

## A lesson in dialogical thinking

*The dialogical mind: Common sense and ethics*, by Ivana Marková. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 260 pages. ISBN: 9781107002555

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Book after book, Ivana Marková has pursued a rigorous exploration of the dialogical nature of human experience and society, from *Paradigms, thought and language* (1982), where she showed the social nature of language, to the well-known *Dialogicality and social representations* (2003) exploring the dialogical nature of social representations, and with it, the deep articulation of inner and outer dialogues in society, and finally in her remarkable *The Dialogical mind: Common sense and ethics* (Marková, 2016) where the enquiry is pushed both to the very foundation of dialogical thinking and to their empirical and practical implications in common sense and everyday life. The thread linking these three books is, according to the author, “a continuous struggle to understand the interdependence between Self and Others in thought, language in their historical and cultural perspective” (Marková, 2016, p. x). In parallel to this theoretical route, Marková here draws on her recent work on trust (Marková & Gillespie, 2008, 2011) and her reflection on post-totalitarian societies (among others Markova, 2004; Marková & Plichtová, 2007).

“Dialogical” is here understood in a strong sense: “the dialogical perspective presented in this book presupposes that the nature of the Self–Other interdependence is ethical and that ethics is embedded in common sense thinking and socially shared knowledge” (Marková, 2016, p. 4). This ethical presupposition is also the core message of the book, and it is progressively and systematically demonstrated. In order to do so, Marková proceeds in two main movements. The first is critical and deconstructive. Entitled “‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ modes of thinking and knowing,” the first section of the book traces back the historical division between rational and irrational thought, or logos and mythos. It then progressively establishes, through a careful reading of the work of Giambattista Vico, the possibility of a dialogical form of knowledge, or common sense, beyond these divisions. The second movement is a systematic theoretical construction. Under the title “Dialogicality as epistemology of daily life and of professional practices,” the second section proposes a series of theoretical, ethical and epistemological axioms, on the basis of which theory is developed, concepts deduced, and implication for methodology and practice examined. This construction is anchored,

on the one side, in Marková’s deep and careful analysis of philosophies of intersubjectivity and dialogue, and on the other, in a wide variety of empirical examples. In the next sections, I retrace these two movements, before highlighting some of the books’ contributions to cultural psychology and the social sciences.

### **From higher/inferior to common sense as cultural mode of knowing**

Marková starts by reminding us how the division between “logos” and “mythos” is taken-for-granted since the Antiquity, and that our history of knowledge has almost systematically preferred the first one, living with the illusion that science and politics aim at establishing logos over mythos. This distinction was then maintained by philosophy and science trying, through progress, to lead knowledge out of irrationality toward rationality—an idea that can be found in Emmanuel Kant’s work, up to many contemporary psychologists.

The naive belief that we are on the side of logos, beyond mythos, creates dangerous illusions: it hides how deeply merged these two modes of knowing can be—as in totalitarian regimes, where the illusion of logos hid a deep mythical functioning, or in contemporary science, where for instance complex social phenomena are searched for in the brain. Such distinctions have, however, be questioned, and Marková recalls the work of many—from Richard Schweder to Albert Einstein—who have emphasized the mutual dependency of rational and irrational, their cultural and relational variation, and even, their secondarity to other goals of knowledge—beauty or ethics. However, this division has been maintained throughout a third pair of concepts, these of “common sense” against “science”—the latter being as usually preferred.

It is at this point that Marková proposes a different route: she rehabilitates common sense through an alternative history of thought, exploring the work of Giambattista Vico and the “Scottish school of common sense” in the 18th century. Marková reads Vico as considering common sense as a type of knowledge elaborated by human groups sharing forms of life over time; common sense includes laws, rules and tools allowing to act in one’s environment. Although it is linked to perception—it allows apprehending the world—common sense also goes beyond it, thanks to ingenuity and imagination, which allows thinking metaphorically, goes beyond the known, and is basis of reflexivity and ethics. Here, common sense is much more historical and accurate than pure reason; in contrast, for Vico, the “barbarism of reflection” designated rational thinking without anchorage in human experience. This, Marková comments, could also allow us to analyse “attempts to rationally justify scientific theories like racism and Nazism” (Marková, 2016, p. 58).

