

## ON 'THE INNER ALTER' IN DIALOGUE

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**ABSTRACT.** Although internal dialogue and inner speech form essential part of communication, it has not been given much attention in studies of interaction and language. This article suggests that the basic unit of dialogical epistemology, the triad *Ego-Alter-Object/representation* could be conceptually relevant to dialogical subjectivity. It proposes that internal dialogue involves different kinds of symbolically and socially represented inner *Alter*. Giving examples of internal dialogue and its features, this article argues for the study of dialogical phenomena in their complexity and multiplicity, whether these are involved in language, communication, subjectivity or in social representations.

Concepts like dialogicality<sup>1</sup> and dialogical subjectivity can be conceived in various ways but usually, their definitions presuppose some kinds of interdependencies between the *Ego* and *Alter* and a multiplicity of positions that they can take with respect to one another. Two further characteristics of these interdependencies should be noted. First, dialogicality and dialogical subjectivity are not concerned with the *Ego* and *Alter* as abstract or schematic notions but with their concrete manifestations, for example, with the self *versus* another self, the self *versus* group, the group *versus* another group, the self *versus* culture and so on. In each case, one component of the dyad is interdependent with the other one. And second, dialogical subjectivity is not reducible to the *Ego versus Alter* in the sense of the *Ego's* 'taking the role of the other' or the *Ego* being solely an actor in that interdependent relation. Instead, it is conceived in terms of multiple symbolic social representations that the *Ego* takes in relation to the *Alter* and *vice versa* (Moscovici, 2005). Hermans (2001) analyses this phenomenon in terms of 'collective voices in the self'. Salgado and Ferreira (2004) and Salgado et al (in press) speak about dialogical subjectivity as involving intersubjectivity, which these authors coin as 'the other-in-the-self'. Bearing on this, potentially, the concept of dialogicality provides a forceful alternative to more traditional approaches studying dialogue primarily in terms of interactions as exchanges of gestures and symbols or as the participants' speech actions.

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<sup>1</sup> I define dialogicality as the capacity of the human mind to conceive, create and communicate about social reality in terms of the '*Alter*' (Marková, 2003).

Nevertheless, despite considerable interest that the dialogical alternative of subjectivity and intersubjectivity has been generating during the last two decades, this alternative is still no more than a potential requiring conceptual precision so that a coherent dialogical theory may develop and become of practical benefit both in the social science research and in professional communication. With this in mind, in this article I shall take a closer look at the basic unit of dialogical epistemology, the *Ego-Alter-Object/representation* triad (Moscovici, 1984; Marková, 2003) and I shall suggest how it can become conceptually relevant – or extended to – dialogical subjectivity as manifested in and through the self’s inner dialogue. In doing this conceptual work, I shall draw on Salgado’s et al. (e.g. Salgado and Ferreira, 2004; Salgado et al. in press) concept of ‘the other-in-the-self’.

### 1. Some basic presuppositions of dialogical interdependencies

As dialogicality and dialogism are receiving more and more attention among human and social scientists, we must face a challenging question. Can we identify any specific features that differentiate dialogicality and dialogism from other approaches studying conversation and dialogue, for example, ethnomethodological, interactionist, cognitive, structuralist or constructivist? Quite understandably, these latter approaches cannot be bundled together as an undistinguished bloc. They differ from one another in terms of their theoretical and empirical priorities, some emphasising the role of the speaker, others stressing the sequentiality of contributions, still others focusing on verbal or non-verbal interactions, exchanges, the mutual construction of meaning, speech acts, and so on. Yet the question holds: can we identify some distinguishing features between the latter approaches on the one hand and dialogicality on the other? This question cannot be answered without posing another one: what are the basic presuppositions of dialogicality<sup>2</sup>?

#### 1.1 Ontological nature of *Ego-Alter* interdependencies

In concurrence with my previous writing (Marková, 2003), I shall presuppose that dialogicality of the *Ego-Alter* is of *ontological* nature. This means that in and through communication the *Ego-Alter* intersubjectively co-constitutes one another: one does not exist without the other. We can find an explicit display of this position in neo-Kantian philosophers and linguists of the early years of the twentieth century, who actually coined the term ‘dialogism’, or even ‘existential dialogism’, like Buber, Rosenstock, Rosenzweig and Cohen, among others (Marková, 2003). This position was further developed in the nineteen twenties by the Bakhtinian Circle in Russia which included, in addition to Michail Bakhtin himself, scholars like Voloshinov and

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Dialogicality’ and ‘dialogism’ are sometimes used indiscriminately, sometimes conceptual distinctions are made (Linell, 1998, Marková, 2003). Bakhtin used the term ‘dialogism’ to refer to epistemology of human sciences. In the rest of this article I shall use only ‘dialogicality’ in the sense of the above note 1.

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Medvedev, as well as others of that period like Yakubinski, Shpet and Russian formalists. After the disappearance of the Circle during the Stalinist persecution in the Soviet Union, Michail Bakhtin continued this work in his quiet isolation until his death in 1975.

But the idea of the *Ego–Alter* interdependence as a point of departure for the study of human phenomena and specifically, for the concept of language, has been also pursued more generally by other researchers. For example, for the French linguist Emile Benveniste, the interdependence of the *I* and *you* formed an essential feature of language: 'language provides the very definition of man' (Benveniste, 1971, p. 224). Since language is 'in the nature of man, and he did not fabricate it' (Benveniste, 1971, p. 224), Benveniste argued, it is wrong to describe language as an instrument of communication or as a tool that the mankind invented. Instead, language is the human condition. This clearly stated position of Benveniste challenges the often cited image of language attributed to Vygotsky (1962), according to which speech and the written word is a cultural and symbolic tool given to the individual by society. In contrast, for Benveniste, the polarity of the *Ego–Alter* is such that 'neither of the terms can be conceived of without the other...the condition of man in language is unique' (Benveniste, 1971, p. 225). Therefore, the image of language as a tool is a misconception. Bearing on this formulation, we can conclude that for Benveniste, too, the *Ego–Alter* interdependence in language is ontologically given. This further entails that meaning-making and thematisation of contents are joint communicative activities of the *Ego* and *Alter*. The dyad is mutually responsible for the meaning-making, the *Ego* being an addressee for the *Alter* and *vice versa*. Their interdependence, nevertheless, does not imply that, dialogically speaking, positions of the *Ego* and *Alter* merge into one another. On the contrary, their subjectivities, rather than being stripped off their independence, are enriched in and through their interdependence. Both the *Ego* and *Alter* seek visibility and recognition by one another, as each subject actualises his or her potential through interaction and communication. Since communication is never a 'neutral' transmission of information, understanding and acknowledgement of the *Ego* and *Alter* is judgemental and evaluative. Their thoughts are communicable 'in and through language' (to use Benveniste's (1971) expression) and equally, dialogue is shaped by participants' concepts and ideas.

