

**International Journal  
for  
Dialogical Science**

**Fall 2017      Volume 10 Issue 2**

**Editor**

**Hubert J. M. Hermans  
Radboud University Nijmegen  
The Netherlands**

**Associate &  
Managing Editor**

**Vincent W. Hevern  
Le Moyne College  
USA**

**Associate Editors**

**Eugenie Georgaca  
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki  
Greece**

**Jaan Valsiner  
Aalborg University  
Denmark**

**Online**

**[www.dialogical.org](http://www.dialogical.org)**

**ISSN 1556-1720**

# International Journal for Dialogical Science

Fall 2017

Volume 10

Number 2

## Table of Contents

### Special Issue: *The Self and Society in Dialogue--Linking Two Theories*

Dany Boulanger & Jaan Valsiner, Guest Editors

Introduction to the Special Issue: Linking two theories. How can the social representations theory be made dialogical?

*Dany Boulanger & Jaan Valsiner*..... 1-8

Extending Social Representation Theory through Dialogical Self Theory: Subjects' and Alters' Relating with Space

*Dany Boulanger (a)* ..... 9-33

A Place for Space?

*Bo Allesøe Christensen (a)*..... 35-43

Cognitive Polyphasia in the Context of Systematic Power and Semiotic Potency

*Maaris Raudsepp* ..... 45-76

Dialoguing—More and More

*Lia da Rocha Lordelo* ..... 77-84

A Semiotic-Dialogical and Sociocultural Account of Suicide

*Catarina Rosa & Sofia Tavares* ..... 85-106

Developing a Discussion Away from Biomedical Approaches to One Embedded in The Social and Cultural Life of Individuals

*Cathy Nicholson*..... 107-115

Representing the Vagueness within Dialogical Self: Presence and Absence of the Object In Between Self and Community

*Dany Boulanger (b)* ..... 117-130

On Vagueness: A Wittgensteinian Discussion

*Bo Allesøe Christensen (b)*..... 131-137

The Narrative Function of Music in a Contemporary Society: Designing an Empirical Approach through Dialogical and Representational Practices Of the Social Self <i>Aris Lanaridis</i> .....	139-152
Exploring Artistic Narrative Forms to Expand the Study of the Dialogical Self <i>Brena Carvalho &amp; Ana Cecília Bastos</i> .....	153-159
Understanding Temporalization by the Activity of Historical Thinking: Dialogical Self Theory and Social Representation Theory <i>Daniel Moreau</i> .....	161-184
Doing History by Telling Stories: A Dialogical Proposal <i>João Salgado</i> .....	185-192
Social Representation Theory and Dialogical Self Theory: A Dialogue Through Implicit Meta-Frames (Conclusion of the Special Issue) <i>Dany Boulanger (c)</i> .....	193-222

The *International Journal for Dialogical Science* (IJDS) is a peer-reviewed, multidisciplinary scholarly publication sponsored by the International Society for Dialogical Science (ISDS) and distributed digitally on the World Wide Web at <<http://www.dialogical.org>>.

### *Copyright and Other Legal Notices*

The individual articles and commentaries within this journal are

Copyright © 2017 by their respective authors.

This issue of the journal as a compendium is

Copyright © 2017 International Society for Dialogical Science.

You may print multiple copies of these materials for your own personal use, including use in your classes and/or sharing with individual colleagues as long as you do not alter the face page of each article which identifies the journal and the author's copyright. For research and archival purposes, public libraries, libraries at schools, colleges, universities and similar educational institutions, and online archives or databases may print and/or store in their research or lending collections or archives or databases *multiple* copies of this journal either *as a whole* or *as individual articles* without seeking further permission of the International Society for Dialogical Science (the editors would appreciate receiving a *pro forma* notice of any such library or archival use). No other permission is granted to you to print, copy, reproduce, or distribute additional copies of these materials. Anyone who wishes to print, copy, reproduce or distribute additional copies must obtain the permission of the individual copyright owner(s). Particular care to obtain the copyright owners' permission should be taken by anyone who intends to use this journal or any of its articles or commentaries *in any commercial enterprise or "for profit" educational purposes*.

### *Suggested Reference Format*

Following examples in the 6th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* for reference materials found online, we suggest that individual articles in this journal be referenced in this fashion:

Chaudhary, N. (2008). Persistent patterns in cultural negotiations of the self: Using dialogical self theory to understand self-other dynamics within culture. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 3(1), 9-30. Retrieved from [http://ijds.lemoyne.edu/journal/3\\_1/IJDS.3.1.02.Chaudhary.html](http://ijds.lemoyne.edu/journal/3_1/IJDS.3.1.02.Chaudhary.html)

## EDITOR

Hubert J. M. Hermans (Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands)

## ASSOCIATE & MANAGING EDITOR

Vincent W. Hevern (Le Moyne College, USA)

## ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Eugenie Georgaca (Aristotle University of Thessalonki, Greece)

Jaan Valsiner (Aalborg University, Denmark)

## EDITORIAL BOARD\*

Sara Chaves (Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil)

Joshua W. Clegg (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY, USA)

Alvaro Duran (Psychotherapeutic Institute, São Paulo, Brazil)

Henryk Gaisul (Cardinal Wyszyński University, Warsaw, Poland)

Katrin Kullasepp (Tallin University, Estonia)

Olga Lehmann (Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia)

Heidi Levitt (University of Memphis, USA)

Beatrice Ligorio (Università di Bari, Italy)

William J. Lyddon (University of Southern Mississippi, USA)

Maria Lyra (Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Brazil)

Paul H. Lysaker (Indiana University School of Medicine, USA)

Liliana Meira (IMSAI, Portual/University of Minho, Portugal)

Shinichi Mizokami (Kyoto University, Japan)

Kyoko Murakami (Brunel University, UK)

Sergio Salvatore (Università di Lecce, Italy)

Seth Surgan (Worcester State University, USA)

Maaja Vadi (University of Tartu, Estonia)

Brady Wagoner (University of Cambridge, UK)

Hetty Zock (University of Groningen, The Netherlands)

Peter Zomer (Zomer & Cornelissen, Consultants; Udenhout, The Netherlands)

---

\* Membership on the IJDS Editorial Board is given to individuals who serve as a reviewer-referee for IJDS. Please contact the Editor, Hubert J. M. Hermans, if you believe there are any errors or omissions regarding his list.

***Introduction to Special Issue: Linking Two Theories***

***HOW CAN THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS THEORY BE MADE  
DIALOGICAL?***

Dany Boulanger  
Aalborg University, Denmark & Catholic University of Salvador, Brazil

Jaan Valsiner  
Aalborg University, Denmark

Abstract. This Special Issue is based on a symposium we organized during the 2014 meeting of the ISDS in Den Haag. The goal—looking at Moscovici’s social representation theory (SRT)—from the perspective of the dialogical self theory (DST) was (and is) an interesting task in the theoretical realm of contemporary social sciences. We felt that the two theories could enrich each other, in particular regarding their respective horizons or levels of analysis, linking, first, the “macroscopic” (SRT) and, second, the microscopic and “person-centered” (DST) levels. Through such linking of levels, we had the impression that SRT could benefit from the dynamic orientation of DST while the latter could gain a better focus in locating a person’s self-dialogues within the framework of social representations. In this Special Issue, the authors carry further their dialogues with both SRT and DST that have continued in the two years after the Den Haag Conference.

Keywords: social representation, relating theories, dialogical self, distance, vagueness

Creating theoretical bridges between established theories is no simple matter. Our effort in this Special Issue to construct such link between Serge Moscovici’s social representation theory (SRT) and Hubert Hermans’ dialogical self theory (DST) is a collective effort to enhance the horizons of both. Yet—in the process of working on editing this issue—we came to believe that SRT has more to benefit from DST than vice versa. Although Moscovici has never denied—and often emphasized—the dynamic and dialectical nature of his theory, our analysis of it has rendered such claims to be only half-true.

Despite the dynamics of social representing that SRT attempts to cover, the realities of the study of social representations have been caught in the habit of isolating them as entities, thus giving them static ontological status.<sup>1</sup> Yet the value of the SRT is

AUTHORS’ NOTE. Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the first author at [danyculturalpsychology@gmail.com](mailto:danyculturalpsychology@gmail.com)

---

<sup>1</sup> This seems to be partly part of the SRT itself.

its sociological depth—while in the context of DST a person may be observed to be caught by “voices” stemming from I-positions that involve social roles (e.g., “*I as myself*” to “*I as woman*” to “*I as daughter*” to “*I as feminist*”). Thus, from the perspective of SRT such personal dialogues are guided by the societal set-up of the social representations of the meanings of WOMAN, DAUGHTER and FEMINIST that are in use in the given society at the given time.<sup>2</sup> Here is the perennial paradox of psychology—it is living human beings who make meanings, but in our theories we assume that they are doing it under the influence of our own invented concepts—those of representations.

In our goal of promoting the dialogue between DST and SRT, we emphasize that both of these theories deal with phenomena that are best viewed within the Individual-Socio-Ecological frame of reference (Valsiner, 2000). This frame sets up all research questions at the intersection of the person and environment. That relationship is dynamic—involving constant interchange between the two together with regulation of that interchange (Figure 1).

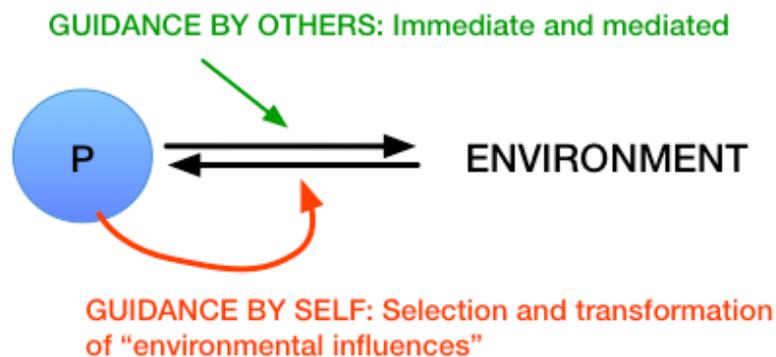


Figure 1. The General Scheme of the Individual-Socioecological Reference Frame

Looking at Figure 1 it becomes clear that all person  $\diamond$  environment relations are inherently dialogical—as they involve the process of constant interchange together with guidance efforts that originate both in the Person and the conditions set up for the guidance of the person by the social others. This theoretical framework is the ground for a dialogue between DST and SRT.

However, the encounter of two theories—DST and SRT—happens at a different level of abstraction than the everyday life encounters of persons with society as in

<sup>2</sup> We can also consider social representing (a process which implies time) reality when a transition occurs in positioning from “*I as myself*” to “*I as woman*” to “*I as daughter*” to “*I as feminist*.”

Figure 2. Abstractly, each of the two theories could transcend the immediate environment by means of distance in a way to innovate (going forward and *beyond*). A theory could be “in avant-garde” in relation to the society within it emerges. Very often an old theory is (re)discovered when we feel it provides innovations regarding today’s societal and scientific paradigms. The innovative movements “in” society sustain its development, its expansion—when the theory spreads into the wider society. This is what Moscovici observed in the case of the diffusion of psychoanalytic ideas in the French society in the 1950s. He was not interested—then and later—in the particular personal dialogues that ordinary French people would have when first knocking at the door of a psychoanalyst’s office. Yet the impact of any—new or old—social representation goes through such personal dialogic processes.

The important aspect is what happens “in-between” the self-dialoguing person and the tensions of social representing in the wider society. Let’s insist on the fact that the different pieces of the fuzzy—vague and ambiguous—constantly future-oriented process of being expressed (presented) and redefined (represented) can be viewed as inclusively separated. This is the basic condition to sustain theoretical dialogue.

