how can she or he be accountable for her own thinking and action? In this paper, using the example of a young woman's diary, I examine three dimensions along which inner-dialogue might proceed (temporal orientation, degree of generalization, and degree of fiction) by which the person might generate her unique voice. So doing, I wish to highlight the often forgotten ethical underpinnings of dialogical studies. Before engaging in current approaches and developing my own, I will therefore go back to an older dialogical reflection.

Prologue: the essence of dialogue

The Babylonian Talmud (the book discussing the legal implications of the Torah, itself the "Old Testament", 3rd-

5th centuries) teaches us how two Masters, known for their competing schools of thought, replied to a man asking for conversion – Shammai, known for his rightfulness, and Hillel, praised for his goodness:

On another occasion it happened that a certain non-Jew came before Shammai and said to him, "I will convert to Judaism, on condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot." Shammai chased him away with the builder's tool that was in his hand. He came before Hillel and said to him, "Convert me." Hillel said to him, "What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary; go and learn it.

Babylonian Talmud, tractate Shabbat 31a

There has been abundant commentary on this little story but it is useful here in order to introduce a few ideas related to dialogicality. The first is the centrality of the relationship to other: to the man that wants to study a very large tradition in a very short time (standing on one foot), the core teaching is to think self-in-relationship to the other ("what is hateful to you do not do to the other"). The second is that the master asks the person to go and study the Torah – and it is through this dialogue with the text, itself a compilation of centuries of rabbinic dialogues and controversies, proposing various interpretations of the biblical texts and arguing by pursuing a further dialogue

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with the text, that he might learn. Third, the basic query for learning from a knowing master has been redefined as a situation in which the learner is conceived as a responsible and active person, meant to engage both with the memory of the master and with the text. Fourth, learning is meant to be done by an embodied person – it is the limit of the physical endurance that will frame the time devoted to study. In addition, the power of Hillel's teaching is underlined by the presence of another person, Shammai – both representing their respective schools. Altogether, this might lead the man to be an ethical person (care for the other) and a knowledgeable one, who has the capacity to engage in inner and outer dialogue.

Discussions on dialogism rarely go back to these Talmudic times (with the notable exception of Billig, 1996; see also Zittoun, 2007). However there is in that sequence one of its core principles: the inherent dialogicality of humans, as an epistemic and ethical stance.

Four approaches to dialogicality

There have been recent important contributions to the clarification of existing dialogical studies (Grossen & Salazar Orvig, 2011; Linell, 2009; Marková, 2005; Rommetveit, 1992). Although it would not be useful to summarize what has been brilliantly done by others, I wish to clarify four approaches to dialogicality before introducing mine. Although some of these approaches have been developed quite independently from the others, they can also be – and often are – combined.

1) *Dialogue as ontological, ethical prerequisite*

Discussing the recent production of dialogical work, Marková (2011) recalls that a series of foundational scholars for a dialogical approach, Bakhtin, Levinas, Gadamer and Ricoeur, developed the idea of dialogicality to overcome individualist ontologies:

Dialogical in this context does not mean that these scholars were primarily concerned with the self and dialogue as a face-to-face interaction, but that they thus posed fundamental questions about human and communicative resources of the self and others.

Marková, 2011, p. 66

In effect, in this ontology, the person is considered as primarily in relationship to the other; the presence of the other, and the recognition of the uniqueness of the other, is a precondition for the humanity of the person as such. Whether it has a simply philosophical or a traditional religious background, as seen above, such a stance has a necessary ethical implication: the person is answerable in front of the Other (Buber, 2001; Lévinas, 1972).

This ontological position also has an epistemological implication, that "knowledge is jointly generated by the self and 'others' throughout history as well as through symbolic and dialogical encounters" (Marková, 2011, p. 67). This ontological perspective, Linell proposes to call *dialogicality* (Linell, 2009, p 7).