Social environment, in which the *Ego–Alter* dialogue takes place, rather than being a kind of a stage for the performance, is itself dynamically interdependent with dialogue. The dialogue shapes its social environment which, in turn, has an effect on dialogue. For example, the dialogue between political dissidents and the totalitarian government takes place in the public sphere and alters public opinions shaped in that public sphere. The public opinion in turn affects the nature of the dialogue between dissidents and their opponents.

## 1.2 The multifaceted nature of dialogicality

The above claims amply point to the multifaceted nature of human thinking and dialogue. In referring to different forms of thinking in a daily social encounter and in science, Serge Moscovici (1961/1971) uses the term ‘polyphasic thought’. Conceptual and polyphasic thought is communicable or better, it is dialogical. Michail Bakhtin (1979/1986a; 1979/1986b; 1984), discussing the multifaceted nature of dialogue, introduces the term ‘heteroglossia’. The nature of dialogue expresses itself in multiple ways, for example in the subject’s positioning (Salazar Orvig, 2006), meaning potentialities (Linell, 2005), communicative and speech genres (Marková, 2001) and so on. Focusing specifically on the dynamic multiplicity of relations into which the self can enter, Hermans (2001) is developing a theory of personal and cultural positioning of the dialogical self. His theory presents the self as moving in multiple inter- and intrapsychological positions that are mutually intertwined. In any dialogical situation the self naturally changes its positions, for example, from being a father to being a researcher or a colleague. Moreover, the self also speaks from various cultural positions, expressing different ‘collective voices’ and using different ‘social languages’, e.g. national languages, speech genres, languages of specific groups like adolescents, professions, age groups and so on. Hermans’s theory assumes that dialogical relations are ‘embodied, spatialized and temporalized processes’ and it illustrates ‘how individual voices coexist and are interwoven with collective voices’ (Hermans, 2001, p. 266).

## 1.3 Implications for a dialogical theory of knowledge

Dialogicality as an ontological position implies a dialogical theory of knowledge or a dialogical epistemology. It further presupposes that ontological interdependence of the *Ego-Alter* entails joint communicative and meaning-making activities; moreover, that the *Ego-Alter* is interdependent with social, historical and cultural environments; and that conceptual thought is communicable ‘in and through language’.

Dialogicality of the *Ego-Alter* is a fundamental feature of the dialogically conceived theory of social representations. In contrast to the position that knowledge is generated by the individual cognition *à la* Descartes or by collectivity *à la* Durkheim, dialogicality assumes that knowledge is communicatively generated by the *Ego-Alter* and that it is captured as a triadic relation *Ego-Alter-Object*. This triadic relation through which knowledge is generated has been recently elaborated in a number of different contexts (e.g. Bauer and Gaskell, 1999; Jovchelovich, in press; Marková, 2006).

The concept of triadic relation in the formation of knowledge is relevant not only with respect to *external objects* that are part of social reality but also with respect to *the self* as an object of knowledge. This is already implied in George Herbert Mead’s notion of the interdependence between *I* and *Me*, both co-constructing *self-identity* and *self-esteem*, etc. This position is also implicit in Mark James Baldwin’s work as well as

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in that of other pioneers of the concept of the social self, arising from the idea of the self-other interdependence, e.g. Brooks and Lewis, Papoušek and Papoušek, and Selman, among many others.

But where do we go from theoretical positions expressed by Mead's (1934) 'taking the role of the other' and 'conversation of gestures' or Baldwin's (1895) 'dialectic of social growth' and from empirical demonstrations that self and other are interdependent? Despite these significant contributions and despite the genuinely 'social' character of these approaches, the 'other' and the 'social' still remain abstract notions. Can we get any closer view of the dialogical interdependence of the *Ego-Alter*?

### 2. From interpersonal interaction to 'the third party'

#### 2.1 The problem of complexity

Humans involved in day-to-day conversation, in reading novels, watching television or negotiating their points of view are well aware that dialogue takes place simultaneously at different levels and in different forms. Hiding some ideas and strategically exposing others, carrying internal dialogues, changing their points of view, abandoning or contradicting ideas that they defended earlier – all these processes belong to the art of conversation as well as to the established common-sense practices in communication. For great novelists and writers this complexity of language and dialogue provides infinite resources for exploring the creative nature of conversation, dialogical cognition, emotions and, we can say, for exploring the human drama in its entirety. But these multifaceted features of dialogical communication create tremendous difficulties for social science researchers trying to empirically combat such complexity.

Let us consider some examples to reflect on the extent of this problem. Generally speaking, studies of world views in social psychology, public enquiries, surveys, opinions, social attitudes and otherwise are, above all, the studies of *individual* world views and they are linked with the notion of the *individual* attitude. This notion was explicitly introduced into social psychology in 1935 by Gordon Allport.<sup>3</sup> He repeated the same definition two decades later, defining attitude as 'a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related' (1954, p.45). This definition still dominates empirical studies of attitudes and public enquiries based on questionnaires, scales and interviews. It is a perspective ignoring that individuals belong to various groups, that they are committed to particular collective positions and that they defend, sometimes simultaneously, different kinds of socially shared knowledge. Instead, Allport's perspective treats groups as something unreal. What is considered to be real is only cognition of the individual. If we transpose

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<sup>3</sup> Allport gave this definition already in the Murchison *Handbook of Social Psychology* in 1935.

this perspective into, say, communication in focus groups, we find that much social research treats a focus group as an aggregate of individuals who argue their individual opinions against one another (for criticism of this position, see Grossen, 2006).