**The content under scrutiny: What our contributors were trying to do**

Raudsepp in *Cognitive polyphasia in the context of systemic power and semiotic potency* posits the complementarity between DST and SRT: they are both grounded in holism and multi-perspectivism and they both recognize the bidirectional relationship between subject and environment while differentiating themselves by focusing respectively on the intraindividual and on the societal levels of analysis. Using the concept of cognitive polyphasia, she defines environment with respect to different levels—societal objective field (relating to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus), shared representational field (collective culture, regulative principles and “battlefield”) and subjective meaning field (semiotic potency)—all of which coexist. Environment defines the limits, possibility and conditions of the subjective positioning process by providing guidance and resources used by subject. In relation to the two forms of cognitive polyphasia—positional (manoeuvres in the representational field in relation to its different forms of knowledge) and intra-positional (manoeuvres in the subjective field through distance and directionality) that she proposes and applies to the trajectory of the acculturation of elderly people, she tries to respond to researchers’ two main challenges: “1) to describe and explain the effects of interaction of plural forms of knowledge in different contexts and 2) to explain the choice among the potential representational possibilities by a subject in his particular relationships with the environment.”

Rosa and Tavares in *A semiotic-dialogical and sociocultural account on suicide* respond to the dominant biomedical approach—unilateral relationship between the subject and the environment with respect to pre-existing and fix categories in reversible time—that they critique. They propose semiotic-dialogical and sociocultural approaches

to look at the phenomena of suicide. These approaches, which are based on social constructionism and the narrative perspective, highlight the interactional, processual, relational and “linguistic” aspects of suicide. Thanks to its structural flexibility, the Self (re)organizes itself—and thus “regulates” its identity in the sociocultural “here and now”. Thus the Self is being located in groups whose members share social representations that are hierarchically organized. This leads to the centrality of meta-meanings or promoter signs defined as *arguments*, that is, the relationship between different *I*-positions and the interplay of the audience (which seem to act both “from the inside” as a part of the Self and “from the outside” as a constraint).

Lanaridis in his *The narrative function of music in a contemporary society* attempts to make sense of musical communication as a framework where social representation and dialogical self (DS) meet. The affective nature of such communication is a promising field for linking the two.

Moving to the realm of history teaching, Moreau in *Understanding temporalization by the activity of historical thinking* attempts to make sense of the mythological dialogicality involved in the system of five oppositions that can be viewed in dialogical relations. Boulanger (*a*) identifies the static and dynamic aspects of SRT and uses DST to develop (expand) this dynamism—in particular with respect to the process of anchoring—while *remaining in* the theoretical environment of the former theory. He also critiques the centration of both SRT and DST (particularly the former) on the clear nature of space and the tendency to remain closed to uncertainty or, at least, to reach for its quick resolution. While DST and SRT could be linked to a representational and transitional zone, this zone needs to be put further into uncertainty. To expand these theoretical perspectives, Boulanger (*b*) refers to the concepts of *vagueness* and *boundary case*. He presents an analysis of the discourse of actors participating in a partnership program in a poor area to show how these two concepts can allow for a dynamic conception of the interplay—central in both SRT and DST, but partly conceived through a static approach—between the presence and absence of the object.

### **Linking DST and SRT: Conceptual problems and Open Avenues**

In building bridges between the two innovative theories in the social sciences of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we set our participants a very difficult task. SRT and DST operate at adjacent—yet different—levels of generality. SRT is set to work from society downwards towards individual persons—highlighting the role of the social and historical heritage in the deeply personal spheres. As such, it encounters the conceptual problem of individualizing shared social heritage. Each person in any society is unique—and therefore the notion of “sharing” the domain of social representations (as tools for organizing personal lives) is a label that covers up a complex process of negotiation of the systems of meanings and the making of personal sense. Such *sharing*

## INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE: LINKING TWO THEORIES

is possible only through communication processes about objects “out there” or of internal psychological phenomena “within me.” This could be the arena where SRT meets with DST. The latter starts from the analysis of the phenomena “within me” (configurations of *I*-positions) and extends it towards the societally predicated extensions (e.g., moving from personal “*I* as woman” *I*-position to the socially intervened predication of “*I* as **not that kind**” of a woman) (Nedergaard et al., 2016). The “not that kind”—a fuzzy moral qualifier—starts to regulate the conduct of a real person here-and-now. The dialogues with the self are guided by normative social representing processes.

Time matters for both SRT and DST. The link between the processes of social representation is actually those of social presentation through the meaning-making person in irreversible time. And such processes are inevitably dialogical—from the DST perspective set up in irreversible time, dialogue is omnipresent between the *I*-positions as those are (and were) and as those could be (“*I* as I could be” or “*I* as I should not be”). The moral dialogicality of the DS is the location where SRT and DST can be brought together on the arena that they “share”—albeit from different perspectives.

A number of basic theoretical issues become important in this regard. First, it is set up at the border of PAST and FUTURE in irreversible time. The usual mapping of DST *I*-positions needs to become temporally re-oriented (Boulanger *c*). Second, the functioning of social representations in the social presentation processes is always approximate. It has the nature of “aboutness”—social representations operate in social presentation within the DS as poorly definable fuzzy notions that cannot be located in any particular location—yet social representations are omnipresent in the dialogue within the Self. The human meaning maker arrives at very precise meanings and actions through the use of imprecise social representations that carry with them deep affective “clouds” of social suggestions. For example, the sequence of two linked *I*-positions “*I* as myself” → “*I* as service professional” (the latter being set by social role systems) could be followed by a third, “*I* as taxi driver” (no affective valuation) or “*I* as prostitute” (immediate affective social valuation added). The system of social representations enters into the processes of DS through the social role meanings combined with the affective value contexts they carry.

It implies *invisible* social guidance (“*I* as taxi driver” but also “*We* as taxi driver” which is an audience within the Self). Social others may be present, or not—a building designated as a “church” in the European societies and bearing specific architectural form can be guiding the present-day visitor without any social agent actively involved. The architectural form mediates the goal-oriented nature of the relationship. It is here where the social representations meet the DS. Centuries of survival of the given church in a given neighborhood provides with the tacit social guidance for ever new generations of the dwellers of the town. They may go to the church to intensify their self-negotiations within the Dialogical Self. Or—they may go

to a pub for the same purpose. In both cases the Dialogical Self operates under the conditions of Umwelt that is pre-encoded by social representations. The space for dialogues is pre-structured, yet *open* (Boulanger *b*). It is experienced in the present, facing the future.<sup>3</sup> The importance of “shared” tacit understanding about “X is Y” brings a social representation into a personal dialogue in a here-and-now action setting.

Sharedness requires difference as its necessary condition. In fact, this is because negotiating meaning is an ambiguous and ambivalent process as unfolding meaning-making happens in communication, which implies “sharing” a dialogical space (or place) that is constantly changing. Abbey (2007) refers to poetic motion to conceptualise this dynamic of meaning-making through ambivalence. In relation to Boulanger’s and Christensen’s (2018) efforts to situate SRT into the aesthetic realm, we propose opening up on their concept of CHARACTERisation. The latter enables us to synthesize the introduction by referring to the issues of classification (“I as **not that kind**”), indeterminacy (comprising ambivalence, openness, ambiguity and fuzziness), “sharedness,” embodiment (whether the Other is present or not) and irreversible time. In fact, this will also allow us to go beyond this introduction and the whole Special Issue. Instead of fully developing the concept of CHARACTERisation, we will illustrate it as follows, then present some epistemological and theoretical issues.

Imagine a *scene* in which you *present* someone who is absent to your audience by using your body to perform gestures and adopt certain physical positions, and by means of verbal cues such as intonation. You will not only say that “this is that kind of guy or girl,” but foremost accentuate it (Bakhtin, 1929) through enacting and *embodying* this person in a specific context.

The *absent* Other is made *present* through your relationship with the audience, like in theater. If you present the same person to another audience, you may use other gestures. It means that this *presentation* is contextual: in a systemic way, you and your audience are co-constructing it. Instead of situating the person in a pre-defined and fixed class, you CHARACTERize him or her through *aesthetic representation* like in theater. A CHARACTER –as opposed to a class— is part of a fuzzy set which is undetermined and ambiguous. While in theater there are many versions of the same character, and in improvisation there is an open co-construction of it, in social encountering, speaking about and enacting Others entails negotiating and renegotiating them. Here, imagination is central. Presenting someone implies distancing ourselves from the context in which we met him or her and extending some of his or her characteristics. If I present someone who had an accident, this very accident will be *re-presented* –presented in a different way— differently when I go into the center of my living room –which is a scene— to embody this person falling on the ground and when we discuss it together, adding to this event the coloration of our own accents.

---

<sup>3</sup> In this sense, it could be more relevant to refer to place instead of space (Christensen *a*).

## INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE: LINKING TWO THEORIES

Sharedness happens through and because of these accents that are contextually grounded on differences. Let's look at sharedness from another perspective, through the following question: What does the real *person who experienced* the accident and the *represented person* in the reconstructed scene—in my living room as a stage to embodying the event—have in common and *share*? The *trajectory* of the object—from being a real person to a character—is constructive and part of an open space. It thus happens in irreversible time, in the present—in an unfolding matter—through a synthesis between the past and the future.

CHARACTERisation has some epistemological and theoretical incidences on bridging SRT with DST. In both theories, the object—which could be a real person—is thought and spoken of (Boulanger, 2018). In Moscovici's analysis, the members of the French population spoke about the psychoanalysts *without meeting them*. Making the Other present means to give him or her a discursive reality, to picture him or her like with realism in painting. This discursive context gives the object its materiality in social thinking. On the other side, DST focuses on how Others are as they are thought. Yet, SRT focuses on a classificatory way of thinking and constructing an image—fixing the Other in a class (Boulanger *a*). Instead, the imagine of Others in DST is not fixed but part of a *stage* where they are alive through their *voice*.

CHARACTERisation happens here, both inside (focus of DST) and outside (focus of SRT in reference to conversation). Yet, *voicing* the Others—both inside (mind) and outside, when the stage is my living room—does not *make them really present*, in the sense of them being socially embodied. The Other is not participating in social discourse about him or her. What is the difference between, first, lay people speaking about a professional—in reference to Moscovici's study—and, second, them having this dialogue while the latter is in the room? What is the difference between sustaining an internal dialogue with someone that is there in front of me and with an absent Other? In what conditions are voices—as part of representational scenes—embodied?

### **Representing theories—presenting potential linkages**

While theories—here DST and SRT—must represent people's voice differences, the authors of these theories themselves convey and enact different accents. There is certain asymmetry in the histories of DST and SRT. While the former is very well situated in the practices of therapy and provides new avenues for psychological analyses, the latter needs specifications beyond those left by Moscovici. It is our hope that making the discourses on *social representing dialogical dynamics* would be a fruitful exercise on both sides. The contributions to this Special Issue have worked diligently towards that goal—now available for public scrutiny

References

- Abbey, E. (2007). Perpetual uncertainty of cultural life: Becoming reality. In J. Valsiner & A. Rosa (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of socio-cultural psychology* (pp. 362-372). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1970). *Problème de la poétique de Dostoïevski*. Paris, France: Édition du Seuil. Originally published 1929.
- Boulanger, D. (2018). Public's social representations of relational professions and their work context: Extension of Moscovici's study in New Public Management. In P. Bendassolli (Ed.), *Culture, work and psychology: Invitations to dialogue*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Boulanger, D. & Christensen, B. (2017). Social representations as social forms and aesthetic phenomena: Dialogue between Moscovici and Simmel. In L. Tateo (Ed.) *An old melody in a new song: Aesthetics and psychology*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Nedergaard, J. I., Valsiner, J., & Marsico, G. (2015). "I am not that kind of...": Personal relating with social borders. In B. Wagoner, N. Chaudhary, & P. Hviid (Eds.), *Integrating experiences: body and mind moving between contexts* (pp. 245–263). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishers.
- Valsiner, J. (2000). *Culture and human development*. London, UK: Sage.

**EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY THROUGH  
DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY:  
SUBJECTS' AND *ALTER*'S RELATING WITH SPACE**

Dany Boulanger

Aalborg University, Denmark & Catholic University of Salvador, Brazil

**Abstract.** This paper aims to express both the static and the dynamic way that Moscovici conceives of the spatial dimension and defines subject (i.e., *representers*, people who represent reality) and *alter* (i.e., person represented by *representers*) in relation to their space. I set the dialogical self theory in a constructive (future-oriented) zone of theoretical innovation to provide some extensions to the social representation theory with respect to Moscovici's work, by focusing particularly on personal anchoring by means of positioning. I illustrate my theoretical avenues by referring to school-family relationship.

**Keywords:** space, social representation, dialogical self, positioning, anchoring, school-family relationship, *alter*

In this paper, I aim to express both the static and the dynamic way that Moscovici conceives of the spatial dimension and defines subject (i.e., *representers*, people who represent reality) and *alter* (i.e., person represented by *representers*) in relation to their space. I am interested in the three following aspects: the conception of space; the way *representers* relate to space; and the way the *alter* is anchored, which implies the *alter*'s relationship with space.

After presenting the dominant static conception of space described by Moscovici with respect to the *representers*' and *alter*'s way of relating to space, I will identify some of the dynamic avenues that he suggests, but which need further elaboration. I will set the dialogical self theory (DST) in this constructive (future-oriented) zone of theoretical innovation to provide some extensions to the social representation theory (SRT) with respect to Moscovici's work, by focusing particularly on personal anchoring through positioning. Then I will provide illustrations regarding the school-family relationship and conclude by proposing the invisibility of the position's space as a theoretical avenue.

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the fauthor at [danyculturalpsychology@gmail.com](mailto:danyculturalpsychology@gmail.com)

**The Static Conception of the *Representers'* Relationship With Space  
in Moscovici's Theory**

Moscovici (1984) used the environment as a metaphor to capture social representations. The systemic orientation of SRT is well established by referencing some spatial concepts that express the representational process:

By dividing the world in zones where the act of communicating is either free or not, good or bad, we manage to fix and regulate the transition from one group to another, from one reality to another, in short, from one culture to another. [...] The general framework in which the idea of this discipline is entirely grasped contributes not only to establish the functions that we associate with it, but also defines a zone of possible orientations. [...] Now we can look at this reflection more closely by observing how the directions existing within each sector constitute the same number of reference points that can shed light on representation in various ways by organizing around it a network of meaning. This has a structuring effect, because it is an integral part of the act of representing, one's self and one's results (Moscovici, 1961, pp. 199-200; loose translation).<sup>1</sup>

In the excerpt, Moscovici defines the anchoring process—situating an object in society in line with usual categories and social spaces (e.g., institutions)—with respect to certain structural zones within the relationship between the individual and the environment.

Although the importance of systemic and structural concepts in Moscovici's (1961; 1984; 1976/2004; 2008) work is undeniable, they are to a large extent anchored (from an epistemological point of view) in a static logic. Concerning the way in which subjects, or more specifically *representers*, relate to their sociocognitive environment, social representations are grounded in what Hermans (founder of DST) calls a *centralized* and (restrictively) *local* view of the Self. This view entails *continuity*, being closed to Others (in particular the people conveying unfamiliarity, that is, *alters*), and stability of a thick *structure* as well as impermeability of different environmental zones, particularly the boundary between the internal and external worlds.

Moscovici (1961) refers explicitly to the elaboration of a *typology* of persons through their *membership* to social categories<sup>2</sup> (e.g., intellectuals and communists). As a sociocultural way of relating to the environment, this type of membership potentially involves loss of identity (Chaudhary, 2008) and of the freedom to act and think (Adams & Markus, 2001; Valsiner, 2003). Regarding the thinking aspect of membership (i.e., *sharedness*), Chaudhary (2008) shows that when put in a static approach “shared understandings of people are characterized more by monologicality than otherwise”

---

<sup>1</sup> The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

<sup>2</sup> Note that when Moscovici refers to the individual, he uses “individual” and “group” as synonyms.

## EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

(p. 23). Sharedness is not problematic in itself—look for instance at the fact that some sharedness of code is an essential condition of intersubjectivity (Rommetveit, 1968); a problem occurs when, as in Moscovici’s case, it is largely grounded in a homogeneous environment (Billig, 1988, 2008), at least a static space defined through generic categories. Subjects, defined through their *sameness*—which means that opinions are the same or identical (Valsiner, 2014)—with Others, lose their particularity. This condition implies the removal of the contextual and subjective dimensions (Harré, 1984, 1998; Jahoda, 1988).

Indeed, “now common sense is science made common” (Moscovici, 1984a, p. 29) and in such a perspective, “[r]epresentations are thus a unifying and homogenizing force” (McKinley, Potter, & Wetherell, 1993, p. 135) instead of a personalizing one. With this in mind, what is the meaning Moscovici (1961) refers to about the concepts of concreteness and personalization?

The concepts themselves: consciousness, unconsciousness, and repression are imbued with concrete images [...] As echoes of a customary vision, instances described by psychoanalysis *personify* general categories (p. 33; loose translation).<sup>3</sup>

While referring, in this excerpt, to the fact that, in his study, the psychoanalytic theory—that the French population receives from the scientific (external) world—makes sense by reflecting the “life” (thus the idea of personalization) of the French population, this “life” is generic and abstract. It seems that concreteness characterizes some general collective reference structures<sup>4</sup> instead of the particular concrete experience of the specific and concrete subject.

I wonder if the familiar space of the *representers* is really familiar from a subjective and personal (as opposed to impersonal) point of view. So, what does familiarity—a central notion in Moscovici’s theory—mean? Whose space is it?

What I mean is that consensual universes are places where *everybody* wants to feel at home, secure from any risk of friction or strife. All that is said and done there only confirms *acquired beliefs* and interpretations, *corroborates rather than contradicts tradition* (Moscovici, 1984a, p. 24).<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

<sup>4</sup> While Moscovici (1961) makes a distinction between sociological and psychological categories that he defines as variables, the latter are generic and are not anchored in a contextual and personal space. Here is how he explains the psychological category: “Of course, in this case, age cannot be seen as biological data, but rather as a characteristic of a psychological and social situation of a group belonging to the same *generation*, and that consequently has common attributes. The family’s situation (people living with their parents or who are single), age, and gender define a mode of existence, problems that lead to perceiving psychoanalysis in a field closer to *life*” (p. 42; loose translation). Note that the immediate (notion associated to the concept of concreteness) situation Moscovici refers to in this excerpt is a generic and common space that entails decontextualization and depersonalization.

<sup>5</sup> The emphasis (italics) is mine.

## BOULANGER

The house Moscovici refers to in this excerpt is a *common* house of shared beliefs. This is both the space of *all* (everyone) people situated in it and of *no one* in particular. The dynamic conversational space (i.e., relating socially and building sense), which Moscovici identifies as the house of the French population and the ground for the construction of social representations, is, from the point of view of Simmel (1971),<sup>6</sup> an impersonal form of sociality. While Moscovici (1961) focuses on the interaction, in particular the conversation that occurs locally between the members of the French population, he does not highlight the ongoing dialogue itself through conversation or discourse analysis. Thus, the space in which the *representers* are situated remains for a large extent static. Referring to such a static conception of the Self, Hermans (1996) asks:

The question can be posed as to how such a crude, undifferentiated structure can mediate the diversity of behaviours to which it is supposedly related. The answer has been to view the self as a multifaceted phenomenon, as a set of schemas, conceptions, images, prototypes, theories, goals, tasks or facets (p. 33).

While Moscovici's reference to the concept of polyphasia (i.e., the co-existence of different modes of thinking and systems of representations) fits with the answer provided by Hermans in this excerpt, this concept is mostly lost in the static space in which it is applied. In fact, although Moscovici (1961) admits that individuals can be members of different groups, he posits a boundary between the zones within the internal world, and between this world and the external world.

This phenomenon supposes that local people (the French population) are closed to unfamiliar zone:

Similarly, if social representation theorists stress anchoring one-sidedly, they will find themselves describing the ways in which individuals anchor themselves to social knowledge: the thinking individual will be perceived as someone who unthinkingly seeks to avoid novelty by automatically categorizing fresh information in terms of familiar schemata. There is a danger that this picture will omit the role of argumentation and the clash between justification and criticism in the maintenance of social knowledge (Billig, 1988, p. 13).

Looking at the fixed spatial position of the generic and abstract subjects who are probably to a large extent *unanchored* in "their own" (common and static) familiar environment, I wonder (relative to Hermans' quote above) if such a structure can entail movement toward unfamiliar zones. In anonymity, the members of the population converse in a local space separated from the external world, that is, in the *local* and

---

<sup>6</sup> Simmel (who died in 1918) does not refer to Moscovici's work. I create this dialogue around the way conversational space is defined by both of them.

## EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

splitting (exclusive separation, see Valsiner, 1987) logic of postmodernism.<sup>7</sup> The fact that *representers* are closed to the external world challenges their relationship with the *alter*, which is the newcomer (the psychoanalyst in Moscovici's study is the *represented*) located in or coming from this external world and represented by the *representers*—represented as such because it is a stranger.

### **Relationship With the *alter* in Moscovici's Internal and External Worlds**

The other person (the *alter*, that is represented), who comes from the external world, is defined with respect to the same static conception of space. When Moscovici refers to the social representations of the psychoanalyst (a *person*), he focuses on the way that an *object* is defined by the members of the French population. In fact, in his study, these people never meet the psychoanalyst directly. The emphasis is on the relationship *about*, and not *with*, the psychoanalyst, who is considered as an object of discourse instead of a participant in the discursive local zone.

The fact that members of the French population are closed to the unfamiliar is expressed by the static fitting of the stranger with local anchors. Here, the tendency to “personify general categories” (Moscovici, 1961, p. 33; loose translation) makes sense in a certain way since anchoring implies: 1) the stranger's depersonalization; 2) and by way of contrast, the stranger's categorization—that Moscovici associated with the objectivation process in 1961 and the anchoring process in 1984—with respect to *representers'* (and Moscovici's) own categorization systems. The newcomer is placed in a fixed and largely predetermined environment:

[T]hey [social representations] *conventionalize* the objects, persons and events we encounter. They give them a definite form, locate them in a given category and shared by a group of people. All new elements adhere to this model and merge into it. Thus we assert that the earth is round, we associate communism with the colour red, inflation with the decreasing value of money. Even when a person or an object doesn't conform precisely to the model, we constrain it to assume a given form, to enter a given category, in fact to become identical to the others, at the risk of its being neither understood, nor decoded (Moscovici, 1984a, p. 7).<sup>8</sup>

The contrast that I mentioned is expressed in this excerpt by modelling and fitting the *alter* through *our* space and anchors (e.g., categories). The *alter* is categorized (in a typological logic) according to a prototype representing a generic and ideal-type of person and representing the typical characteristics of the category (in an undifferentiated manner) in which each individual is inserted (Moscovici, 1984a; for a critique of this aspect see Harré, 1988). Newcomers lose their particularities and are

---

<sup>7</sup> We don't say here that SRT is part of postmodernism (see Raudsepp, this special issue), but we emphasize the presence of localism and a splitting logic that is close to or part of postmodernism.

<sup>8</sup> The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

potentially rendered *inexpressive* through their monological relationship with the environment as they risk not being understood (see excerpt above). The conventions (anchors) potentially render the *alter* inaccessible.