The importance given for common sense, formulated by Vico, has only marginally been taken over in social sciences and psychology. Marková thus shows how in France, and against August Comte’s proposition, since Durkheim up to Bourdieu, common sense has been systematically considered as producing “false claims about

social reality” (Marková, 2016, p. 64). In contrast, Anglo-Saxon pragmatism saw common sense and science as different types of knowledge. Marková’s careful reading shows the nuances between William James’ understanding of common sense, for which it was one among many types of knowledge, together with science or critical philosophy, Charles S. Peirce’s, who saw it as “the instinctive result of human experience” implying imagination (Marková, 2016, p. 69), and John Dewey’s conception of common sense and science as being part of the same transaction between humans and their environment. Comparable ideas can then be found in phenomenological sociology, such as Alfred Schütz or Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Marková then shows that the same tensions can be found in social psychology, where common sense can be promoted, rejected, or naively measured. However, Serge Moscovici always gave a central role to common sense, captured in his fundamental Self–Other–Object psychosocial triangle. Finally, for Marková

Common sense is a way of talking, thinking and acting by which humans express their social and dialogical nature. It is an implicit way in and through which humans make sense, create sense and understand social phenomena that form the social reality in which they live. (Marková, 2016, p. 77)

It is on this basis that Marková calls for a study of common sense, which can only be done through dialogical dynamics, or, more exactly, “common sense is a dialogical sense which is historically established in and through the ethical nature of the Self–Other” (Marková, 2016, p. 94). This is what is established in the second section.

## **Dialogical ethics and epistemology**

The second section of the book opens with the following statement: “The dialogical mind is the mind in interaction with others, that is, with individuals, groups, institutions, cultures, and with the past, present and future” (Marková, 2016, p. 91). As announced, it is built around a series of axioms; I present these axioms, synthesizing some of the ideas presented in that section.

The first axiom defines the Ego–Alter as an “irreducible ethical and *ontological* unit” (Marková, 2016, p. 94). Historically, Marková retraces a move from a person-centered philosophy and science, as proposed by Descartes and Kant, to an understanding of the relational nature of human existence, in 18th century, with the progress of sciences and the diversification of the population. It is in particular Fichte that introduces the idea of the central role of social recognition in human life, and who proposes the concept of intersubjectivity, to ground the very idea of human rights, which are always rights towards other humans. “This kind of reciprocity (. . .) totally overturned the meaning of Kantian morality: ethics is a mutually recognized relation between the Self and Others who acknowledge and act upon their reciprocity” (Marková, 2016, p. 99). These ideas were then completed by Hegel, with his idea of freedom, grounded in the recognition of the other.

Marková then retraces the three forms of intersubjectivity discussed by Hegel: intersubjectivity in interpersonal relationships; between individual or families and institutions; and in the relation of citizen to the State. These are deeply mutually dependent, as a ‘circle returning within itself’, only some aspects being more relevant in some instances than others. The concept of intersubjectivity has also been developed by the Marburg Neo-Kantian School, including Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenberg, and Martin Buber. These authors pursued the idea of a fundamental ethical responsibility toward the Other; they will also suggest an asymmetry of that relation, where the other has primacy, that will be pursued by Emmanuel Levinas.

Marková sees these two lines of work, establishing both an ontological unity of Self and Other, and an ethical responsibility between Self and Other, as foundational for all further dialogical approaches. Authors such as William James, Lev Vygotsky, George Herbert Mead, James Mark Baldwin, and Mikhail Bakhtin were thus all familiar with these authors and their ideas and shared some of these assumptions. This is what, as a whole, distinguishes their work as psychologists from those that focused on information processing, or from approaches that consider intersubjectivity as isolated phenomenon, or in terms of cognitive processes or behavioral responses. Rather, Marková emphasizes the fact that for the approaches stemming from dialogical philosophies, “intersubjectivity is strongly connected with social praxis: it is entrenched in ethical action, in the relations to freedom, the will and in the engagement in responsibility between the Ego–Alter” (Marková, 2016, p. 106).