But even if we casually inspect social interaction approaches like conversation analysis, talk-in-interaction and various kinds of discourse analysis that presuppose the *I – you* interdependence, we find that in their theoretical and empirical priorities they close windows to interactions in their complexity. For example, conversation analysis presupposes that dialogical participants are involved in joint meaning-making activities; some discourse analytic approaches emphasise the interdependence between dialogue and context; and so on. Theoretically, they acknowledge that speakers mutually construct their meanings, that their speech is filled with others' speech, world views and collective opinions. They emphasise that dialogue takes place in specific contexts, that speakers perform different and multiple communicative activities, and so on. Empirically, however, they use extracts from conversations that are usually brief in terms of a number of dialogical contributions. Since their aim is to study the organisation of talk, accountable patterns of meaning and cultural contextualisation of actions in talk, such procedure enables them to focus on turn-taking, sequencing and actions like repetitions, repairs, adjacent pairs and so on (e.g. Drew and Heritage, 1992).

If we turn again to social psychology, the studies of interpersonal interaction have been avoiding strategies examining interactions in their complexity. Instead, they have been traditionally concerned with verbal and non-verbal interactions, e.g. frequencies of gaze, gestures, seating arrangements and so on, using established statistical or qualitative methods, e.g. coding, content analysis, description of interactions and so on. Such analyses are being performed in the name of science: in order to understand complex processes, the researcher must first examine elementary interactions, rules of sequencing and meanings of elementary communicative phenomena. After all, there are good historical reasons for that. The aim of social psychology should be to create science and not journalism, as the British social psychologist Michael Argyle used to emphasise. But such perspective holds only if we presuppose that language and communication is constructed from elements which, if put together, can reveal the complex message. Yet there is little evidence that multifaceted communication is a phenomenon constructed from simple elements.

Thus it appears that while a daily dialogue explodes from the richness of ideas involving complex social phenomena in which interactants are implicated, texts or conversations examined by means of selected brief extracts from big research corpuses of data, are likely to lose all or most of its human relevance. In this way the student of dialogue and conversation deprives him- or herself by own choice of the possibility of exploring social reality. This is not to argue in principle against using brief and selected extracts from discourse in order to analyse certain interactional phenomena, e.g. the structure of interaction and organisation of talk. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether

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information so obtained makes, or can make, a contribution to the study of knowledge of language in communication, grasping contents, feelings and in general, to the meaning-making of talk.

We can conclude that current studies of public opinions, of social interaction and dialogue share a characteristic militating against the study of the multifaceted nature of thought and communication.

They assume that 'the other' is a kind of an 'objective entity' interacting with the self. For example, such a brilliant scholar as Fritz Heider, in characterizing 'the other as perceiver' and the self 'perceiving the other person' assumes that the self and the other are "'objects" [that] have color and occupy certain positions in the environment' (Heider, 1958, p. 21). Of course, he claims that in contrast to physical objects, persons are not manipulanda; they are centres of action that have intentions, motives and desires, which either can be accurately perceived or misperceived. Nevertheless, he defines the *Alter* by his or her *qualities* that the *Ego* may or may not perceive correctly. But Moscovici (2005) draws attention to the fact that the *Alter* is not an 'objective' entity, but a social representation generated jointly by the *Ego* and the *Alter*. Heider's focus on social perception, i.e. the focus on the person's ability to perceive the other *correctly* detracts attention from the fact that 'perception' requires a dialogical and culturally based theoretical analysis that is to be captured not by means of a *social perception* but by a *social representation*. The former conception ignores the *Ego's* dialogical subjectivity.

Just like Fritz Heider, so Gustav Ichheiser and Erwin Goffman and much of the extensive research on self-management, self-perception and self-control, all focus on perceiving correctly the qualities of the *Alter* that the self attempts to manage, control and understand, and so on. Thus we can say that both classic as well as contemporary interactional approaches share fear of addressing the complexity of human dialogicality. It is qualities of the *Alter* that are supposed to determine strategies of the *Ego*, for example, to hide, to make invisible and otherwise, the *Ego's* characteristics relevant to the interaction in question.

In contrast to the prevailing research trend directing attention to the study of relatively simple interactions or on social perception as defined by qualities of the other, dialogically orientated researchers have started extending the concept of *Ego-Alter* interaction to 'third parties', 'third person', 'virtual others', 'other others' or the 'positioning' of the self with respect to physically or symbolically co-present 'others'. They argue that interaction between the *Ego* and *Alter* necessarily involves or refers to some other *Alter* that is not immediately present in dialogue. For example, Wibeck et al. (2004) show that focus group discussions often invoke references to 'virtual' parties. Since the detailed analysis of notions like 'third person', 'virtual others', 'other others' and so on would go far beyond the scope of this article, I shall consider here one

conceptual characteristic in relation to these different notions of ‘the third’. I shall refer to ‘the third’ as being either ‘outside’ or ‘inside’ of the *Ego-Alter* dialogue.

## 2.2 The third party entering dialogue from the ‘outside’.

Let us first consider the meaning of ‘the third party’ entering dialogue from the ‘outside’. The term ‘the third party’ is commonly used in sociology, politics, rhetoric, in the media and otherwise. Since holding a dialogue does not mean that participants are always in harmonious relations, that they understand and agree with one another, it is not uncommon that the opposing parties cannot resolve their disagreements and face a conflict. In such cases they may call on ‘the third party’, a mediator who enters into the conflict from the outside and offers a ‘neutral’ position. The term refers to someone or something that suggests a solution to the problem in question through searching for a common ground, which the two existing main parties cannot find or cannot manage on their own. In a more general sense, the third party may offer products that the two main competitors cannot provide. The third party can also benefit from its position as a negotiator and consequently, its interest might be to take an advantage from the conflict or competition between the two contesting parties.