As ordinary people, without the benefit of scientific instruments, we tend to consider and analyse the world in a very similar way; especially as the world with which we deal is social through and through. Which means that we are never provided with any information which has not been distorted by representations “*superimposed*” on objects and on persons which give them a certain vagueness and make them partially *inaccessible* (Moscovici, 1984a, p. 6).<sup>9</sup>

So, if anchoring makes the invisible (unfamiliar, inaccessible) visible (familiar, accessible), then the static aspect of the anchors also makes the *alter* inaccessible. Not only is the *alter* put in the background and in the shadow of the *representers* (excerpt above), but it is potentially rendered invisible:

The invisibility is not due to any lack of information conveyed to the eyeball, but to a pre-established fragmentation of reality, a classification of the people and things which comprise it, which makes some of them visible and the rest invisible (Moscovici, 1984a, p. 5).

In this way, the *alter* is not fully seen nor heard as the *representers* see and hear what fits in their house. Paradoxically, while the *alter* can be situated in the *representers*’ environment, it risks being anchored to the point of becoming inexpressive:

Social use has removed any arbitrary element and made it possible to *place* or *locate* psychoanalysis in the world of social categories [...] The statements that have nurtured such a verbal activity [...] have penetrated reality to the extent that they are no longer expressive because their simple presence is sufficient (p. 38; loose translation).<sup>10</sup>

So, the very (stable) presence of the *alter* in the environment does not guarantee its expressivity (his voice). If anchoring involves the object’s meaning, and if it is defined as the “active pole of the subject’s choice” (Moscovici, 1976/2004, p. 63; loose translation), how can the *alter* be signified, that is, rendered expressive and used for the (unfamiliar) resource it has to offer?

---

<sup>9</sup> The emphasis (italics) is mine.

<sup>10</sup> The emphasis (underlining) is mine. The italics come from the author. Note that the verbalism referred to in this excerpt implies fuzzy structures and boundaries. For this reason, it can sustain creativity (see Boulanger *b*, in this special issue).

### Overcoming Moscovici's Static Approach

#### Synthesis and illustration of limitations.

The limitations that I identified with respect to Moscovici's static approach can be summarized as follows: as a generic category closed to the unfamiliar, the *representers* and the *represented* (*alter*) are situated in restrictive areas of a static environment with permeable boundaries.

This situation is very problematic since globalization implies a dynamic conception of space entailing confrontation with the unfamiliar and crossing boundaries (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Social representations should thus focus on openness to Others coming from outside while taking into account the tension associated with boundary crossing.

In the field of SRT, Howarth, Cornish and Gillespie (2015) study the movement of actors crossing boundaries for the purpose of partnership and engagement. To grasp how partnership and engagement—concepts implying tension and confrontation with the unfamiliar (Boulanger, 2018)—translate into Moscovici's framework, I studied parental engagement by analysing the discourse of stakeholders (professionals from the school and other community organizations) who participated in a partnership program implemented in poor areas in Canada (Boulanger, 2016).

As expressed by the scientific literature in the field of school, family and community partnership, my results (presented in Boulanger, 2016) show, on the one hand, that stakeholders (*representers*) generally consider themselves in relation to the program and to the school in an abstract and impersonal way; they thus form an undifferentiated aggregate. On the other hand, parents (the *represented*, the *alter*) are generally represented as strangers posing a potential threat to children's learning. They are rarely considered through their specificity; they are all labelled parents *from* a poor area whose practices are risky for their children.

In this study, whose results are published in Boulanger (2016), I discover the limitations of SRT. First, as (practical) environments (Moscovici, 1984a), social representations are static and imply the depersonalization of the person (both the *representers* and the *represented*) situated in a static space. Second, as a theoretical tool, SRT prevents me from identifying exceptions, that is, particular cases in which the *representers* situate (positioning) themselves more freely in a flexible space and the *alter* (the *represented*) is rendered expressive. While I look for alternative frameworks, in this study I remain critical about SRT limitations and try to understand what remains *invisible* in this theory. As a result, I find some interesting avenues (presented later) both in SRT and elsewhere (we will soon refer to DST).

Based on the fact that social psychology aims to articulate the individual and the social (Moscovici, 1984b), I recognize the need for “bridging the divide between self

and other” (O’Sullivan-Lago, 2011, p. 3.1) at the boundary of a dynamic and flexible space. This supposes that I need to take into account “that in looking at these elements of individual variability in this way, the investigator is not examining something asocial” (Good, 1993, p. 174). The Self dimension is missing in Humanities and Social Sciences (Stetsenko, 2008). This is what Zittoun (2012) clearly mentions:

Social and behavioral sciences have largely analyzed these channeling forces—social representations and beliefs, institutions, interactions with significant Others, as well as one’s personal history. Yet much less attention has been given to how, still, unique persons, a unique subjectivity, can at each emerge out of these streams of determinations (p. 261).

There is a need to display the dynamic aspect of SRT by highlighting the contextual and personal dimensions of the Self.

### **SRT and DST at the heart of centralization and decentralization.**

To understand the concept of social representations in a dynamic perspective, I will first have to consider that SRT is characterized by an approach that is both static and dynamic. The static aspect of SRT, which is salient, renders the dynamic aspect invisible. The fixed and homogenous environment, more particularly with respect to SRT’s boundary zone, decontextualization, and depersonalization are the major obstacles that put in the background this theory’s dynamic side. I need a *decentralized* movement using some external theory—as mediational tools—to reframe some of the principles conveyed by SRT concerning Moscovici’s theoretical work. For the purpose of this article, I will refer to DST. I also need some theoretical anchors from SRT itself; I will thus refer to a *centralized* movement using the dynamic aspect of SRT. To do so, I will have to look at some of the *particular* principles conveyed, but not fully elaborated by Moscovici. Some of these principles contradict his own general approach and form *exceptional* ideas. I will also refer to some of Moscovici’s ideas conveyed after the publication of his principal works in 1961 and 1976.

Sometimes, Moscovici (1961) went back and forth from static to dynamic in a contradictory logic. For example, speaking about the individual’s participation in a globalized and heterogeneous society while, some lines and pages later, expressing the fact that society is unitary and composed of well-delimited groups and thought systems. Often, the same content is simultaneously defined in relation to a static aspect and a dynamic aspect. Yet, beside the contradiction between these two aspects of SRT, the dynamic aspect also entails tension, which is a key to our endeavour.

### **Open theoretical space and flexibility of DST**

In fact, I will create an open theoretical space that will provide arguments for and against SRT fitting with DST. It is through this tension that DST will make sense as

## EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

an extension tool. The centralized and decentralized theoretical movements that characterize the open theoretical space are interrelated and future-oriented.

This creative and proactive (instead of prospective) space is also possible because DST is an open and flexible theoretical framework that allows conceptual bridging between some dimensions, for instance the spatial aspect that interests me:

Altogether, the concept of positioning, and its variations such as “repositioning,” “I-position,” “meta-position,” “third position,” “coalition of positions,” “composition,” and “depositioning” allow us to stretch the theory into different directions so that phenomena that are usually treated in their separate qualities can be brought together in a more comprehensive theoretical framework. The advantage of such a *bridging framework* is that it brings insights, meanings, and experiences, back and forth, so that the description or analysis of one phenomenon can profit from the other ones (Hermans & Kempen, 1993, p. 11).<sup>11</sup>

Below, I present some of the principles of DST and associated principles of the SRT by highlighting the way in which the former permits the extension of the latter.

### **Toward a dynamic conception of space: Extension of SRT using DST.**

The spatial aspect is central to DST, as expressed by the emphasis on the concept of position. DST focuses on the spatial dialogue of the Self with Other (*alter*) within the internal and external worlds through permeable boundaries, by means of a dynamic positioning interplay. “*I as knower*” interprets reality subjectively; this position is characterized by continuity (intra stability through time), volition (appropriation and rejection of thoughts), and distinctiveness (inter-individual variation). “*I as known*”—which is to say *Me*—is the empirical Self extended toward one’s environment and comprises all that is *Mine*. *Me* is the object of the discourse and reflective activity of *I-as-Knower*. DST articulates personal and social positions:

The distinction between individual and collective corresponds to the distinction between two kinds of positions in which people may find themselves located: social and personal positions (see also Harré & Vangenhove, 1991, for a comparable distinction). Social positions are governed and organized by societal definitions, expectations and prescriptions, whereas personal positions receive their form from the particular ways in which individual people organize their own lives, sometimes in opposition to or protest against the expectations implied by societal expectations (Hermans, 2001, p. 263).

Collective voices constrain the Self, but it can to some extent reconstruct itself in an innovative way (see the concept of dependent-independence in Valsiner, 1987) by means of positioning dynamics (in particular counter-positioning). The Self’s zone of

---

<sup>11</sup> The emphasis (italics) is mine.

action is more or less free in society. The Self is composed of internal and external positions as illustrated by Hermans (2001):

In this example we see at least two external positions in the self of the mother: her daughter's friend and her brother, who are experienced in similar ways. At the same time, there are two internal positions involved: the mother as a critic and the mother as vulnerable (p. 225).

The different positions interact in a dynamic way as they are endowed with voices. They thus enter into a dialogue: "On the basis of this distinction, the storyteller can be considered the *I*, whereas the story or narrative figures as *Me*" (Hermans, 1996, p. 38). This emphasis on the voice differentiates the concept of dialogical self (DS) from others such as schemata that are considered voiceless entities like social representation (more on this later). In this line of thought, DS is more dynamic than schemata and social representation, which are core and self-contained concepts.

The complex of society of the mind involves recognizing the plasticity of space. Moscovici (1984a) partly recognizes the plasticity of the environment and its boundaries:

[R]epresentations, in his [Durkheim] theory, are like a thickening of the fog, or else they act as stabilisers for many words or ideas - like layers or stagnant air in a society's atmosphere, of which it is said that one could cut them with a knife. Whilst this is not entirely false, what is most striking to the contemporary observer is their mobile and circulating character; in short their plasticity. We see them, more, as dynamic structures, operating on an assembly of relations and of behaviours which appear, and disappear, together with the representations (p. 18).<sup>12</sup>

While the static view of social representations that Moscovici refers to is "not entirely false" (p. 18), it is still fundamental to their conventional nature. However, recognizing the plasticity and the dynamic structures of social representations is useful to me.

And yet, DST is much clearer about such a dynamic conception of structures. Concerning the notion of unity in diversity, Valsiner and Han (2008) clearly describe the structure tackled in DST:

Van Meijl (2008) provides a look at the DS theory from the angle of contemporary anthropology. He takes an issue with the globalization effect on uncertainty on self—self is a *unity but it is not unitary*. Uncertainty is one of myriad reaction in the cultural contact zone. The self is disunited and dialogue is essential to maintain a balance between multicultural selves. [...] What happens in the relationships of I-positions is the negotiation of functional unity of the self—different parts of the self

---

<sup>12</sup> The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

## EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

are loosely and temporarily connected with one another, which leads to tension in some of these relations (but not others) and is the basis for *adaptation to all the new encounters* that social reality—globalization—might bring (Tsuda, 2000). The dialogical interaction among I-positions is to establish unity—but this process is *never-ending as instead of unity of structures* (“the core self”) we arrive at steady states of *unity of loosely structured* but focally functioning cores of human beings. Uncertainty of living guarantees the functional nature of such solution (p. 5).