2) *Dialogicality as epistemological stance*

From the previous stance follows very naturally an idea that has been developed mostly during the last century: that of the social nature of human mind and the mutual construction of person and culture. *Dialogism* can thus be seen as a specific epistemological stance (Linell, 2009, p. 7), described in the following way by Marková, Linell, Grossen, and Salsazar Orvig (2007, p. 8):

Our point of departure is the perspective that humans live in the worlds of others' words (Bakhtin 1989/1996, p. 167). The limits of the self are not within the I, but within the relationship with the other, 'I and thou'. Every individual makes his/her world in terms of others by dialogically constructing and re-constructing the social world as a set of multifaceted and multivoiced realities situated in culture. Systems of symbols, texts, artistic products and historical interpretations, all have dialogical properties. They are expressions of socially shared dialogical cognitions and communicative actions. These are not engaged in a peaceful contemplation but are in tension, they clash, judge and evaluate one another.

This perspective has thus brought authors to thematize a self-other-object model to apprehend social situations (Marková, 2005). Such a perspective is also adopted by social psychologists interested in the dynamics by which meaning circulates and evolve within the social world and through individuals (Moscovici, 1984), as well as by socio-cultural or cultural psychologists (Boesch, 1991; Valsiner, 2000, 2012) (for a similar point Gillespie and Cornish, 2010).

3) *Forms of dialogues*

One obvious way of approaching dialogicality is to look at actual conversations and interpersonal communication. Drawing on Bakhtin's work on literature (1982, 1984, 1996), authors examine discourses with the ideas that (a) an utterance is always an answer to a previous utterance or anticipates a further one, and (b) words and utterances have specific genres, referring to various social frames and carrying the echoes and undertones of other uses, in past and present situations. Such ideas can lead to different forms of enquiry, ranging from a strict analysis of situations of communication to broader analysis of social dynamics. Even when it comes to examining actual interactive situations, it soon appears that various "dialogues" co-occur and are deeply interwoven. Grossen and Salazar Orvig (2011) and Zittoun and Grossen (2012) have thus identified: (1) *Distant dialogues* with absent third parties who are involved in these or other related situations (or "dialogues in absentia", François, 2005); (2) *Actual dialogues*, or *dialogue in praesentia* (François, 2005), with present others; (3) *Autodialogue*, the sort of dialogue that a person has with herself (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998). It also includes the dialogues one can have with internalized others, or Inner Alters (Marková, 2006). Typically, these dialogues also designate what could be called diverse aspects of the self as in Dialogical Self Theory (see below); (4) *Dialogue between*

situations: part of the sense of continuity of the self is due to the similarities that exist between various situations in which the person is involved, and the similar patterns or motives of activities in which people are engaged and that repeat in different frames. Hence, the dialogue here designates the person's engagement within a specific type of situation, which itself answers to other situations. Such dialogues connect various spheres of experience, various temporalities (one in which the person is involved and one that is invoked in his or her discourse), and consequently, various facets of one's own self. (5) *Dialogue between human and non-human actants*. Cultural elements also play a role in the construction, transformation, and management of the self. Yet these are "non-human actants" (Latour, 1987): they have specific modes of intervening in dialogue and can play an important role in the person's learning and development.

Eventually, these various forms of dialogue interact with each other and create *dialogical tensions* (Zittoun & Grossen, 2012). Under some conditions, such inner tensions might bring the person to reflect or to find new creative solutions that might yield new ideas and actions. Of course, people might also want to reduce tensions by repressing some voices or complying with others.

4) *Dialogical self theory*

With a specific emphasis on inner dialogues, since the 90's Hermans developed his dialogical self model (or DST for Dialogical Self Theory), which has the virtue of recognizing the dialogical nature of the self, against a too-monological view of the person. Developed as a clinical technique, it enabled many scholars to identify "a multiplicity of I-positions within the imaginary landscape of the self" (Hermans & Kempen, 1996). Heuristically useful in identifying positional shifts, the model has been enriched over the years. However, as with any popular method, it runs the risk of losing sight of its very constitution as a mediation tool. One of the limits I want to address here is its identification of firmly defined *I*-positions through specific discursive practices, usually research interviews or psychotherapeutic dialogue *aiming at identifying these positions* (Jasper, Moore, Whittaker, & Gillespie, 2012).¹