Georg Simmel’s (1950) classic analyses of triads in terms of *the non-partisan and the mediator*, the *tertius gaudens* and *divide et impera*, draw attention to subtle and specific psychological characteristics of interdependencies in triads that do not exist either in dyadic interactions or in more than three-party interactions. In the case of the non-partisan and the mediator, the third party represents an impartial element, an arbitrator between the two who cannot find a solution to their controversy on their own. An example of this could be the conciliatory party trying to solve the conflict, like that between employees and the employer, unions and the management, and so on. In contrast to this case, in which the arbitrator and mediator saves the dyad from splitting up, in the case of *tertius gaudens*, i.e. ‘the third who enjoys’, the third party promotes its egoistic interests. Rather than functioning as an independent arbitrator, the third party may grant support to one of the parties in conflict or may make the two parties in conflict compete for favour of the third thus taking advantage of the conflict. Finally, the third party may bring about the conflict between the two participants while succeeding in making itself invisible, leaving the two in hostilities. In this way it dominates the situation: *divide et impera*.

From my point of view, the important characteristic of ‘the third party’ discussed here is that it enters dialogue from the ‘outside’. It is not a dialogical party at the beginning of the encounter but it enters as a mediator of positions that are not reconcilable by the two original dialogical partners. In this way the third party then becomes physically present in a dialogue, although it may intend to remain invisible either in negotiation or in the outcome.

### 2.3 'The third party' as an 'inside' feature of dialogue

The other kind of 'the third party' is essentially different from the former case because it is 'the third party' within: it is an inside feature of dialogue. This meaning of the third party has already a long past in dialogue studies. It is based on the idea that a great deal of what speakers convey to one another cannot be reduced to knowledge, thoughts and words that they acquire as individuals. Instead, it is traditions, institutions, friends and colleagues, political parties and so on, who speak through dialogical participants. Speakers may explicitly or implicitly refer to those who are not physically present in dialogue and they may quote or repeat someone else's words either to support their own arguments or to say something with irony, as a joke and so on. And so although dialogue, whether a clinical interview, a telephone chat or a dinner conversation, may involve only two participants, conversation is conceived as being penetrated by a number of visible or less visible *Alters* who communicate through the mouth of speakers. Any single conversation, being no more than a slice in the life-long dialogue, has its past, present and future. It never starts out from nothing and interpersonal dialogues cannot be reduced to the here-and-now exchange of gestures and words. In one way or other, each dialogue is a continuation of previous dialogues, whether in terms of particular positions, attitudes, contents and contexts; it is filled with ideas of others, their commitments and loyalties. And this is why any interpersonal interaction may involve a variety of virtual participants, or, as these have become known, 'third parties'. As Bakhtin insisted,

[t]he speaker is not Adam, and therefore the subject of his speech itself inevitably becomes the arena where his opinions meet those of his partners (in a conversation or dispute about some everyday event) or other viewpoints, world view, trends, theories, and so forth (in the sphere of cultural communication). World views, trends, viewpoints, and opinions always have verbal expression. All this is others' speech (in personal or impersonal form), and it cannot but be reflected in the utterance. The utterance is addressed not only to its own object, but also to others' speech about it (Bakhtin, 1979/1986a, p.94).

Bakhtin continues saying that even a slightest allusion to another's utterance produces a dialogical turn and cannot be reduced to a referential object: 'Attitude toward another's word is in principle distinct from the attitude toward a referential object, but the former always accompanies the latter'. The speaker creates links to others' communications, anticipating their responses, reactions and feelings. Bakhtin (1979/1986b) discusses the idea of 'the third party' in the context of understanding. He maintains that 'a *third* party in the dialogue' is not to be taken in an arithmetical sense but in a sense of a symbolic participation – there of course can be more than three participants involved. The author and the addressee can have dialogue only because the author

with a greater or lesser awareness, presupposes a higher *super-addressee* (third) whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time (the loophole addressee). In various ages and with various understandings of the world, this super-addressee and his ideally true responsive understanding assume various ideological expressions (God, absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the people, the court of history, science and so forth)... Each dialogue takes place as if against the background of the responsive understanding of an invisibly present third party who stands above all the participants in the dialogue (partners) (Bakhtin, 1979/1986b, p. 126).

For Bakhtin, the idea of ‘the third party’ is an aspect of heteroglossia: the third part(y/ies) speak/s through dialogical participants in different ways; as we have just seen, it could be an invisible super-addressee or a mediator between the author and addressee. The latter case can take place because the author and addressee share at least some knowledge about the subject matter in question. The third party however involves more than a reference to shared knowledge. It is actually the organizer of topics, of ideas and even of positions from which dialogical partners speak.

Levinas’s (1969, 1998) concept of ‘the third party’ is different from that of Bakhtin. It is profoundly ethical and universalistic. ‘The third party’ includes the totality of the mankind. In explaining the concept of ‘the third party’, Levinas confronts the notions of love and justice. He argues that love for the other person creates no more than ‘a society of two’ (1998, p.20), it is a society of solitudes that resists universality. Therefore, love for a single human being is to the detriment of another; it blinds respect for another, that is, for the third party. In daily living one cannot encounter another fellow man as if he were the only person in the world. And so in contrast to love, justice as an engagement with others, is based on unlimited obligation. The self is simultaneously confronted by claims of all others, ‘the third’: ‘The third party looks at me in the eyes of the other – language is justice’ (Levinas, 1969, p.213). It restricts the self’s and the other’s freedom by calling for responsibility and so both the self and the other are responsible to the third party: ‘the real ‘thou’ is not the loved one, detached from others’ (p.21) but it is the totality of others, of the humankind. This is why Levinas’s concept has important political and economic significance in alleviating the feeling of strangeness, of poverty and destitution of others. Levinas is of course aware that it would not be possible, in the name of justice, to avoid comparison of different others, weighting and calculation in negotiation of interests with respect to different others. Nevertheless, ‘the third party’, that is, ‘the whole of humanity which looks at us’, calls for justice among everybody and at least to some degree reaches balance in asymmetries of relations.