The decentralized conception of the Self and its dynamic way of relating to a globalized environment implies constant tensions and dialogues between positions endowed with voices. But Moscovici (1984a) barely discusses voice:

In the consensual universe, society is a visible, continuous creation, permeated with meaning and purpose, possessing a human *voice*, in accord with human existence and both acting and reacting like a human being. In other words, man is, here, the measure of all things (p. 20).<sup>13</sup>

In keeping with what we mentioned earlier about Moscovici’s static view of the self, I ask the same question as Jahoda (1988): “since social representations are not uniform but said to vary across different social groups, what is the relationship between them and *this* voice?” (p. 198).<sup>14</sup> In other words, how is this voice plural? I am dealing here with the issue of conciliating a homogeneous perspective of social representations with a dynamic conception (e.g., in accordance with the concept of polyphasia). The issue at stake also concerns the owner of the voices. Is it a collective or a personal voice? In the excerpt below, Moscovici (1984a) uses two pronouns to distinguish a consensual from a reified world:

Even our use of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘they’ can express this contrast, where ‘we’ stands for the groups of individuals to whom we relate and ‘they’- the French, scholars, State systems, etc.- to a different group, to which we do not, but may be forced to, belong. The distance between the first and the third person plural expresses the distance which separated the first and the third person plural expresses *a social place* where we fell included from a given, indeterminate or, at any rate, *impersonal place*. This lack of identity, which is at the root of modern man’s psychic distress, is a symptom of this necessity to see oneself in terms of ‘we’ and ‘they’; to oppose ‘we’ to ‘they’; and thus of one’s *inability to connect* the one with the other. *Groups and individuals* try to overcome this necessity either by identifying with ‘we’, and this enclosing themselves in a world apart, or by identifying with ‘they’, and become robots of bureaucracy and the administration (p. 20).<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> The emphasis (italics) is mine.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

How is it possible for *We* and *They* to connect if, in a typical postmodernist logic, the *alter* (*They*) standing outside is defined in a contrasted (splitting) way as impersonal and bureaucratic (grand-narrative)? Is *We* the pronoun of a group or of the individual? Moscovici refers to the pronouns *We* and *They* in reductionist (either/or) logic without recognizing the personal and specific characteristics of the subject (*I* and *Me*). These conditions undermine Moscovici's efforts, in another paper published the same year (1984*b*), to display the dialogic aspect of social psychology by referring to the triad *ego-alter-object*. Although useful for the purpose of my reflection, this triad may be rooted in a static perspective if the subjects are abstract and impersonal. In the same logic, I have shown that using the concept of polyphasia—which is an important aspect of the *ego-alter-object* triad—does not make SRT part of a dynamic approach when the systems interacting are static and if they are separated by permeable boundaries.

One of the keys to improving my understanding of a dynamic approach is the concept of globalization. Moscovici partially recognizes this concept, but contradicts it by insisting on the homogeneous and anthropocentric aspects of social representations. DST allows a more dynamic articulation of the global and local dimensions by conceiving the Self as a space in which tension exists between the *movements* of globalization and localization in the “society of the mind”:

[T]he landscape of the mind as a “society of mind” is never a self-contained unity, but is constantly subjected to the opposing forces of globalization and localization. The corresponding movements, centering and decentering, impel in opposite directions. When the decentering movements dominate over the centering one, the self becomes discontinuous, fleeting, and fragmented; when the centering movements dominate over the decentering ones, the self becomes stabilized, with the risk of closing itself off from innovative impulses (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 62).

The internal and external worlds are linked by a constant tension between global (decentralizing) and local (centralizing) movements. Through tensions, the Self is thus constantly moving at the boundary of and coming into dynamic interaction with different zones (Hermans & Kempen, 1993). The Self actively addresses and responds to the Other (*alter*); they are in constant dialogue—sometimes monological in nature—within these worlds. This dialogical conception of the Self and of the *alter* is made possible by the dynamic (dialogical) conception of space. Thanks to the flexible extension of the environment in the landscape of the Self, the focus is on the Self's situation in an immediate *context* and on the Self's *personal* space, which includes Others in the form of an audience (more on this later).

Let's see the cues that Moscovici provides to situate SRT at the contextual and personal levels of the self. Moscovici (1961) mentions that representational systems can

## EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

be more or less organized and structured. Sometimes, it contains a stable core that organizes—in a centralizing movement—the different semantic elements, but sometimes these are linked in a fuzzier logic (decentralizing movement) while also having a structural component. This structure can occur around collective aspects like ideologies or around more personal aspects like attitudes. Although, in Moscovici's logic, the specific subject is lost in a generic and abstract system of attitudes (common to individuals), this focus on personal aspects in a more decentralized structure provides a key to connect SRT with DST. Moscovici even specifies that the lack of organization in some structures prevents him from “extricating a *typology* from respondents” (1961, p. 53; loose translation).

Moscovici (1984a) proposes three types of social representations: hegemonic (Durkheimian logic), emancipated (each group has its social representations), and polemical (based in conflict and antagonism between the members of a group). The polemical type is an open door to considering, potentially through inter-individual differences, the subject in immediate interaction with Others (the other *representers* and the *alter*). The collective voices that Hermans mentions seem to fit polemical structures. In accordance with Hermans' recognition of cultural patterns, collective voices also fit emancipated structures. Nevertheless, as Chaudhary (2008) and Adams (2000) note, DST needs a more structured conception of the Self grounded in patterns and traditions. If this is true, the core structural conception of SRT associated with hegemonic and emancipated structures could complete DST. While I insist more on a flexible and fluid conception of structure in this paper, I also recognize that there is a stabilized aspect.

DST allows an extension of the polemical structure's dynamism and makes it possible to situate SRT more clearly at the personal and contextual levels, that is, in the latter case, the layer of interaction in an immediate situation. Moscovici shifts from a static to a dynamic approach. While on one hand, he insists more on the level of analysis of the group and society, on the other hand, his idea of conversation as a dynamic field of encounters is highlighted:

*Without forcing the data, it is not an error to highlight that accepting or rejecting a psychoanalytical action is understood as part of an interpersonal, intersubjective, and complete framework when it is positive, but objective and partial when it is negative. [...] Despite the importance of this interpersonal framework, the specific psychological situation in which the whole representation appears emphasizes this or that aspect (p. 123; loose translation).*

The *representers' own spatial situation* (first section of this paper) *provides orientation for the way that the alter (the represented) is anchored* (second section of this paper). If I consider the *object* of representation as a *person*, this excerpt provides a key to thinking about the way that an *alter* is contrastingly anchored in two zones: a generic and abstract space or, on the contrary, a particular and specific space.

About the latter, Moscovici (1961) shows how the process of anchoring occurs when there is a contradiction between the external (from the psychoanalytic theoretical framework) and the internal (local population) conception of the Self:

Complete refusal may follow as well as an attempt to *mediate*: people handle by *themselves* the information acquired on the structure and dynamics of their own behaviour. [...] [I]f they wish it, they can overcome their difficulties without outside intervention, in one way or another (pp. 46-47; loose translation).

Moscovici (1961) completes by mentioning that “[s]ubjects who have a favourable attitude toward psychoanalysis find in this *weakly structured* image a *free space* in which to imagine the analytical situation as they wish” (p. 60; loose translation).<sup>16</sup> Sometimes, the space in which *representers* anchor the *alter* is flexible and contains permeable boundaries. This enables them to anchor the *alter* in a contextual and more personal way. The author also mentions, in reference to Stern, that an external object is not simply interiorized but actively structured.

In 1961, Moscovici also admitted, albeit briefly, that the Self is endowed with an audience, a generalized Other. In 1984, his approach became even more in line with DST since he suggested that the Self is populated with characters:

In addition, we have the right to observe that in each individual resides a society: a group of imaginary or real characters, heroes who are admired, friends and *enemies*, brothers and parents, who nurture the individual’s ongoing internal dialogue. And who even manage to have relationships with the individual *without him or her being aware of it* (p. 5; loose translation).<sup>17</sup>

Instead of saying that the Self relates to Others *without their knowledge*, Hermans emphasizes the fact that this kind of relationship is *central* to the Self’s interaction with the world. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) develop this aspect much more than Moscovici by placing the Other (voice) in an extended landscape of the Self. In DST, the Other is not excluded but included in the landscape of the Self, and the interaction with Others happens within the internal and external worlds through flexible boundaries.

Although barely mentioned, the representational aspect (of the object and the *alter*) is not absent from DST:

Morris (1994) has emphasized that the self is not an entity but a process that orchestrates an individual’s personal experience as a result of which he or she becomes self-aware and self-reflective about her or his place in the surrounding world. The concept of self may accordingly be defined as an individual’s mental *representation* of

---

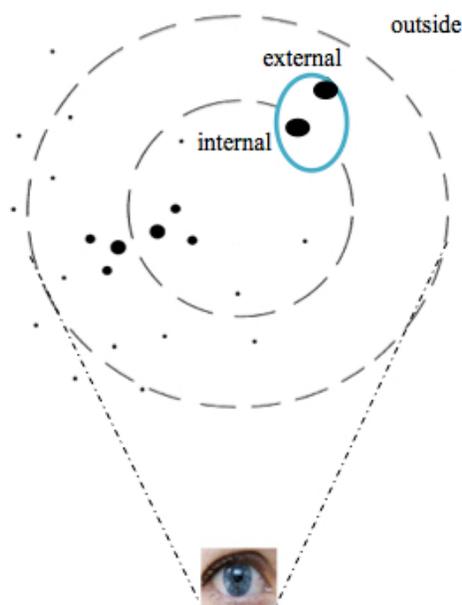
<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

## EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

her or his own person, as a self-representation, while the concept of other refers to the mental representation of other persons (Van Meijl, 2008, p. 177).<sup>18</sup>

Looking at the social and dialogical nature of the Self and at its *anchoring* in an immediate context, I should, in this excerpt, replace “mental” representation with “social” representation as the space of the society of the Self. This implies a more contextual, dialogical, and personal (Self) understanding of the concept of social representation than what Moscovici achieves. I examine this aspect more closely by referring to the “repertory of the self” (DST) (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Representational Space<sup>19</sup>

This extensive zone (the “society of the Self”) contains many positions situated more or less at the centre of the Self or on its periphery. These positions are related in some zones (the blue one). The quantity of positions, their texture (size), and their spatial situation express the inter-variability—and possibly the intra-variability, if I take into account the time dimension of a position that is moving—of the representational zone. Relating to the constructivist orientation that Moscovici partly refers to, I focus here (the eye) on the idea that the “repertory of the Self” contains everything that the Self presents to itself in its own way (the reference to the syllable “re” in representation), that is, what the Self *represents*.

<sup>18</sup> The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

<sup>19</sup> Adaptation of Hermans (2001, p. 252).

## BOULANGER

From the perspective of DST, and in line with Moscovici's constructivist orientation, objects are not mere copies of the Self; they are endowed with a voice, associated with the particular intonation of the Self. The *alter* is in this way innovatively created and humanized! As a particular subject in an authentic relationship with Others—as expressed by addressivity and responsivity (Bakhtin, 1929/1970)—the Self is defined as a process happening in an immediate context<sup>20</sup> (hence the focus on topology instead of typology).

In these conditions, anchoring occurs in a contextual and personal space and entails dialogue with the Other as a human. Anchoring could therefore be conceived of as an open space for dialogue that sustains the reciprocal expressivity of the *representer* and the *alter* (the *represented*) through their movement of positioning within the internal and external worlds.

Openness to unfamiliarity is important. DST promotes confronting strangeness and uncertainty, as well as dialogical meeting in a contextual and personal situation that is collaborative and participative in nature. Moscovici (1961) partially supports this reasoning:

Opposition to making psychoanalysis accessible to the layperson is fuelled by other apprehensions. People worry about the *anonymous* force—that applies a subtle restrictive action through the press, the radio, and fashion—because it results from a category of people whose skills we cannot assess and who embody this “*on généralisé*.” Feeling like one is not *participating* in spreading a system of concepts provokes resistance to any content that may be conveyed. Preventing *this kind of exchange* is usually accompanied by a derogatory judgment regarding the quality of the message (p. 189; loose translation).<sup>21</sup>

Thus, subjects resist anonymous forms of sociality (Simmel, 1971), and would rather participate or be included. They don't want to receive abstract and anonymous definitions of themselves and their way of relating to the environment. They want to be *engaged* in this process of definition. This perspective opens the door to dialogical and collaborative forms of exchange in a contextual and personal space, in a flexible environment that allows their active participation and dynamic construction of the *alter's* position (in a collaborative logic). This is necessary since, from the point of view of DST, globalization requires an “investigation of the ways in which severe conflicting positions can be reconciled so that they are no longer experienced as competitive or mutually exclusive, but as *cooperating* and mutually complementing” (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 70).<sup>22</sup> This perspective expresses the importance for participants to be “able to construct a common dialogical space in which they permit

---

<sup>20</sup> Hermans (1996) grounds DST in contextualism.