In recent studies, authors have tended to identify *I*-positions as quasi "characters" (Hermans & Gieser, 2012, pp. 2–3, pp. 1–22) to be found in a person's narratives, as well as "third positions" (the resolution of conflicting positions), meta-positions (that is, in a meta-cognitive posture), and

promoter positions –which have a guiding role (Hermans & Gieser, 2012, pp. 15–16, pp. 1–22). While these distinctions might be useful to account for certain issues identified as "identity related" – in therapy, migration, etc. – one should not forget, however, that they do not constitute a full model of mind. It ought not be assumed because people can speak *as if they were one or the other character*, or identify inter-nalized voices of others in themselves, that people actually *have* characters in their mind. Consciousness is much more fluid than this. As stream, it has all kind of layers and movements, which are all fed through or inserted in his-torical and cultural worlds – it is dialogical (Baldwin, 1997; Gillespie & Cornish, 2010; James, 1890). Some thoughts occur with no specific *me*-ness, and yet are dialogical. A presentation in terms of *I* or *me* is necessary only if one is called, for some reason, to self-define, to present oneself in terms of his or her belonging or attributes, or position herself toward someone else, or to react to some require-ment to position oneself (but for a different position see Raggatt, 2014).

So called identity-positions are just one aspect of a deeper, more general movement of the social mind revealed by dialogical approaches. It is this dialogicality of the flow of consciousness that I try to approach here.

Dialogicality and semiotic answerability

Studying the person from a dialogical perspective (recognizing dialogicality and dialogism) demands examining how her activities and sense-making – actions, thoughts, and externalisation – reflect or are guided by the social world, her past interactions with others, her experience of places and locations, her exposure to social representations, films and songs. In that sense, the dialogicality of mind is much more than the specific dialogue with internalized words of others, as the study of semiotic mediation shows (Leiman, 2011; Valsiner, 2001, 2007a, 2007b). In a similar vein, I suggest that the dialogical nature of mind is better apprehended at the level of a smallest unit of analysis of mind: that of signs, things that designate other things (Peirce, 1993). Mind and human action are enabled by semiotic mediation – resulting from the internalisation, or "translation" of signs into mind, traces of past experiences and their combination and creation into new syntheses (Freud, 2001; Valsiner, 2007a; Vygotsky, 1986). However, capturing the dialogicality of mind is extremely difficult: first, because it can only be accessed through externalization; and second, because if signs are in themselves social, then any thought or expression is in an ever-lasting movement of dialogue. How can we know, from a person's externalization, what she is thinking? How can we trace back to the person signs or words which are more clearly quotations, ventriloquations, or appropriations?

One of the ways to approach the stream of thinking-speech is to decide on some entities that can be recognizable as such – as borrowed from somewhere else, another situation, another person's discourse, other ideas and signs. Typically, a turn-to-turn analysis of dialogue reveals such effects. Hence, another way to observe dialogicality is to identify "markers" in one's discourse, or "beacons" –

¹ Discussions of the model have addressed others shortcomings, such as the fact that it does not explicitly consider the social embeddedness of the self (Gillespie, Cornish, Aveling, & Zittoun, 2008), the social frames structuring interactions (Moore, Jaspers, Gillespie, 2011), the systems of activity in which people are embedded (Michel & Wortham, 2002), or their location in society (Jasper et al., 2012, p. 325) or culture (Valsiner & Han, 2008). Other authors have found the model too language-focussed, and have proposed expansions to non verbal experiences (Grossen and Salazar Orvig, 2011), or to embodied ones (Baerveldt, 2014; Maslov, 2011). In the terms proposed here, if the model accepts dialogicality as an ontological principle, it seems to fail to consider it as an epistemo-logical and ethical principle, and to account for the plurality of forms of dialogue.

objects that, so to say, subsist or float in the flow of thinking or discourse. Socially shared objects are such beacons: for example, mentions of *cultural elements* such as books or movies, political or shared events, can appear in one's discourse, and be discussed, appropriated, transformed, etc. Observing the trajectories of cultural objects in one's flow of thinking or discourse reveals much about the dia-logicality of mind (Zittoun, 2008, 2010; Zittoun, Aveling, Gillespie & Cornish, 2012).