In yet another sense, in discussing the subject matter of the third party (without actually using the term) other scholars, like George Herbert Mead and Sigmund Freud,

introduced the terms like the 'generalised other' and the 'superego', respectively. Although the underlying concepts of these terms are theoretically different, they both function as a societal 'super-addressee' sanctioning and reprimanding individuals who dissent from socially imposed norms. They are part of individuals' consciousness (e.g. 'the people', science, tradition), unconscious (e.g. Freud's superego) or conscience (e.g. Mead's 'the generalised other'; Bakhtin's 'the court of dispassionate human conscience' or 'the court of history').

### 3. Internal dialogicality

#### 3.1 External and internal dialogue

Having considered some conceptions of the 'inside' dialogue third party, let us now turn to 'the inner *Alter*'. By 'the inner *Alter*' I shall mean symbolically and socially represented kinds of the *Alter* that are in an *internal dialogue* with the Ego. These inner *Alters* may or may not be *physically* absent from an *external dialogue*. Let us explain.

It has been well recognized in psychology and in studies of dialogue - and even more so in literature - that humans, when speaking to others in what we can call an *external dialogue*, may also hold an *internal (or inner) dialogue* within themselves. In other words, they have the capacity of speaking to themselves and of having a symbolic dialogue with the *Alter* that may not be immediately present. It could be argued that talking to oneself amounts to a monologue, but whether one calls inner speech an *internal dialogue* or a *monologue* depends on an epistemological stance one adopts. Dialogically orientated scholars like Vygotsky, Voloshinov or Bakhtin have drawn a great deal of attention to dialogical aspects of internal dialogue and inner speech. For example, Voloshinov was concerned with the nature of internal dialogue not only in *Marxism and the Philosophy of language* (1929/73) but also in papers published in the late 1920s. He questioned the role of other voices in internal dialogue, referring to different possibilities that the second dialogical voice might take. Thus, the second dialogical voice could represent the social group to which the self belongs; the internal dialogue could constitute a conflict between the self's own norm and that of the group; or the self, belonging to two social groups might try to decide which position to take; or the second voice might not represent any stable position but consist of incoherent reactions determined from moment to moment (Todorov, 1984, p.70). Michail Bakhtin (1984), also preoccupied with the nature of inner dialogue, discusses his position above all in his analysis of Dostoyevsky in terms of double-voicedness and heteroglossia.

But while great novelists like Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Marcel Proust, James Joyce or Thomas Mann display exuberant and profoundly rich inner dialogues in their literary masterpieces, social and language scientists consider other tasks: what is the relation between internal and external dialogue? What form does it take in different concrete situations? What are linguistic characteristics of inner dialogue? Voloshinov stated the problem succinctly:

It is clear from the outset that, without exception, all categories worked out by linguistics for the analysis of the forms of external language (the lexicological, the grammatical, the phonetic) are inapplicable to the analysis of inner speech or, if applicable, are applicable only in thoroughly and radically revised versions...the units of which inner speech is constituted...resemble the *alternating lines of a dialogue*. There was good reason why thinkers in ancient times should have conceived of inner speech as *inner dialogue*. (Voloshinov, 1929/1973, p.38).

Theoretical and a methodological problems identified by Voloshinov still remain. Until recently, they have not received much attention in social and language studies.

Postulating a triadic relation of dialogical subjectivity, Salgado et al. (in press) propose the concept of ‘the-other-in-the-self’. These authors point out that, dialogically speaking, ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ are relational terms. The *other* participant in dialogue can be postulated as ‘outside’ with respect to the *self* but the *self* appropriates ‘outside’ and the other in a subjective manner and therefore, ‘the other is the other-in-the-self’ (Salgado et al., in press). This clearly dialogical meaning of outside/inside and of ‘the other-in-the-self’ opens the door to further conceptual analysis.

Bearing on the idea of ‘the other-in-the-self’, as well as on that of the ‘inside’ third party discussed above, in the remainder of this paper I shall use the notion of the ‘inner Alter’. I am making this terminological change because the sense of ‘the inner Alter’ is somewhat different from Salgado and Ferreira’s ‘the other-in-the-self’. While I agree with their model according to which dialogical subjectivity, generally speaking, requires three elements the *Ego-Alter-Third* (Salgado, personal communication) as discussed above in section 2.3, I am referring here only to ‘the inner *Alter*’ with respect to *internal dialogue*. In order to carry out this proposition, I am therefore returning to the basic triadic relation of dialogical epistemology *Ego-Alter-Object (representation)* (Moscovici, 1984; Marková, 2003).

Internal dialogue does not necessarily accompany an external dialogue. If we take the Voloshinov’s account described above, it is clear that internal dialogue is an attempt to solve the author’s conflict, whether relational, personal, and moral, choice-related and so on. It is during such circumstances that the second, third, etc. voices enter the inner dialogue as ‘the inner *Alter*’. ‘The inner *Alter*’ can take multiple and multifaceted forms, for example, as participants’ reference groups, conscience, individual and collective memories, commitments and loyalties, the selves’ internal dialogues, their mutually shared knowledge, the distrusted *Alter*, the superimposed *Alter* and otherwise. This multiplicity is not surprising because, as already emphasised above, a concrete dialogue in which the *Ego* and the *Alter* are involved is no more than a momentary episode in the life-long continuing dialogue. Each subject enters a concrete dialogue with all their previous social experience which, unavoidably, shapes their

encounters. Equally important, 'the inner *Alter*' also manifests itself *linguistically and through diverse speech activities* of the *Ego* and *Alter*. How does this fit then with the epistemological dialogical triad?