<sup>21</sup> The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

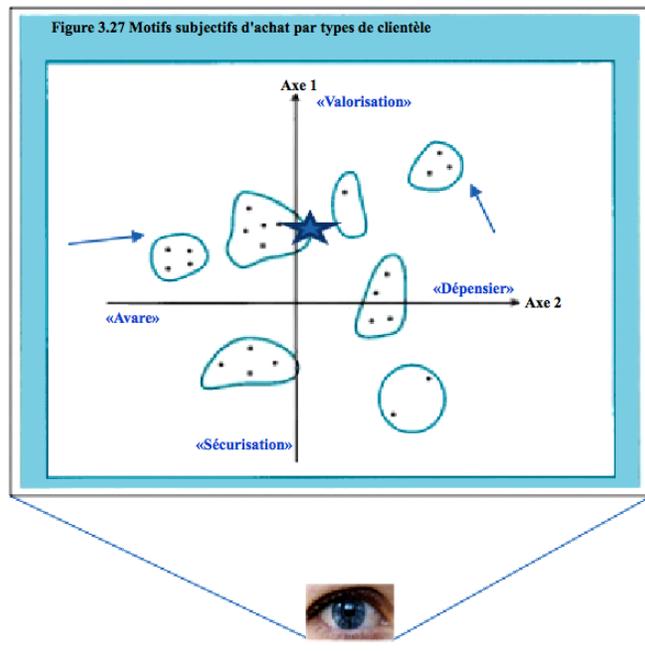
themselves to be influenced by the parties involved” (ibid., p. 47). Such common dialogical spaces involve openness to Others and their perspective, and thus expressivity.

In the next section, I will present some illustrations of the dynamic conception of anchoring that I have just identified. To do so, I will rely quickly and broadly tackle—without identifying excerpts (for more details read Boulanger, 2016)—the school-family relationship (implying *partnership* and *engagement*) mentioned earlier. I will focus on the three central aspects of the paper: 1) the conception of space, 2) the *representers’* relationship with space, 3) and the way the *alter* is anchored.

### Brief Application to School-Family Relationship in a Partnership Program

#### Representational space.

In my study (Boulanger, 2016), I perform a textual data analysis of discourse of stakeholders grounded in a qualitative approach (Py, 2012) to take into account the inter-individual variability.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of Discourse Elements<sup>23</sup>

The large square at the top of Figure 2 is an illustration of the graphical distribution of discourse elements I obtained during the first phase of the analysis. The “keywords” used by the stakeholders are distributed in the *representational space* (and

<sup>23</sup> Adaptation of Py (2012), p. 95.

linked to the subjects). I do not insist on what is common to all the stakeholders (professionals from the school and other community organizations)—the elements of discourse situated in the middle (star)—but on what is both peripheral (“decentralized”) and “shared” by some subjects, in particular what is far from the centre (the zone the arrows point to).

I perform an in-depth qualitative analysis of these zones. I focus on “similarity” rather than “sameness” because the former presupposes sufficient closeness (Marková, 2004) for subjects to share contextually, to “*coordinate* themselves” without necessarily being vectors of a relationship that is identical to the objet (Valsiner, 2014). Similarity implies inter-individual difference as well as dynamic convergence. This may be the case of individuals who are doing a coordinated activity together, sharing a common goal, but differing in their approach (Branco & Valsiner, 1997). Not only do two “groups” (I don’t insist here on membership), but so do the subjects (blue circle in Figure 1 and zones or constellations in Figure 2). This is exactly what I identify. While the different zones are interrelated and their subjects share some objects, there are discord—the representational space is polemical—and many particularities.

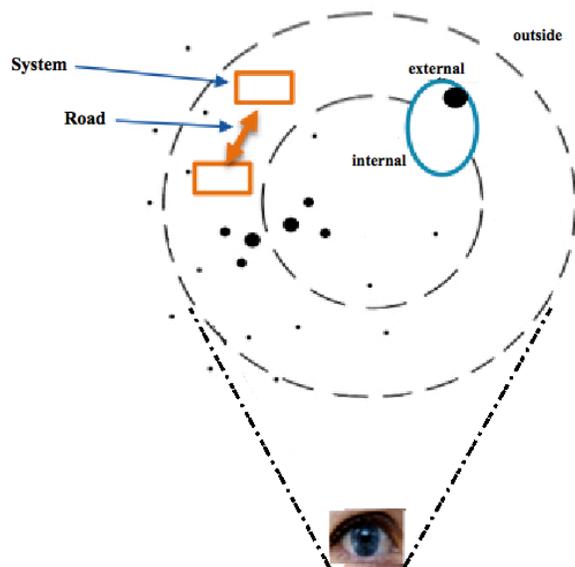
The interesting observation I make is that what is *particular is not asocial* and not marginal with respect to the population’s anchors. The particular aspects are not outside the representational space that is an extended zone. Sometimes, in *one* subject’s discourse, I notice the presence of *all* the categories commonly used by this subject and the other subjects in that zone (*all* of the participants in a constellation or zone). This is a sign that society is in the mind! A good metaphor is the intergenerational home viewed as a common space that is occupied differently by each generation (zone) and by each participant. The school can also be divided in different zones.

The specific subject sharing some objects of discourse with Others also has his or her own specific orientations towards the environment. These specificities are largely rendered invisible by Moscovici’s approach, but are made visible by the approach I am developing here. To further develop the metaphor of the school, I expand the schema (Figure 1) of representational space.

In the Figure 3 (see top next page), I add to Hermans’ original schema two systems (green squares)—for example, school and family or different rooms (zones) in the school—linked by a road (or corridor) where the movement of the Self (representer) and *alter* (*represented*) occurs. The subjects (stakeholders as *representers*) position themselves and the parents (*alter*) within the school environment. This anchoring implies that the *representers* are in control of positioning the *alter* in this space.

In general, my analysis show that parents are rendered inexpressive through such positioning. For example, they are positioned in very restricted zones: they can be

## EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY



**Figure 3.** Distribution of Discourse Elements in Representational Space

present for report cards, which is a formal activity, but can't express themselves too much, and they can't go into the classroom often, at least at the beginning of the program. Moreover, they can't move freely in space because their movements are controlled by the stakeholders. For instance, parents can't wander in the entrance and corridors of the school.

As mentioned earlier, this static anchoring occurs when the stakeholders are themselves spatially situated in a static way (instead of flexible), when they can't adapt, contextualize, and personalize the conventions and move freely. In this situation, they generally refer to themselves as *We* and *Us* and to the parents as *They*, albeit using the pronoun *We* sometimes implies flexible space. To get beyond the splitting logic generally adopted by Moscovici, I need to consider cases in which space is dynamic.

### **Personal anchoring: Personalizing my space and the zone of *alter*.**

Sometimes the space is represented as flexible when *many* stakeholders position themselves using the pronouns *I* and *Me* and when they adopt a "My parent" position instead of an "Our parent" position. In the latter case (referring to "Our parent") they focus on the collective nature of action with parents and on the global and undifferentiated aspects of the scholar environment. In the former case, they refer to particular activities occurring in proximal relationship with parents in school or in other formal community institutions. However, while the stakeholders (representers)

generally move freely in the space—from one system to another (Figure 3) by participating in many activities and moving from one room to another as they want—, they fix the parents in a restricted area. The stakeholders (particularly teachers) would permit parents to enter classrooms, but parents could only sit there quietly (rendering them inexpressive). The stakeholders would also focus on the institutional and formal aspects of parental engagement. The stakeholders do not spatially situate themselves in the same way they position the parents. *They don't put themselves in the same restricted areas attributed to the parents.*

While I focus here on the common positions (common personal house as anchor) shared by *many* subjects, the *personalization of space* occurs “in” and “out” of the house of *a* specific subject. In this condition, the focus is not on the sharedness of *I*-position by many stakeholders, but on how a *specific subject* is endowed with them. In Figures 1, 2 and 3, the eye is not collective but personal. In my study, on more than 200 participants (stakeholders), only a few experienced what I call **personal anchoring** implying the personalization of **both** the Self's space and the *alter's* positioning in the environment.

Thus the stakeholders participate—resisting an anonymous form of sociality—in the definition of, and positioning in, the space they adapt in their own way. Not only are the objects (*alters*) represented—presenting an object in their own way—but so are the *stakeholders' own positions* in a flexible space. Not only do they move in school or in formal community institutions, but, to my surprise, they left such formal spaces, moving **outside** and **crossing the boundary** to meet the parent in *his or her own house*. The “*My parent*” position is *personalized*, which means that the *alter* is specific and particular and that it is endowed with voices! And yet, these voices are heard, thus made expressive, because they are taken as resources for the stakeholders who agree to confront unfamiliarity (DST) and to grow from it. Moreover, the focus is placed on *informal* meetings with parents (e.g., the teachers met parents in the corridors of the school and the parents moved from one room to another). In this way, the corridor becomes a road and an informal meeting space between parents and stakeholders (teachers). However, the community's road is not represented (particularly in the discourse of teachers), at least I did not note it during the discourse analysis! I come to the conclusion that a representational zone does not include all of the environmental elements.

### **Conclusion: Toward Invisibility of the Position's Space**

Using DST to extend SRT's concept of anchoring—both with respect to the spatial situation of the representers and of the *alter*—enables me to display some theoretical zones that are present but invisible in Moscovici's theory. In effect, the dynamic aspect of this theory is “there”—as I was able to find—and yet it is “not there” in that it is rendered invisible (remaining in the dark) by the static aspect of this theory.

## EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

The former aspect needed to be found. For this reason, I feel like a sea explorer venturing into a storm, in which DST is my lighthouse. It sheds light on the fog (dark) and makes the iceberg (static entity concepts) visible so that I can “walk” around it and move into the strong current and the flow (concepts related to environmental flexibility and dynamism).

It seems that many researchers step onto (anchoring) the iceberg, trying to quickly find a home. They become so anchored in this (static) territory that they lose perspective: their ground is invisible (not there)—either because it is too close to them or because it is hard to see what is right under their feet—and the sea is near (there) but its flow is inaccessible (not there; if they stay on the land). So, they need a boat to venture in the flow (sea/ocean), accepting the uncertainty that comes with the experience of travelling. This experience could be applied when moving from a disciplinary approach to an interdisciplinary approach (going in-between).

In this paper, I sail between SRT and DST using the latter as a boat to venture in SRT’s territory. But I also expand the latter by referring to DST’s territory. Here, by navigating the sea (situating myself between the theories), I do not only find an island, I also created one through expansion (theoretical extension). Since I am now on my feet, let’s take a more pragmatic narrative approach: DST helps me make sense of SRT’s dynamic aspect around the subject’s and the *alter*’s relationship with space, place it at the forefront and extend it. From a dialogical stance, both from a methodological (Figure 3) and theoretical perspective, I shed light on the interdependency between the subject’s relationship with space and the way it anchors the *alter* in the environment. Personal anchoring occurs when the stakeholders personalize the environment that is composed of flexible zones and venture outside of their familiar house and zone. Here the unfamiliar space is constructive and allows for subject and *alter* expressivity.