In effect, any reference to another meaning, discourse, place, or event, creates the possibility of two perspectives in mind: now and then, here and there, me and others, etc. (Martin & Gillespie, 2010). Hence, the mediation of cultural elements, or the inner dialogues mediated by semi-otic guidance, generates inner distancing and - the capacity to move out of the immediate flow of here-and-now experience (Gillespie, 2007; Valsiner, 1998). Inner distancing is the condition for recognizing, naming, or thinking about a given experience, that is, for sense making. In what follows, my suggestion is that such dialogical movement can be represented as a loop within a three dimensional space.

To support my argument, I will use the diary of a young woman as data. Diaries offer the advantage of being "natural" laboratories in which people externalize their flow of thinking-discourse in a verbal form, over a long period of time. A diary is dialogical per essence - it is usually addressed to someone, and it triggers reflexivity through language use and writing, which itself transforms and elaborates the actual flow of thinking (Gillespie & Zittoun, 2010; Wagoner et al., 2011; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2012).² Beyond these obvious aspects of inherent dialogicality, using the presence of cultural elements as beacons, I will illustrate three dimensions for organizing inner-dialogicality.

Hanna's Diary (1938-1941) (Spencer, 2001) was written by an educated young woman during the first years of the Second World War. Living in Czechoslovakia and from a Jewish family, she and her talented German boyfriend decided to hide - or rather bracket - their relationship to avoid prejudicing his career as a composer. Aged 24, she thus started to write a diary for him, containing all the thoughts and ideas she could not tell him about, or write to him about, in a letter. The diary thus follows her as she loses her teacher position because of the racial laws in 1938, emigrating to the UK as a maid in the spring of 1939, and eventually, immigration to Canada in the summer of 1939, where she reunites with her family on a farm. It ends exactly on the day when she meets the Canadian man that would become her husband. The diary retraces a portion of her life punctuated by important ruptures (mainly the loss of civil rights in 1938 and the first exile to London), and thus renders extremely visible the process of sense making in which the person is engaged (Zittoun, 2009). Here I use it to illustrate my arguments (which have been built empirically through other studies - Zittoun, 2006, 2008).

Three dialogical dimensions

A diary can be seen as a complex dialogical object. Hanna's diary is clearly addressed to her fiancé [who is indicated by "H." or "you" or is hidden behind "dear diary" (Spencer, 2001, note 9, p. 5)]. It has been written in a specific time, and carries the echoes of various social and political events. Her moves through three countries and many more settings (changes of professional assignments in schools around Czechoslovakia, work as a maid in various households in England, and as farmer, factory worker, touring guest-speaker, and teacher in Canada) are re-sponses to war conditions and political decisions conspiring to silence her, and that have the power to substantially limit her freedom of speech and her daily activities. The others with whom she interacts - family members, colleagues, friends - during the war, vary across time. For example, after the passing of racial laws in November 1938, Hanna not only loses her job, but her friends stop seeing her - it is as if she has suddenly lost her place in the social world. After her best friend puts an end to their friendship, she writes: "For me, it was the last contact - the last real contact - with the world around me" (Friday, 18 November, Spencer, 2001, p. 54). As a cultivated young woman, Hanna reads widely, mentions movies and musical pieces that move her, and discusses philosophical theories that she finds interesting. Hence, all possible partners of dialogue are present: real others, inner alters, cultural objects, diverse situations - all in specific social settings shaped by wider ideological and political forces.

Moving away from these aspects, I wish to present three dimensions along which Hanna's inner dialogicality can be observed. The three dimensions can be seen as vectors organizing the space of her interiority; there are the main dimensions, I argue, along which two points, or two perspectives, can be parted. They are therefore both the dimensions for inner distancing, as well as for inner dialogue - every inner distance creates an inner loop.³ They are: (1) Temporal orientation (2) Degrees of generalization; (3) Degrees of fiction.

1. Temporal orientation

Inner dialogues have an important temporal dimension. Temporality is present when a person links today's situation A with situation B experienced yesterday, or reflects about how to solve a problem in the immediate future. It is particularly present when people engage in self-narration, for instance when people compare self in the present with self in the past, or imagine what might happen to them. Such oscillation, part of the work of creating one's own continuity through ruptures and change, has also been observed by most scholars working on the self. Of course this can be expanded to the other forms of dialogue mentioned earlier: a dialogue between situations usually demands connecting two locations in time.