The triad of dialogical epistemology *Ego-Alter-Object (representation)* refers to the joint – or social - construction of knowledge. Since any meaningful conversation or dialogue involves communicating about something, e.g. social reality, the self, feeling etc., I assume that this triadic relation also applies to subjective dialogicality. However, in the case of *inner dialogue* we are concerned with the *Ego- Inner Alter – Object (representation)* that either can be embedded in *external dialogue* formed by the *Ego-Alter-Object*; alternatively, the *Ego's* inner speech can take place outside external dialogue. If *Ego-Inner Alter-Object* is embedded in external dialogue, what goes on in internal dialogue does not necessarily take the same form in the external dialogue. I may, in my internal dialogue express distrust of my partner but externally, for one reason or other, I may not expose this feeling. The remainder of this paper provides some examples of the inner *Alter* as a component of the dialogical triad *Ego-Inner Alter- Object/ (representation)*.

### 3.1 The inner *Alter* in dialogue

Let us consider, as our first example of 'the inner *Alter*', Platonov's (2005) short story '*The Return*'. This will enable us to take a look at some of the multiple aspects of internal dialogicality of the main hero, Ivanov. The plot of this short story is simple.

After four years in the army during the Second World War, a Guard captain Aleksey Alekseyevich Ivanov is demobilised and sent home. Waiting at the railway station for long hours and in a gloomy environment, there was 'nothing to divert of comfort human heart except another human heart'. Ivanov started conversation with a young woman Masha whom he had known from the army. She too was waiting for the train to go home. As he moved closer to her, he asked her for a tiny and comradely kiss on the cheek, 'imagine I am your uncle'. That was granted, the train finally arrived and they travelled together for two days. On the third day Masha reached her town and Ivanov interrupted his journey to stay with her for two days before continuing his journey home to his wife and two children whom he had not seen for four years. Another kiss on the cheek and a final goodbye separated them. Ivanov's wife Ljuba and his two children, Petya, who was nearly twelve years and Nastya, five year old, kept waiting for him during the last six days; and he explained that the train was delayed. During Ivanov's absence, Ljuba and her children lived in poverty; she worked in a brick factory, while Petya took over the role of the head of family. During the conversation Ivanov learned that an uncle Semyon had been coming to the family during the last two years to play with the children and to read

them story. Jealousy, suspicion, mistrust and feeling of having been deceived by his wife erupted during the evening. Nastya slept, Petya pretended to be asleep while the couple tried noisily to clarify the situation. However, the children were woken up and brought in the dialogue. In the morning, when Petya woke up, only his little sister was at home. Mother has gone to the factory and father back to the railway station. Petya dressed his sister and took her out with him towards the railway crossing, where would be chance for their father to see them from the train. In the end he did, got off the train to meet his children.

Dialogues in this story take place at several levels, or one could say, there are several embedded stories involving different *Ego-Alter-Object* and leading to different forms of internal dialogicality in which one story is framed by another one.

In the dialogue between Ivanov and Masha at the beginning of the story, at first sight, there seems to be no ‘inner *Alter*’ as their conversation and kisses on the cheek seem to be the ‘here-and-now’ way of coping with boring waiting for the train. But there is more to it and in delaying his return home for another two days Ivanov’s inner *Alter* spoke by ‘putting off joyful and anxious moment of reunion with his family’. And so reflecting on the dialogical triad *Ego-Inner Alter-Object (Masha)* one can see that the anticipated anxiety of the return turned into the factual anxiety as the story unfolded itself. Back with his family, Ivanov found his home strange and could not understand it; he was no longer used to family life, his children and his wife.

Another internal dialogue occurred when, externally, a dialogue took place between Ivanov and Ljuba, and the ‘outside’ ‘third party’, the family friend uncle Semyon was unwittingly brought into conversation by little Nastya. Semyon has been coming to see the children, to play with them and to read to them. His wife and his own children had been killed by the Germans, explained Ljuba. Semyon loved Petya and Nastya, ‘he talked to the children about you, Aloysha ... He told the children how you were fighting for us and how you were suffering. They’d ask why, and he’d say because you’re a good man.’ Astonished and jealous, Ivanov (*Ego*) could not accept (*Inner Alter*) that Semyon (*Object*) would talk to his own children, never having met Ivanov yet singing his praises.

Another embedded dialogue took place between Ivanov and his son Petya. Pretending first to be sleeping, Petya listened to his parents’ heated debate about Ljuba’s ‘men’ when father was away and he was surprised by some of mother’s admissions. In his internal dialogue he whispered to himself: ‘So our mother’s been naughty too’, ‘fancy that’. However, he then involved himself in dialogue with his father, narrating a story about another local woman who had a friend when her husband was in the war. Having returned, the husband started cursing his wife, day after day, until he exhausted himself, and made his wife cry. Then he stopped tormenting her and

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changed the tone, telling her that she had been very foolish having had only one man with one arm because he, when he was away, he had had a number of women. And then, Petya commented, everything was fine between them and his wife was happy. But that was not the end. The husband finally laughed: 'But I deceived my Anuyta – I hadn't had anyone...A soldier's the son of the Fatherland, he's got no time to fool around, his heart is levelled against the enemy. I just made all that up to give Anuyta a scare' (p.292).

The final and a decisive part in the story that brought about the change in Ivanov's mind is his internal dialogue, framed by all the previous dialogues. It is the crucial negotiation within himself after he had left his wife and children and got again on the train going in the direction of Masha's town: 'Masha isn't expecting me', he thought. 'She told me I'd forget her, whatever I said, and that we never meet again; yet here I am, on my way to her for ever.' (p. 293). Having had these thoughts and finding no excuse for his wife who had kissed and had had sex with other men so that she could survive the war and separation from her husband, he thought that her behaviour was the proof of her true feelings: 'All love comes from need and yearning; if human beings never felt need or yearning, they would never love'.

As he looked out from the train window for the last time, he saw two children trying to reach the train crossing. He did not recognize his own children. He saw that those children were exhausted, fell to the ground and got up again. Ivanov closed his eyes not wanting to see and feel their pain. But here, a final and definite internal dialogue prompted the change: 'He suddenly recognized everything he had ever known before, but much more precisely and more truthfully. Previously, he had sensed the life of others through a barrier of pride and self-interest, but now, all of a sudden, he had touched another life with his naked heart' (p.194). As he looked out again for the window, he realised that these two children in the distance were Petya and Nastya.