While I have discovered and generally built new territory, the horizon is still far, and as mentioned at the end of the last section, certain zones remain invisible. So I am left with a question: Why don’t I observe the stakeholders using either the parents’ house or informal community spaces (e.g., roads, sidewalks or the kindergarten parking lot where parents and stakeholders meet) as anchors? This question suggests that the relationship between the subject and the *alter* is not fully dialogical.

It seems that anchoring (SRT) and positioning (DST) remain partly grounded in a static logic. I can think that anchors and positions are thick points of reference—associated with an entity conception of space—as expressed in the “repertory of the Self” that does not contain holes. While this zone is extensive, there is a clear demarcation and distribution of positions, and no exploitation of the white and empty background (Figure 1), which is their environment. Maybe the community’s road and the kindergarten parking lot are absent from the researchers’ map identifying the repertory of the subjects’ Self.

## BOULANGER

To change my anchors and positions in a way to adopt those of the *alter* would probably imply not only their redistribution—by means of movement—in space, but also the reframing of this very environment by exploiting both the visible and the invisible. In this way, not only would I (and my position) have to move outside to meet the *alter* in his or her house, but also would my space *expand* (through the invisible space between school and family) to “include” this house. If not, everything risks remaining the same when I return to *my* house. But, if my space expands, does the *alter* necessarily have to welcome me? The invisible zones we identify in this conclusion in addition to this article, suggest the need to expand my theoretical avenues to include topics such as invisibility, space expansion, intersubjectivity, and resistance (the *alter* resisting to my presence).

### References

- Adams, G., & Markus, H. R. (2001). Culture as patterns: An alternative approach to the problem of reification. *Culture & Psychology, 7*(3), 283–296.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1929/1970). *Problème de la poétique de Dostoïevski*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Paris, France: Édition du Seuil.
- Billig, M. (1988). Social representation, objectivation and anchoring: A rhetorical analysis. *Social Behaviour, 3*, 1–16.
- Billig, M. (2008). Social representations and repression: Examining the first formulations of Freud and Moscovici. *Journal of Theory and Social Behaviour, 38*(4), 355–368.
- Boulanger, D (2016). *Dynamiques représentationnelles à l'interface de l'école et de la famille* [Representational dynamics between school and family]. Germany: Éditions Universitaires Européennes.
- Boulanger, D. (2018). Parental engagement through the ecosystemic foundations of the field of school-family-community partnership: Toward a psychosocial, dialogical and developmental perspective. In G. Marsico & L. Tateo (Eds.), *The emergence of self in the educational contexts*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Branco, A. U., & Valsiner, J. (1997). Changing methodologies: A co-constructivist study of goal orientations in social interactions. *Psychology and Developing Societies, 9*(1), 35–64.
- Chaudhary, N. (2008). Persistent patterns in cultural negotiations of the self: Using dialogical self theory to understand Self-Other dynamics within culture. *International Journal for Dialogical Science, 3*(1), 9–30.

## EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

- Good, D. (1993). The problems of investigating social representations: Linguistic parallels. In G. M. Breakwell & D. V. Canter (Eds.), *Empirical approaches to social representations* (pp. 171–179). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Harré, R. (1984). Some reflections on the concept of “social representation”. *Social Research*, 51(4), 927–938.
- Harré, R. (1998). The epistemology of social representations. In W. Flick (Ed.), *The psychology of the social* (pp. 129–137). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hermans, H. (1996). Voicing the self: From information processing to dialogical interchange. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(1), 31–50.
- Hermans, H. (2001). The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning. *Culture & Psychology*, 7(3), 243–281.
- Hermans, H., & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2010). *Dialogical self theory. Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Hermans, H. J. M., & Kempen, H. J. G. (1993). *The dialogical self: Meaning as movement*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Howarth, A., Cornish, F., & Gillespie, A. (2015). Making community: Diversity, movement and interdependence. In G. Sammut, E. Andreouli, G. Gaskell & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of social representations* (pp. 179–192). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Jahoda, G. (1988). Critical notes and reflections on ‘social representations’. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 18, 195–209.
- Markovà, I. (2004). Langage et communication en psychologie sociale : dialoguer dans les *focus groups* [Language and communication in social psychology: Dialogue in focus groups]. *Bulletin de psychologie—Les groupes centrés (focus groups)*, 57(3), 231–289.
- McKinley, A., Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1993). Discourse analysis and social representations. In G. M. Wetherell & D. V. Canter (Eds.), *Empirical approaches to social representations* (pp. 134–156). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Moscovici, S. (1961). *La psychanalyse, son image, son public* [Psychoanalysis, its image and its public]. Paris, France: PUF.

## BOULANGER

- Moscovici, S. (2004). *La psychanalyse, son image, son public* [Psychoanalysis, its image and its public]. Paris, France: PUF. (Originally published 1976)
- Moscovici, S. (1984a). The phenomenon of social representations. In R. M. Farr & S. Moscovici (Eds.), *Social representations* (pp. 3–70). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Moscovici, S. (1984b). Le domaine de la psychologie sociale [The field of social psychology]. In S. Moscovici (Ed.), *Psychologie sociale* (pp. 5–20). Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Moscovici, S. (2008). *Psychoanalysis. Its image and its public*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- O’Sullivan-Lago, R. (2011). “I think they’re just the same as us”: Building solidarity across the Self/Other divide. *Papers on Social Representations*, 20, 3.1–3.27.
- Py, B. (2012). *La statistique sans formule mathématique* [Statistics without mathematical formulae] (2<sup>e</sup> ed.). Paris, France: Pearson Education.
- Rommetveit, R. (1968). *Words, meanings, and messages. Theory and experiments in psycholinguistics*. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Simmel, G. (1971). *On individuality and social forms*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Stetsenko, A. (2008). From relational ontology to transformative activist stance on development and learning: expanding Vygotsky’s (CHAT) project. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 3, 471–491.
- Valsiner, J. (1987). *Culture and the development of children’s action: A cultural-historical theory of developmental psychology*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Valsiner, J. (2003). Culture and its transfer: Ways of creating general knowledge through the study of cultural particulars. In W. J. Lonner, D. L. Dinnel, S. A. Hayes, & D. N. Sattler (Eds.), *Online readings in psychology and culture* (Unit 2, Chapter 12), Center for Cross-Cultural Research. Bellingham, WA: Western Washington University. Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/orpc/vol2/iss1/7/>
- Valsiner, J. (2014). *An invitation to cultural psychology*. London, UK: Sage Publishers.
- Valsiner, J., & Han, G. (2008). Where is culture within the dialogical perspectives on the self? *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 3(1), 1–8.

## EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

van Meijl, T. (2008). Culture and anthropology: Reflections on ‘unity’ and ‘uncertainty’ in the dialogical self. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 3(1), 165–190.

Zittoun, T. (2008). Learning through transitions: The role of institutions. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 23(2), 165–181.

BOULANGER

(This page left intentionally blank)

## A PLACE FOR SPACE?

Bo Allesøe Christensen  
Aalborg University, Denmark

Abstract. I will focus on the concept of space presented and used by Boulanger (2017) in his article combining a Moscovician social representation theory (SRT) with Hermans' dialogical self theory (DST). I argue that the notion of space used is somewhat incongruent with Boulanger's (2017) argumentation due to its (the concept of space used) natural scientific bias, and would need to be reworked by relating it to a notion of place instead. I am first going to present Boulanger's (2017) notion of space in relation to Moscovici then stating some worries about it, and lastly, conceive the concept of dynamic space as related to a dynamic place as well. While space connotes a geometric shape, like a form of space, hence the natural scientific bias, as well as something separate and unalterable from the living beings and stuff occupying this space, the notion of place emphasizes the dynamic interplay of subjects and space. So, while I agree with the presented criticism of Moscovici, and the use of DST, I would also emphasize relating space and place as providing us with a more nuanced way of addressing dynamic spatiality by understanding every moment of positioning as a normative matter involving the spatial aspect of objectivity, subjectivity and intersubjectivity. In general terms, subjects, by placing themselves or by being placed in a space, at the same time re-configure the whole space in which this placing is done. The last notion is more prone to be congruent with the dynamic notion of space needed to conceive the relation between subject and *alter*, than a separate and unalterable space.

Keywords: space, place, intersubjectivity

Boulanger (2017) begins by making a forceful critique of Moscovici, claiming that the latter presupposes a static conception of space in the way anchoring happens, thereby leaving no room for actually engaging with the *alter* but only with what is *conceived* as the *alter*. The reason is, according to Boulanger (2017) that Moscovici defines the process of anchoring as “situating an object in society in line with usual categories and social spaces (e.g., institutions)—with respect to certain structural zones within the relationship between the individual and the environment” (p. 10). Emphasis is here put on the word *usual*, which makes the relationship between the individual and the environment a matter of stability and continuity. Any conceptualization of how we understand things and the difference between them, then, is already being delineated by our anchoring (i.e., our structured meaning making processes), creating in the process impermeability between our internal and external world. Our conception of difference,

AUTHORS' NOTE. Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the author at [boallesoe@hum.aau.dk](mailto:boallesoe@hum.aau.dk)

of alterity, is, so to speak, familiar; there is a place for it in our conceptual structures. Due to the static conception of space, of the relationship between us and the environment, alterity is not really a part of our engagement with the world. We are, in a slightly altered phrase taken from John McDowell, living in a frictionless spinning in our own conceptual void, where what we are not, the world around us—alterity—fails to make a real difference. Alterity is only what we already are able to make of it, which Boulanger (2017) illustrates through the social representation of the psychoanalyst in Moscovici's famous study, to whom the French population has a relation about and not with. So in a nice phrase "if anchoring makes the invisible (unfamiliar, inaccessible) visible (familiar, accessible), then the static aspect of the anchors also makes the alter inaccessible" (p. 14). The alter is not allowed to speak, since the static space is objectifying and depersonalizing the alter allowing us to subsume "this" under already given categories (with "not subsumable" being yet another category). Understood this way, we never really engage in a dialogue with alterity, but only a monologue making the alter conform to us. So, when anchoring involves the object's meaning (i.e. the meaning of alterity) but this is solely determined by the representers, "how can the alter be signified, that is, rendered expressive and used for the (unfamiliar) resource it has to offer"? (p. 14). I take this to be the central question in the article, the answer depending on delineating a suitable notion of dynamic space, which Boulanger (2017) sketches combining the more dialogical oriented theory of Hermans with certain indications of a more dynamic approach also found in Moscovici.

To summarize: the problem, then, is: first, that social representations are static implying that the representers and the represented are already situated in a static space with a reification of both as a result; second, this keeps us from identifying exceptions as *real* differences, where the representers are able to situate themselves in a more openly manner, and the represented is rendered more expressive. So we need to emphasize the dynamic aspect of SRT "by highlighting the contextual and personal dimensions of the Self" (p. 16). This, I will claim later, creates a need to distinguish between the more abstract notion of space, and a more localized notion of place, as a sense of how space is used.

Boulanger's (2017) solution, which we will turn to now, actually retains the *same* notion of space, as I will claim, but seeks to add a dynamic component into it. This despite Boulanger actually uses the important distinction between an abstract and a more localized sense of space. The solution depends on a *decentralized* movement, reframing some of the principles governing Moscovici's work within an external theory, *in casu* Hermans, and a *centralized* movement by taking as a point of departure the dynamic aspect within Moscovici's theory itself. For Boulanger (2017), "[t]his makes manifest an open theoretical space, a *bridging framework*, conceiving the relation between self and *alter* in the midst of internal and external worlds by means of a dynamic positioning interplay" (p. 17). The interplay consists of an intermingling of

## A PLACE FOR SPACE?

personal and social positions, internalized in the Self as a complex relation between external and internal positions. This then paves the way for “conceiving the Self as a space in which tension exists between the *movements* of globalization and localization in the “society of the mind” (p. 20). Through these tensions, then, the Self is moving at the boundaries of different zones in dynamic interactions, actively engaging the *alter* in a dialogue (always with the possibility of ossifying into a monologue) made possible by a more dynamic conception of space. Reinterpreting Moscovici’s notion of anchoring would therefore mean conceiving it as “an open space for dialogue that sustains the reciprocal expressivity of the *representer* and the *alter* (the *represented*) through their movement of positioning within the internal and external worlds” (p. 24).