Implications from this first axiom are then developed—in what appear as corollary axioms. The first is “dialogical imagination,” which Marková defines with Vico “as the competence of humans to select features and symbols of past and present knowledge and to experience, recreate and synthesize them, as well as transform them into new ideas of the past, present and future” (Marková, 2016, p. 107). Imagination is central in scientific work, as observed by Albert Einstein, as well as to our capacity to imagine the other’s perspective—it is thus vital in interpersonal relations. A second corollary is that of the irreducibility of the ethical/ontological Ego–Alter dyad, which Marková traces back ontogenetically in the primary mutuality of infant and carer, and that can then be expanded to the diverse intersubjectivities in which people are involved, also implying Ego–Inner Alter dynamics. A third one concerns mutuality and autonomy achieved through dialogue. In Bakhtin and others’ work, Ego’s engagement within an Ego–Alter relation is a creative activity; there, the Self’s integrity is at stake, as well as, through language, reflexivity. Hence, one’s responsibility toward the other is partly assumed through one’s imagination of the perspective of the other.

The second axiom states that the Ego–Alter–Object is an “irreducible ethical and *epistemological* unit” (Marková, 2016, p. 94), where the core idea is that “The Ego and Alter act upon objects in order to get to know them, to create and destroy them; humans imagine objects, they desire objects of others and so on” (Marková, 2016, p. 115). Although the author has addressed this idea earlier in her work, she can here systematically ground it in her first axiom. This for instance allows

dismissing objections recently raised against intersubjectivity, such as the supremacy of “interobjectivity”—which cannot hold if one accepts the first axiom. This axiom also allows highlighting the implications of various asymmetries in the triangle: Giordano Bruno’s death, or Galileo’s renouncement to his ideas can be seen as different choices between one’s commitment to the object of knowledge and Other’s recognition. Conversely, it is the total submission to the other that was the Communist Party, that can explain people’s blind acceptance to some of its insane knowledge. These dramatic examples highlight the existential strength of these commitments to other and object, and the deep embeddedness of ethics, integrity, as well as knowledge, and imagination. The epistemological triangle can then be distorted, for instance in the “consumerist triangle,” when people’s Ego–Object relation seems to overwrite totally Ego–Other. Yet, Marková aptly notes, even when Self desires an Object, it is to satisfy his or her need of recognition by Others (real or inner).

The third axiom proposed by Marková reflects these deep dynamics as it considers “the Ego–Alter and the Ego–Alter–Object as being interdependent in terms of dialogical thinking (imagination, multivoicedness or heteroglossia, intersubjectivity, the search for social recognition, trust and responsibility), dialogical communication and dialogical action” (Marková, 2016, p. 94).

“Epistemic trust” refers

to the participants’ trust that they live in a temporarily shared social world comprising a common ground for understanding and interpretation of the social reality. (...) Second, [it] refers to the capacity and readiness of Selves and Others to learn, share, and accept knowledge, experience and ethical evaluations otherwise from one another. (Marková, 2016, p. 127)

Here, drawing on T. Berry Brazelton or Peter Fonagy’s works, among others, Marková takes a developmental stance to retrace the genealogy of such basic trust in primary parent–child relations, which is also the basis of the establishment, through trust and the recognition of the other, of self-reflection. Similar moves from pre-reflective to reflective trust can be observed in macro-social terms, as for instance people’s trust in institutions highlighted by Georg Simmel. However, these can also become progressively distrusted, which brings Marková to consider variations of the hermeneutics of suspicion in Hans Gadamer or Paul Ricoeur. However, Marková underlines that it is precisely because institutions or authority could not be trusted that Bakhtin considered as crucial “dialogical competencies as trust and responsibility” (p. 137).