Platonov's story, composed of a number of internal dialogues and involving various representations within *Ego-Alter-Object* triads, makes sense only as a *story* and not as a number of *extracts* that could be analysed separately from one another. Each of these internal dialogues involves different inner *Alter*, in which morality, ethical questions, distrust, self-hurt and self-interest are negotiated by the speakers with respect to some inter-relational problems that are embedded in and framed by other inter-relational problems.

### **3.2 Inner *Alter* of distrust and secret**

In discussing the Platonov story I have given examples of internal dialogues that comprised negotiations between different positions of the inner *Alter* in order to solve inter-relational problems apparent in external dialogues between the *Ego-Alter*. Internal dialogues usually involve personal issues requiring reflection and evaluation of one's

own and others' conduct, both past and present, and on that basis making decisions and predictions about the *Ego-Alter* future conduct.

In this section I shall consider internal dialogue as a means of protecting or enhancing the *Ego's* interests. In this case, internal dialogue is dominated by the *Ego's* distrust, uncertainty about the future conduct and intentions of the *Alter* and it is these concerns that determine the content and its thematisation in the external dialogue. However, the focus of dialogical analysis is not on 'objective' qualities of the *Alter* that could be correctly or incorrectly perceived, but on interactions between the *Ego* and the *Alter* that as generated by relevant social representations. For example, the *Ego* may represent the *Alter* as someone who can pass on desirable or undesirable information to the third party which may benefit or harm the *Ego*, respectively. In other words, the *Alter* is represented as a potential mediator between the *Ego* and a powerful third party.

Strategies of self-presentation have been traditionally studied in social psychology under the different names like impression management, self-management, impression formation, self as an actor, and so on. In these approaches the self has been usually conceptualised as a Machiavellian attempting to influence others by presenting a favourable or even unfavourable image of him or her in order to gain some benefits. Yet it is significant that social psychological research has treated self-presentation and the like phenomena as *one-way* activities of the self targeted at the other participant in order to impart the desired effect.

In contrast, speaking from the dialogical perspective, self-protection or self-enhancement is viewed as a triad composed of the *Ego-Alter-Object*. However, since we are talking here about the *Ego* and the *Inner Alter*, internal dialogue involves a kind of projection or a representation of the imagined impact that the *Ego's* message could have on the *Alter*. Moreover, internal dialogue could be concerned with the possible effect of the *Alter* on an imagined (and sometimes unknown) third party. And so, an external *Ego-Alter* dialogue is likely to become a prudent verbalisation of what goes on concurrently (or beforehand) in the internal dialogue. The external dialogue could thus become anything ranging from a fake dialogue, double-talk to a window dressing or a camouflage that is intended for the represented *Alter* and the imagined third party.

Within this perspective, at least two alternative scenarios are possible, although in practice the two may be intermingled, and could appear in more or less extreme versions. They are also likely to be inter-related with other communicative phenomena, e.g. with institutional discourses, inter-group relations and otherwise.

In the first case, the *Ego* may strategically impart a specific kind of knowledge, particular personal information or otherwise to the *Alter* in believing that the *Alter* will spread that knowledge around to different third parties either as a gossip or as diffused information from which the *Ego* may benefit. These third parties, themselves, could potentially become future gossipers, which the *Ego* may believe would be even more

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beneficial. A variation of this case could be a rhetorical speech of a politician interviewed by a journalist in a television studio. Although apparently talking to the journalist, the politician addresses the invisible audience in the outside world or some future recipients of his/her speech that might win him voting voices.

The alternative scenario with respect to self-presentation is not to convey information but to conceal it or to impart the misleading information about the self. This strategy would be based on the *Ego's* distrust of the *Alter* who might misuse knowledge or information about the self and pass it on to the third party. Simmel's (1950) classic analysis of notions like 'discretion' and 'secret' presuppose that others are divided into those with whom the self shares or does not wish to share discreet knowledge. Suspicion that such knowledge could be passed on to those for whom it is not intended, would shape the content as well as the style of the *Ego-Alter* dialogue. Although distrust and suspicion may apply in any circumstances, dialogues in totalitarian regimes are particularly characterised by fear of revealing secrets, which will result in pretending something and concealing information, because one will carefully consider what can and what cannot be safely said. Totalitarian regimes thrive on engendering distrust, and fabricating fear and uncertainty in communication. As the dissident Václav Havel (1975) brought that to public attention, fear is associated with the loss of human dignity, the crisis of identity, passivity and non-involvement in communication. Since verbal messages can be misused by the other party, the use of words that do not mean anything, that express generalities and are non-committal seem to be a safe strategy of survival. And Yuri Levada (2004) argued, 'the presence of cunning and double-think is a constant reminder that both the law of self-preservation and the hope of daily life continuing as usual request conformity' (p.157). Although daily conversation does not normally involve such extreme cases, it nevertheless often contains some traces of self-presentation strategies and of non-committal or empty exchanges of words.

Finally, the inner *Alter* could also represent a relatively stabilized perspective, for example, something like Mead's 'generalised other', Freud's 'superego' and otherwise (see above). This could also include the common-sense knowledge, religious beliefs, laws of the society, institutional practices and so on, that could be transmitted from the generation to generation. Although such stabilised inner *Alter* could remain an implicitly present aspect of external dialogues between *Ego-Alter*, there is always a potentiality that it enters explicitly into speech, become questioned and negotiated. These relatively stabilised inner *Alter* like the 'generalised other', 'superego', traditions and established moralities are built into institutions, whether religious, governmental or otherwise and reproduced in daily discourse. As they become internalised and stabilized, they can engender 'bad conscience', 'guilt' and 'shame' if transgressed.