² Such material also belongs to the public domain and is accessible to any interested reader - science can thus remain dialogical.

³ These three dimensions have been identified as they best allow accounting for the diversity of inner loops, both reasoning on the basis of data and of theory (see Zittoun et al., 2013).

In a diary, dialogues mediated by different temporal locations are very common. Typically, they are visible when people refer to special dates (anniversaries, New Year, personal memories), or when they are exposed to the unknown (Zittoun, 2008). Here, I want to emphasize dialogue through time revealed around the presence of a symbolic resource:

Saturday, 12 November [1938]

It has been a bad week. Night after night I buried myself in the pillows as if I could smother all thoughts and feelings, for there seemed no way out. I felt alone and desperate. Have been rereading Rilke's *Geschichten vom lieben Gott* [Stories of Our Dear Lord]. Remember how we used to read stories together? And how you said that I would understand them better in life? Well, I think I do now.

Spencer, 2001, p. 5 0

In this sequence, Hanna starts reporting her state of desperation (after her world was turned upside down by the loss of civil rights): she describes a permanent state of emotional upheaval with "no way out". She then reports finding, as she feels alone, a "non human" other, in the poems of Rainer Maria Rilke (Rilke, 2003). Starting a dialogue with them, she creates a distance between a present situation (alone and sad) and a past one, in which she was happy with her fiancé, sharing experiences of reading Rilke. From that bridge to the past, Hanna can also recall the fiancé's prediction about the future (that she would one day understand these poems). Eventually, the present becomes that day announced in the past. Thus, the loop is completed: from present, to past announcing the present, to now – mediated by the dialogue with the poem (and behind them the inner alters that are the fiancé and perhaps the poet). Eventually, the present becomes tolerable, as narratively connected to the past – moreover, the poem is used again in the diary as a companion for the present (Spencer, 2001, p. 54).

This temporal dimension is a very important aspect of the dialogicality of mind (Bergson, 1938; James, 1890). It makes it possible for people to create a sense of their personal continuity through time, and also, to reflect upon change – both being important processes in learning and development (Erikson, 1959). It is also the condition for an orientation toward the future, which needs to be anchored in a present or past in order to become a promoter to people's actions. Along the temporal dimension, dialogical loops can be wider – a young adult can connect to his childhood, or think about retirement – or shorter, based on recent events. Also, depending on their life situations, people can mainly develop either future oriented, or past loops (the latter, more typically in old age, or in confined situations, Zittoun et al., 2013).

2. Degrees of generalization

The second dimension along which uses of resources can be analyzed, and with them, I suggest, dialogical movements in the flow of consciousness, corresponds to progressive *generalisation*. It is related to the basic function

of semiotic means: to organize thinking in more or less differentiated and generalized ideas (Valsiner, 2007a; Werner & Kaplan, 1963). Concretely, one looks for what the cultural element is attached to. Here are two contrasting examples:

Friday, 28 October [1938]

[After teaching a philosophy class]. Speaking of good and evil, forgive the nonsense I wrote last summer, dear diary, when I was reading Oscar Wilde. Seems to me now that my concept of good was far too rigid. What is goodness? There are so many possibilities of doing or not doing good, kind, decent, appropriate things. But as Fontane says, "Das ist ein weites Feld, Luise!"⁴ I just wanted to let you know that I have been thinking about it quite a lot lately, prompted by my discussions with these young people.

Spencer, 2001, p. 4 8

Monday March 6 [1939], 4:45 pm

[Three days after arrival in England, meeting the lady she will work for, an impressive matron in a white bed]. I felt like Parsifal, "the dumb knight" on the Mount of Grail, who was speechless when faced with the sick Kurneval. The entire atmosphere was eerie. It was almost as if there were a veil between me and the world. What a contrast to the hectic times of the last weeks (...).

Spencer, 2001, p. 8 4

These two excerpts have been chosen for their contrasting uses of symbolic resources on the generalization dimension.