Here also, Marková explores variation in these dynamics of trust, one being “epistemic authority.” Understood as dialogical relation, epistemic authority is a voluntary recognition by Self of the Other’s intellectual or moral supremacy; it is to be distinguished from power (non-dialogical and imposed on Self). She explores its variations for education. Following Hannah Arendt, she questions the consequences of adults’ apparent renouncement to their epistemic authority in the name

of a “democratic” education; in such conditions, how can future adults learn to trust others’ experiences and be trusted, or engage their own responsible action, which is precisely based on experience? Or, in the new conditions of University education, what is the consequence for learners to aim for prestigious jobs or financial recognition rather than knowledge, while their professors themselves promote these career values, rather than playing their role of epistemic authorities? Thus, as “learning from the epistemic authority is a dialogically rational way of acquiring knowledge and experience, which is a substitute for Self’s lack of capacity to discover natural and social phenomena on his/her own,” and given the current “uncertainty and distrust in modern education,” the “question of trust has become a societal issue” (Marková, 2016, pp. 152–153).

Another concept following from Marková’s axioms is that of “epistemic responsibility,” fundamental to account for people’s commitment in their own lives or in their societies—people’s learned helplessness during the communist regime being precisely one where people were denied responsibility. In the dialogical tradition, there are two main variations of dialogical responsibility. For Bakhtin and his followers, responsibility is grounded in one’s fundamental dialogical answerability in his/her relation to the other. Escaping this answerability is an attack on one’s integrity and implies an “alibi in living.” Yet, such responsibility is symmetrically shared in any dialogue. In contrast, Levinas’ dialogical responsibility implies a radical asymmetry, where Self is infinitely responsible for the “face of the Other”. Marková examines the implications of such radical view, for instance when facing with an other guilty of crime against humanity. However, she notes that spontaneous acts of solidarity, such as the ones that took place in France after the terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo, might reflect such deep and fundamental sense of responsibility for the other.

This leads Marková to examine situations in which people are taken in situations of clashing epistemic responsibility. One of them is that to which Czech dissidents under the communist regime were exposed: their responsibility for freedom towards others—implying an ethical commitment to live in truth and maintaining one’s dignity against an absurd regime—could threaten their responsibilities toward their family members, as retaliation for the former could affect their relatives and children. Marková recalls the ambivalence of children whose parents were confronted to such clashes. Another case is that of the medical mistakes of a British hospital, in which the medical personnel was taken between the responsibility toward financial efficiency and that toward the actual patients’ health. Here, Marková notices, it is the very rationalization and over-bureaucratization of the institution that deprives people from imagining the other’s sufferance, and consequently from responsibility towards the Other. The criticism of the author then extends to the transformation of universities into businesses, in which academics comply with an absurd system of pursuit of money and so-called excellence, and fear so much for their positions that they do not engage their critical responsibility towards it.

Finally, Marková examines the implication of these propositions for professional practice, both in terms of dialogical professions—these engaged with

problems of communication in care and therapy—and in terms of methodology. She examines the first point in the frame of care relationship with people born deaf and blind. Here, carers have to establish a form of communication based on touch, yet absolutely unique to each person and their relational history. A close analysis of sequences reveals a deep dialogical understanding that is prerequisite for such relational engagement, as any sign has to be co-constructed or rather, is emerging within a deep web of dialogical dynamics, referring to previous encounters and experiences. This then is further explored in the case of psychotherapy, which gains by being understood dialogically, and as engaging mutual recognition and answerability. Second, Marková examines the methodological implications of her propositions, by recalling that a dialogical methodology shall not question or proof its own axioms, precisely as these consider the dialogicality of human life as given. The question is therefore to devise research methods that preserve such dialogicality, more than simply improving non-dialogical methods. Here, the author's main proposition is to engage in well-designed case studies, which only can preserve the uniqueness of Self–Other relationship, as these are taking place in specific social, cultural, and historical dialogical dynamics. Generalization is then possible through theoretical work, based on “a clear axiomatic stand” (Marková, 2016, p. 210).

## **Lessons learned and implications for cultural psychology, for today and tomorrow**

*The Dialogical mind: common sense and ethics* is an important book, striking for its theoretical depth and breadth, which I could only poorly retrace. Deeply in dialogue with authors of the past, dialogical in its construction, it is both tight in its demonstration and wide in the range of empirical and real-world issues it illuminates—from young people's relation to social media to political oppression, including educational challenges, and collective reactions to current terrorism. In what follow, I wish to underline some of the qualities of this work, and, given its theoretical compatibility with cultural psychology, a few lessons we may learn from it.