#### 4. The third party in language

Dialogical features of the inner *Alter* could be accompanied by linguistic characteristics. As Benveniste (1971) argued, the pronominal use of *I* and *you* shows mutual involvement of interlocutors and therefore, he argued, subjectivity begins with the use of pronouns. Benveniste also pointed out that while the pronouns *I* and *you* are marked as persons, the third person is not, because it is outside discourse. It is someone spoken about and he therefore called the third person a ‘non-person’. He listed several linguistic characteristics of *I* and *you* separating them from the third person. First, *I* and *you* are discursively reversible: *I* addresses him-/herself to *you* and *vice versa* and such addressivity is unique each time it takes place. Both speakers think of themselves as *I* and about the other as *you*. In contrast, *he* can stand for an infinite number of persons or for nobody. Discursively, *he* cannot become *I* or *you*.

Moreover, and in contrast to *I* and *you*, the third person can literally turn a person into a thing. Just consider numerous cases of medical or health related interviews between clients and professionals, in which the professional, while actually talking to the client as *I* and *you*, switches from *you* to *he* (e.g. Aronsson, 1991). But even in interpersonal dialogue, in which one speaker wishes to treat the other as a non-person, may switch to the third person. For example, in Ibsen’s ‘The doll’s House’ Helmer reprimands his wife Nora for spending too much money for Christmas presents. First he tells her that one should not live on credit and borrowed money. Then, seeing that Nora is upset, he switches to the third person:

Helmer: There, there. My little singing bird mustn’t go drooping her wings, eh? Has it got he sulks, that little squirrel of mine? (from Rommetveit, 1991, p. 197).

But as Benveniste (1971, p. 200) points out, this quite a ‘special position of the third person’ can take on an antinomic position. In contrast to denigration due to switching from the second to the third person, the use of the third person can also mark respect: ‘it is the polite form (employed in Italian and German or in the forms of ‘His Majesty’) which raises the interlocutor above the status of person and the relationship of man to man’ (Benveniste, 1971, p.200).

In internal dialogues, the *Ego* speaking to the self can address him-/herself as the *I* as well as the third person. For example, in Platonov’s story, speaking to himself, Ivanov says: ‘Masha isn’t expecting me’, ... ‘She told me I’d forget her’, and ‘yet here I am, on my way to her for ever.’ On the other hand, if the speaker wishes to distance from the previous identity that he/she no longer wishes to expose, it may be desirable to address that old identity as ‘he’ rather than ‘I’.

Moreover, in a direct discourse the speakers usually respond to one another without repeating each other’s words which would make the dialogue redundant. They

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adopt Grice's conversational maxims, in particular those of quantity (do not make your contribution more informative than necessary) and manner (be brief, avoid unnecessary wordiness). In contrast, when reverting to reported speech, i.e. the speech of the third party, they are free to treat it according to their choice. On the one hand they may preserve its linguistic and content authenticity. This authenticity actually strengthens the impact of the quotation. Depending on how the quotation is made, its impact can either increase or decrease. On the other hand, the speaker may distort authenticity by introducing his or her own interpretation, by making specific accents, by using a 'synonym' with a slightly different meaning and so on. Speakers may also select what to report, what not to say and all that changes the impact on the audience. They may decide want *not* to say or to say something in a way that distorts the original meaning. A joke about the religious dignitary when he arrived at an important visit to another country says it all. The dignitary was asked by someone: Would you also like to see our brothels? Not knowing how to respond to such a question, he responded by a question: Do you have brothels? Next day a newspaper published an article entitled: *The dignitary asked the question: Do you have brothels?*

### 5. Conclusion

A number of concepts that have been discussed in this paper, e.g. the *Ego-Alter* interdependence, the joint construction of meaning, positioning, the attention paid to context, and the third party, can be found in many approaches studying interaction and dialogue. The adjective 'dialogical' is used by scholars of different theoretical persuasions ranging from those who refer to dialogue in terms of a daily conversation to those for whom dialogicality is an ontological matter implying the theory of knowledge based on the dialogical triad *Ego-Alter-Object*. Clearly, 'dialogical' has a variety of meanings; moreover, different scholars may adopt different perspectives of dialogicality (see Linell, 1998; 2005). Consequently, such dialogical approaches may involve a mixture of characteristics and concepts coming from different theories and epistemologies, which might give the impression that some approaches could be more dialogical than others. If that is so, how can we answer the question posed at the beginning of this paper: is there anything specific about dialogicality? In any case, is it important to insist on the specificity of dialogicality? Why not accept an eclectic approach and take whatever appears be useful in the advancement of dialogical knowledge?

Let us remind here Einstein's (1949) claim that the relation between science and epistemology is of a peculiar kind, with science being dependent on epistemology and *vice versa*. There appears to be no reason why that relation should not include social science and epistemology. If it does, we can assume that sharing more or fewer dialogical features does not make one system more or less dialogical, respectively. It is not that one can take out a particular characteristic of one system and transplant it into

another system and so change its degree of dialogicality. We must not forget that a concept which belongs to a particular epistemological system will necessarily have a different meaning in another system and therefore in a science that is dependent on that system.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that science and epistemology are dependent on one another and that science without epistemology is not thinkable, scientists, including Einstein himself, often make use of concepts from other systems. Eclecticism is a common characteristic in science building. Dialogicality, too, can make use of concepts from other systems and appropriate them to its own perspective. Equally, dialogical concepts may cross-fertilize other fields and adapt them for their own use. If we adopt the dialogical triad Ego-Alter (including inner Alter)- object (social representation), we also adopt the perspective that language, communication, thought, social subjectivity and social representations involved in this triangular relationship is multifaceted. Despite cross-fertilisation and borrowing concepts from other fields, in my view, it is the concurrence of these characteristics that define dialogicality – or at least one of its forms - as a conceptual system.

Dialogicality by definition focuses, theoretically and empirically, on understanding phenomena in their complexity and multiplicity whether these are involved in language, communication, subjectivity or in social representations. It is therefore unlikely that it will bring comfort and ease to a social scientist seeking some definite or certain solutions of problems under study. What it provides, however, is a challenge. It creates an opportunity to redefine a great part of social psychology, if not the whole field of social psychology, in terms of epistemology based on the dynamic triad *Ego-Alter-Object*.

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