In the first sequence, Hanna mentions Oscar Wilde to open a reflection on general *values* – Good and Bad; her current understanding of them has changed. We might think that the recent events and experiences have precisely brought her to revise them, and define them in such a way that they can account for her own actions and that of her close others, as the war deploys. In that sense, the dialogue takes place at the level of highly generalized experience. It is probably also related to specific actions (which could be seen as more or less contradictory with an ideal of "goodness").

The second sequence is anchored in a much more concrete, situated and embodied experience: Hanna seems to have had an experience of actual discomfort and stupefaction. Mobilising *Parsifal* enables her to take distance and move out from that experience: the scene seems first to echo and map the whole Gestalt. Mentioning "the dumb knight" becomes a label to name the initial emotional and physical state of which Hanna felt prisoner. Thanks to such naming, she seems to distance herself enough from the situation to establish a dialogue with it, linking and comparing it to other situations ("last weeks").

⁴ In a later note, the author indicates that Theodor Fontane was a German novelist and that the expression meant "that's a big subject" (Spencer, 2001, p. 183).

Altogether, such distancing thus moves along a continuum, going from the recognition of certain patterns of experience, their naming, the definition of progressive categories, up to general values. This dimension thus enables us to reflect in categorical, quasi-conceptual or conceptual terms, in terms of general values as well as over-generalized impressions (Green, 1999; Valsiner, 2007a; Vygotsky, 1986). As such, it generates dialogical dynamics between two positions on such a continuum, and can substantially transform the degree of general-ization at which an experience or an event is apprehended; it might thus contribute to the person's *f u r t h e r* change.

3. Degrees of fiction

A third dimension concerns the dialogue that takes place between “real” events or experiences, and imaginary and fictional ones. Here, the loops move along the dimension that unites “what is” and “what could be”, the real and the hypothetical, or the unreal (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998; Valsiner, 2007a). Such aspects are marked in the discourse by formula such as “what if”, by conditional or subjunctive forms, or by semantic fields suggesting bracketing the real, or opening fiction, dream, etc. Here, for instance, is Hanna's reflection after seeing a Disney movie, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Cottrell & Hand, 1938):

Thursday, 24 November [1938]

It's fabulous, magical. I am still quite numb. If you saw it – and I hope you will – you would go straight to Walt Disney and offer to work with him. And I could join you. Or another version of the dream, as I continued it: I am standing in a big office, talking to Walt. And one day soon afterwards someone in old Europe gets a letter from America with an invitation...Now I am not scared of America any longer. It's so wonderful how everything in the film comes to life. The trees, the stones, the animals.

Spencer, 2001, p.56

Here Hanna seems to have had a wonderful experience in the Disney world with dancing and singing animals – a fictional, cultural experience. Coming back to real life, she starts to “dream” that her fiancé would go to the USA, or that she would first meet Walt Disney. The “dream” has variations, Hanna plays with possible imaginary scenarios, nourished with real life experiences (e.g., of “big offices”).

This sequence enables her to move through at least three different degrees of fiction: the here-and-now difficult situation, the totally unreal world in which brooms sing and dance (the fictional sphere), and the unlikely-real sphere in which she might meet M. Disney himself. This dialogue between here-and-now and various hypothetical positions also creates a loop that ends up back in the present: now, she is “not scared of America any longer”. This last point has very concrete implications, as one quite reasonable option for Hanna and her family is to migrate to America. Here again, the dialogical loop has the possibility to change the here-and-now.

The importance of these dialogues with what is not or what could be, have been identified previously by Vygotsky around the idea of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1986). It also plays some role in clinical work, and in studies of scientific (Vaihinger, 1924) and cultural creativity (Glaveanu, 2010). Here, I propose to see this progressive fictionalisation of experience as the work of imagination, rather than seeing it as an escapist aspect of daily thinking, I suggest that it can offer the person a whole new range of perspectives to support dialogical movements. Imagination is thus an essential component of mind (Pelaprat & Cole, 2011; Zittoun et al., 2013).

A three dimensional dialogical space

These three dimensions are not mutually exclusive; they are always potentially present. Inner dialogical movements can be represented as taking place in a three-dimensional space, around an origin defined by the here-and-now (see Fig. 1). If the intersection of these dimensions represents the here-and-now, then any dialogical movement is generated when the person moves away, through semiotic mediation, in one or the other direction. This means that any dialogical movement demands a displacement that can be located in regard to all three dimensions.