### *Theoretical integration*

I first wish to emphasize one formal quality of the book: its axiomatic nature. In effect, one of the major challenges of our social sciences is the infinite production of new data poorly anchored in theory, constantly postponing and rendering more difficult the task of theoretical integration (Toomela, 2010; Valsiner, 2006, 2007a, 2015; Zittoun, Gillespie, & Cornish, 2009). In this book, Marková proceeds in the most convincing way to achieve such integration: through axiomatic reasoning (see also Salvatore, 2016). Her book is based on one core idea, developed in three mutually dependent axioms; any further conceptual or methodological issue can be solved on this basis, and almost any empirical case can be illuminated by these.

Theoretical integration through axiomatic reasoning is elegant and powerful. It produces a basis for further building and theoretically and ethically sound debate.

The second impressive feature of Marková's work is the depth and precision of her historical reconstruction of theoretical ideas and debates. This historical analysis produces a critical stance which questions concepts and notions that have become doxa (see also, Valsiner, 2005). Hence, her analysis of the historical evolution of the distinction between "lower" and "higher" modes of thinking creates an imperative to question these expressions uncritically used when talking about Vygotsky's work (for another critical stance, see for instance Toomela, 2016). Similarly, retracing different modalities of intersubjectivity back to Hegel, she invites us to question normative understandings of "levels" of more advanced intersubjectivities, or, indirectly, static layers of causalities that can be found in different variations in current discussions (for another comparable, yet often forgotten analysis, see Doise, 1980). Such systematic critical accuracy is a welcome vaccine against notions happily adopted as fashions (such as the one on "interobjectivity," see above): it invites to question their theoretical grounding and their ethical implications.

This being said, the dialogical theory and epistemology defined by Marková are in my understanding, deeply compatible with some streams of current sociocultural, cultural or critical psychology. This compatibility can be found in the basic assumption of the fundamental dependency of Self-Other, or the person in his or her world; the mediated nature of human existence; and the fact that these dynamics are located in time (Baucal & Zittoun, 2013; Gillespie & Martin, 2014; Simão, 2003; Valsiner, 2002; Zittoun, 2007, 2014). These fundamental assumptions depend also from the effort to ground theory in its history, and a partially overlapping common genealogy (Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2000). The original perspective developed by Marková and her acute search for consistency, allow her to highlight issues and questions currently debated in our field, but also, issues largely overlooked.

### *Imagination and methods*

Located in its time, the book contributes to the current rediscovery of imagination by social and cultural psychology, as core dynamic in human development and cultural change (among others, Pelaprat & Cole, 2011; Wagoner, Bresco de Luna, & Awad, in press; Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2016; Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2017). Marková's reading of Vico thus concurs with and reinforces other current attempts (Tateo, 2015; Zittoun, 2015). The specificity of Marková's approach is, however, to emphasize the role of "dialogical imagination," seen as the core dynamic by which we can see, acknowledge, and consider the perspective of the other. Fundamental for our human life, it is a prerequisite of any human intersubjectivity, and following, sociality; and it is the very ontological grounding of ethics. Interestingly, Marková sees imagination as allowing compassion; compassion is, however, for her not an end; it should lead to reflectivity, answerability, and integrity. Conversely, bureaucratization as well as totalitarian regimes precisely

challenge people's capacity to see and imagine the other as oneself—and self as another—and, denying imagination, they deny humanity to others and following, to self.

Similarly, Marková's methodological reflection echoes the one currently taking place in cultural psychology. As stated above, Marková considers as vain any attempts to "prove" the dialogicality of the mind: dialogicality is given, and as an epistemological axiom, it can only shape the researcher's apprehension of any phenomenon. Marková proposes rich case studies as methodology best adapted to preserve the dialogicality of any situation involving humans: it allows retracing dialogical dynamics with real and inner others, and social and cultural dynamics at stake. However, this raises the question of possibility of generalization from single cases. Marková reminds us of Lewin's propositions, and Peirce's abduction, before suggesting that generalization can only be done theoretically, based on a strong axiomatic position. In my own reading, theoretical generalization can in effect be achieved through case studies, when these are built with enough complexity and space for dialogue. Hence, the richness of cases can create puzzlement; theoretical discovery is then possible when one draws on theoretically sound elements, previous knowledge and other observations, so as to allow patterns to emerge (Zittoun, 2016). Together with Marková and others, I am aware of the difficulty of building such case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Gillespie, Zittoun, & Cornish, 2006; Molenaar & Valsiner, 2005; Rolls, 2014). But perhaps, following her other pleas for a more authentic academic activity, it is time for us to create the conditions of slow and patient observation of everyday lived situations (see also Slow Science Academy, 2010; Stengers, 2013), and patient and systematic constructions of rich case studies, preserving common sense and dialogical dynamics—against the demands of research "productivity."

### *On common sense as culture*

Sociocultural psychology aims at understanding people's living experience and sense-making in their sociocultural worlds, how these guide and enable human experience, and how humans can participate to the transformation of these worlds. One implication is that it tries to understand how people perceive, think, decide, innovate, or learn from experience. However, the history of the discipline has brought us to apprehend everyday thinking through three main routes: as a form of "learning," beyond childhood and the boundaries of formal institutions; as form of "cultivated" or "complex" thinking, one of which is narrative, in contradistinction to apparently less cultivated modes of perceiving the environment; or as one particular kind of social knowledge, as emanation of groups or societies. The limitation of our own field is engrained in these historical roots: because what people do in everyday life is always conceived in contrast or continuity to something else, we end up losing its specificity.

Ivana Marková's coup here is to go back to Vico to excavate a spring ignored in our western psychology and carefully bring to the fore the streams it has irrigated

in the margins of the history of social sciences. It may be here interesting to add a footnote: in Czech, “common sense” is called “zdravý rozum,” that is “healthy sense.” It thus has in daily language a positive connotation, in contrast to the “common” with the derogative connotation it took in English or French. This positive common sense is for instance the one displayed by the good soldier Svejk, as “simple folk wisdom and sharp satire against violations of healthy reason” (Miller, 1990, p. 14), and at times turned into a national virtue (Holý, 1996). Although Marková mentions Czech history and authors, she does not explore this aspect of which she is likely to be aware. Rather, she elegantly rein-states common sense through the history of social sciences. Common sense thus becomes the dialogical imagination, knowledge, and experience people have as cultural beings engaged with others and concerned by others in the everyday affair of living. As concept, common sense can be thus seen as englobing activity and sense-making, narratives and reasoning, personal life philosophies, imagination, and even the uncatchable wisdom (Baltes, 2004; Bruner & Haste, 1987; Valsiner, 2007b; Zittoun et al., 2013). Eventually, the study of common sense may be another way to apprehend the lived “culture,” yet finally freeing us from the difficult histories of the concept.

### *On the need of an ethical foundation*

Finally, one of the most substantial contributions of this book is doubtless its ethical exigency. Marková is not interested in the phenomena of dialogue or interactions as objects of study. Much more radically, she invites us to change our apprehension of people in the world and perceive them dialogically—which is an epistemological invitation. It implies a developmental ontology—acknowledging the fundamentally given fact that we are engaged in relations with Others as human beings—and an ethic: as we are engaged in time, our answerability and responsibility as humans is engaged. Here, Marková follows Paul Ricoeur or even Emmanuel Kant who saw ethics as foundational. Ethics is here defined as what “aims at achieving the ‘good life’ with Others in just institutions” (Marková, 2016, p. 212) and includes people’s capacity to imagine what the other experiences, one’s ability to judge self and other’s conduct, to engage or leaving trust relationships, or to take and avoid responsibilities.