If we examine the Walt Disney example again, Hanna actually moves away from the here-and-now situation (a difficult day in time of war) into fiction, where she eventually imagines an impossible scenario (talking to Walt Disney). She also thinks about the future (going to America), and goes back in the past when she imagines the presence and work of her fiancé, who she has not seen now for quite a while. Finally, through her exposure to specific images – singing brooms, poetic birds – she actually develops a general positive feeling about America, as a land of promises and possibilities. In Fig.1 the grey line attempts to represent this movement.

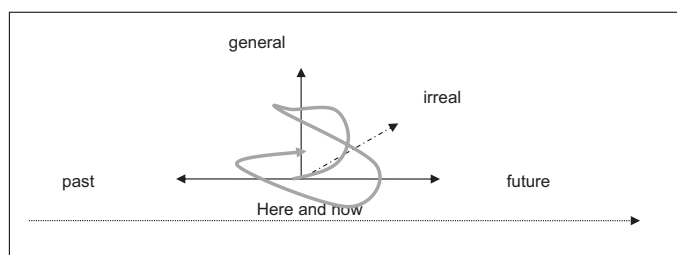


Fig. 1. Three-dimensions of dialogical space.

In other words, a deeper understanding of dialogicality as a fundamental process invites us to consider dialogical movements in the mind, and in the flow of thinking and discourse. This goes beyond the presence of other persons in one's discourse – here for instance the fiancé and Walt Disney – to examine dialogical movement as enabled by a wider range of semiotic mediations. My proposition is to consider the dialogical positions generated as a person moves through time, and through levels of fictionalization and generalization. Each of these dimensions creates a distance from the here-and-now, and as such, a dialogical tension. From this tension, the person's flow of consciousness usually loops and comes enriched back to the present.

If dialogicality is a proper condition of the mind – of the person in her social and cultural environment – then it is important to see what supports such dialogicality. The fine-grained analysis proposed here suggests a variety of dialogical movements, which seem to nourish a person's capacity for reinventing herself. Conversely, limits to a person's inner dialogue and capacity to change might be due to the presence of oppressing real or imaginary others, to restraints on one's capacity to establish a connexion between present and past, or to the difficulty one might have in jumping into the unreal or the imaginary.

Dialogicality, answerability, and the emergence of the person

The dialogical perspective proposed here raises many issues. If so many others enter in the making of the self, how can a person have an idea that is his or her own? How can one free oneself from the louder or more powerful voices of others – as suggested by the case of Hanna?

For inner dialogical movements not to be imposed or hindered, something in the person needs to be preserved: there is a fundamental human need for privacy, integrity and uniqueness, or “faithfulness to oneself” (Cresswell, 2011). This is where the ethical stance underlying dialogical approaches, often left aside by current research, can be recalled.

The possibility of dialogicality demands the basic acknowledgement by others of the person in his or her uniqueness, with rights to think, feel and act as a full member of the social world – an ethical claim also supported by developmental as well as clinical psychology.⁵

Inner dialogicality thus depends, on the one side, on real dialogues with social others. The experience of being acknowledged and recognized by others is a precondition for the development of inner thinking. Such acknowledgement thus grounds the capacity to stand for oneself while committing oneself in close relationships, learning situations, at work or in the public space. On the other side, dialogicality precisely requires the inner phase of inner dialogues – the possibility to let one's thinking wander, exploring dialogical spaces (Zittoun, 2012). Such explorations demand time and intimacy, internal freedom and a

relative security – the space to deploy an interiority. A diary can provide the conditions for “thinking spaces” (Perret-Clermont, 2004). Overbearing others, demanding social duties, restrictions on time, and in more extreme situations, deprivation or abuse, threaten the possibility to maintain and nourish inner dialogicality.

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⁵ As Hanna rightly feels, the progressive loss of professions, friends, public spaces or cultural events, imposed by the Nazi regime, turns Jews into “outcasts”, and raises questions about how one might “keep one's self-respect” (Spencer, 2001, p. 52).

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