This is worth emphasizing, because although cultural or sociocultural psychology can be understood as an epistemology and an ontology (the inclusive separation of person-world whole (Valsiner, 1998, 2012a)), a lot of current cultural psychological reflection is ethic free.<sup>11</sup> Of course, as in any other domain of psychology, cultural psychology needs to follow “ethical guidelines,” guarantee of not harming and protecting people we study. But these are imported from medical studies and other domains; these are not intrinsically deduced or contained in our theories. Also, cultural psychology, freeing itself from cross-cultural studies, tried to get rid from certain problematic normative assumptions; yet being developmental, educational or work-related, cultural psychology is always normative

and often positioned in link to various sources of social power (Brinkmann, 2010; Teo, 2015); only, it is not always reflexive of such norms. The ethical concern can, however, be found in theoretical approaches linked to sociocultural or cultural psychology, and find support either in more political philosophy (as in critical psychology Teo, 2015) or in philosophy and clinical work (Abbey & Zittoun, 2010; Ellis & Stam, 2010). Such approaches eventually theorize the person–world relations in terms that involve an ethical stance, or engage empirical work on this basis (e.g. Daiute, 2010; Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2012). However, as a whole, although cultural psychology has developed an important reflection on the need to develop methodologies consistent with our epistemology and theory, it has much less reflected on the need to develop an ethical stance compatible with, grounded in, or grounding its theory.

I believe such theoretically grounded ethical foundations are fundamental. As researchers studying the social, we are constantly invited to reflect upon phenomena which are given, that we create or that we cultivate. We work on education, body changes, mass celebration, illegal migration, or right-wing groups. How do we define the lines that we shall not cross, when we document, intervene, report, and theorize? These need to be anchored in the very theoretical grounding of our approach, as suggested here by Marková (see also Brinkmann, 2016).

More generally, the challenges we are currently facing, beyond academia but as members of our society, are important. As borders are reinforced, anxieties growing, authorities distrusted, groups feared, it is vital for academics (and others) to hold our grounds, to clarify the principles on which we can define our responsibilities, and to direct our conduct with measure. Marková’s demonstration, illuminated by her analysis of past situations of oppression and resistance, as well as contemporary dysfunctions of our bureaucratic societies, is a strong interpellation. As readers in a dialogical position, it is our very answerability that demands to position ourselves as ethical beings, taking on our responsibilities as researchers, professors to our students, or citizens in our societies.

## **To conclude**

In these pages, I have tried to synthesize the double movement of Marková’s *The Dialogical Mind: Common sense and ethics*. It first deconstructs a commonly accepted hierarchy between “higher” and “lower” forms of knowledge, before showing the theoretical value and heuristic power of common sense, that is, the human capacity to know from experience, with and through others. Second, the book builds a core dialogical theory, on which common sense becomes the foundation of a dialogical epistemology and ethics.

Having highlighted the strength of that demonstration, I have also recalled that the approach is compatible with sociocultural psychology because of partly shared historical roots, and shown that some of Marková’s concerns enter in dialogue with current debates in cultural psychology. Yet, some of Marková’s lessons go far beyond: first, her rehabilitation of common sense may offer us another way to

tackle the everyday life we wish to study under the complicated umbrella term of “culture” itself. And second, Marková brilliantly demonstrates the fundamental need to define on which ethical grounds one stands. She raises high standards for academics, as primary audience of her work, and more general for us as humans.

With her remarkable work, Ivana Marková may thus be seen as a figure of epistemic authority, inspiring others to develop much needed ethical exigencies and integrity. And she herself reminds us of Jan Patočka, whose “call for scientific conscience and solidarity is a call for epistemic responsibility, which, as we know, is responsibility for the self and others in and through the uniqueness of communication as *I-You*” (Marková, 2016, p. 179).

## Note

1. Thus, there is no fundamental mention of ethical issues in the Cambridge and the Oxford Handbooks of sociocultural psychology (Valsiner, 2012b; Valsiner & Rosa, 2007) (ethics is only mentioned as developmental issue (à la Kohlberg) and in data collection). The issue starts to be addressed in the more recent “Yokohama Manifesto” that has a foundational ambition for cultural psychology (Valsiner, Marsico, Chaudhary, Sato, & Dazzani, 2016).

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