### Is This a Real Dynamic Space?

Now, as already indicated above I agree with Boulanger (2017) that Moscovici predominantly understands the process of social representations as involving a static conception of space, and Hermann’s DST could be one way of overcoming this. I will, however, voice one fundamental reservation, namely that Boulanger (2017) doesn’t change the conception of space but rather just installs a dynamic concept within it. In other words, the dynamic interplay between a decentralized and a centralized movement works within the same kind of *overall* space as conceived by Moscovici. This is a problem, because Boulanger (2017) would need the concept of place, in contrast to space, to develop the substantial and dynamic meaning connected with a *real* encounter with alterity.

I have already alluded to the lack of distinction between space and place, which I will return to below. This distinction is central in what has been termed the spatial turn in the humanities (see Warf and Arias 2009) with Tuan (1977) as an important precursor. Overall the distinction can be characterised as understanding space as something abstract, without any substantial meaning (and not without meaning *per se*). In contradistinction place is understood as involving peoples’ awareness and comprehension of, or attraction to a certain localisation of space. A place can be seen as a concrete space carrying a substantial meaning. I will bring out three relevant points from this distinction. First, this turn means understanding place as the condition through which relations between self, *alter* and objects appear *and* are understood as being dependent on each other. Second, space can be described as a “container” in which positions of self, *alter* and objects are related in an objectified and disengaged way. Indications of this in Boulanger’s (2017) article are describing the different positions through quantity, texture and dividing space into zones and a relation between global and local, with dynamic movement conceived as a relation between these spaces, as well as the two-dimensionality of the figures on pp. 23, 25, & 27 (replacing these with a three-dimensional picture, within which positions are pictured, would not make a difference). Third, positioning should instead be understood as *taking place*, connecting

the character of an event with concretely occupying and comprehending a location. The complex relation between something happening to one, another or the world, with the intentional taking of a stance towards it, should furthermore be understood as normative<sup>1</sup>. It comes, as Harré claims, with duties and rights, making someone or something taking place a site of contestation. In the following sections I will elucidate these points by using Malpas' (1999) and Harré's positioning theory, and after that return to Boulanger's (2017) argument for a reinterpretation using space/place.

### Space and Place

Defining precisely what is meant by space and place is notoriously difficult, and it doesn't make it easier that both are related to each other. However, as Malpas points out one particular semantic feature of place seems to be its connection with a sense of openness coming from the Latin *platea*, meaning broad way, and serving as the etymological backdrop for concepts like Italian *Piazza* or the German *Platz*. A place for living or dwelling is, in this sense "a place that provides a space in which dwelling can occur—it 'gives space' to the possibility of dwelling—and yet a place to dwell must be more than just a 'space' alone" (Malpas, 1999, p. 22). This *more than just space alone* denotes, in my understanding, the actual possibility of self and *alter* (and objects) to engage, by considering how this takes place. Imagine the difference between the two spaces, a small elevator with three persons and a dog versus two people walking on Victoria Square in Montreal, and what kinds of events these spaces allow. In both cases, we can accurately describe the features of the space, its three-dimensional extensions, how many objects there are, etc., but the total amount of variations of how these spaces are used, the relations of the positions and objects taken—coordinating the shifting of positions in the elevator without touching each other or getting bitten by the dog—will surpass our imagination. Furthermore, the three-dimensional description will say nothing of what actually *takes place* in the elevator or on Victoria Square.

So, in a first approximation space has something to do with territory, it is mappable and explorable, while place is more like occupation, it is lived and enlivened as well as dwelled in and on. At the same time, it is obviously that without space no place would exist, but place cannot be reduced to be a matter of space only. Realizing that I actually did whatever it is I did, as in the example in the footnote, this objectifying (spatial) attitude towards myself, is part of the possibility of repressing the memory or regretting what was done as taking place.

However, our philosophical history has for a long time emphasized space at the expense of place, modelling this space on three-dimensional extension, with place

---

<sup>1</sup> An example of this is understanding self-conception as involving a form of self-alienation: arriving at a concept of oneself at times involves abstracting from one's dealings with the world and others thereby taking a stance towards oneself as something "other than oneself." This is expressed, for example in the thought "Did I really do that?"

## A PLACE FOR SPACE?

*reduced* to the part of space a given body takes up. As Malpas (ibid, p. 26) explains, this was a result of a gradual development of thinking of space and place in terms of the concept of a void, the greek *kenon*, following in the wake of the movement of the self-understanding of human beings from, in Latin, *subjecta* to a more objectified *subjectum*. The former denoting being subject to something, a whole in which one understands one's place as meaningful, the latter denoting a sense of I over and against the "world," with the possibility of a void in between. It is the possibility of this void that brings with it the idea of a homogenous and undifferentiated realm of pure extension, a grand-sized container, when everything is abstracted from space. Placing things back in space, then, leaves us the possibility of describing both the position of a given thing, its place, through the coordinates of the three dimensions, as well as, with Newton and Leibniz, the movement of things through the use of the differential calculus. Place receives a secondary value being a derivative of spatiality, as in the words of Descartes cited from Malpas (1999), "[t]he difference between the terms 'place' and 'space' is that the former designates more explicitly the position, as opposed to the size or shape, while it is the size or shape that we are concentrating on when we talk of space" (p. 28).

The lack of discussion of place in Boulanger's (2017) article is simply, I take it, due to the fact, that within an understanding, or presupposition of space as extension, there is no need for a concept of place beyond the notion of a simple location of position, and with the movement of positions as the dynamic component. But what about the anchoring and the contextualization, are these not notions indicating the importance of place? On the one hand yes, they are emphasizing place as essentially involving subjective and psychological phenomena. But on the other hand these also denote something more like a responding to, or reacting towards the spatial location, a kind of orientation towards the world, thereby conjoining the idea of objective space with a psychological set of qualities, cognitive or emotional, in a dynamic interplay. This last point is alluded to in Boulanger's (2017) article through the excellent descriptions of the interplay between internal and external spatial worlds, but *not* by touching on how these concretely are to be connected at all, namely through something *taking place*. To put it another way, operating with a distinction between internal and external worlds are still too abstract, and needs to be complemented with localization, or place, as the condition on which the specific relation between the "zones" of internal and external can be instantiated. But what are the consequences of this for Boulanger's (2017) use of the notion of space? Before we address this, I will just underscore that what has just been said is congruent with the intention and description by Boulanger (2017) in his article. The above is not a critique of the overall argument of the article, but merely suggesting the need to consider a shift of focus from space towards incorporating place as an equally important theoretical and analytical focus.

### Positioning as Taking Place

Now, if my “diagnosis” above is correct, that the implicit understanding of space in Boulanger’s article is a conjoining of space as extension with a set of psychological qualities, we need to understand the complex relationship between space/place less as a geometrical three-dimensional and objective grid, and more like a normative grid instead. And this, I will claim, is part of the impetus for Harré and Langenhove’s argument for positioning theory. As Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010, p. 11) claim both positioning theory and dialogical self theory are interested in the role of language and communities, as well as the dynamics of positioning. Different accentuations exist between the two approaches, but nothing severe enough to make this comment’s inclusion of positioning theory obsolete.

In Harré and Langenhove (1999), positioning is conceived as a dynamic alternative to the more static concept of role thereby trying to capture a new social ontology for the social sciences. This involves rethinking the usual ‘substances’ of the social world, hence involving changing the concept of space as well. Allow me to quote a bit: “People tend to be treated as complex, causally interacting ‘things’ [...]. As thing-like substances each of them can be located in the Newtonian-Euclidian space/time grid of the natural world, just like natural entities and phenomena.” (ibid., p. 14) Harré and Langenhove’s point is that social phenomena of course always can be described through the use of a space/time grid, but that this might not be the most relevant way used to study these phenomena, especially when we consider how dialogues in a social context develop into dialogues within the Self. What replaces this grid then? Well, for Harré and Langenhove this involves understanding “persons as the locations of social acts. As a ‘space’, a set of possible and actual locations, the array of persons is not necessarily Euclidian” (ibid., p. 15). As is probably well-known, this serves as the background for unfolding positioning as a theory through the positioning triangle—comprising of position/act-action/storyline, a point we will not dwell on here. What will be emphasized here (in continuation of Harré and Langenhove’s approach) is, first, that persons are conceived as *locations*. How people *place* and are *placed* in relation to each other, or with a little fantasy in relation to oneself (think about standing in front of a mirror), is an important part of how the dialogue between people and within oneself takes place. Positions are, among other things, connected with certain ways of acting and expressing oneself, what is OK to say and do and what is not, and what one expects in the turn-taking of the conversation. This normativity is also manifested through the concrete location of people. To repeat what I said above, taking place has both the character of an event, the specific situation, as well as reflecting the concrete stance(s). Think of a discussion between two professors, one with arms crossed, the other gesticulating with both hands. Both professorial stances (involving and expressing cognitive and emotional dimensions) are enacted through the discourses connected to being a professor as well as the specific acts taking place in the particular situation.

## A PLACE FOR SPACE?

Furthermore, the specific location, in front of students or in the common room, is highly important for understanding how the specific dialogue and concurrent expressive actions unfold.

Second, a position is a complex between possible and actual locations. This corresponds to the openness connected with place as claimed above. The discussion just mentioned is obviously limited by the actual physical situation, one wall there, one door here, etc., each with their particular size. This would be part of the Newtonian grid, counting the elements involved, and again there would be a point in describing this in a geometrical manner. But in the actual situation, the location of the door and whether it is closed, open, locked or unlocked is more important than the size of it. Furthermore, there is also the complex of possible and actual gesticulations, of actions to do, of things to say. One of the professors might try to threaten the other, knowing very well that this would be a wrong thing to do. Within what he might do rightfully, a lot of possibilities are present as well, involving both imagination and anticipation. So, what is taking place is also related to the complex of what could happen and what do, in fact, happen. The overall point is, then, that when something takes place, it is related primarily to a dynamically unfolding normative space through persons as locations of acts and not an independent Newtonian grid. Through this normative space, the external and internal dialogues are related (persons as locations) and unfolds dynamically both through discourses and actual embodiments and interactions with the physical environment. Alterity, we might say then, involves a discrepancy between persons and their locations, internally as a sense of being misplaced, involving the alienation mentioned above, and externally as the discrepancy between what a person does and how this person is positioned. Instead of understanding this alterity as depersonalized and objectified, as was the critique of Moscovici above, alterity here expresses the possibility of learning of one's own positioning through the positioning of others. Alterity as conforming to the representer is therefore not, as within the static version of SRT, the primary relation, though positioning as this can occur as forced positioning or even malignant positioning (see Harré & Langenhove 1999, pp. 27-28).

The essence of the above is that if we appreciate that space is necessarily connected to the dynamics of place, and there is nothing peculiar about this, we might also be able to conceive the connections between place and the dialogue, between the multivoiced self and alter in a non-reductive manner. Place points towards space as not made up of separate entities/persons connecting, but understanding space as already permeated with normativity, hence the possibility of resistance, identity as well as intersubjectivity. And understanding Hermans and Harré as supplying each other (in developing Moscovici), combining the complexities of the dialogical self with conceiving these positionings as normative in nature. In the last section I will return to Boulanger's (2017) paper and try to interpret this in light of the above.

### Consequences

My discussion above can be seen as unfolding the decentralized trajectory Boulanger performs himself by using Hermans, but here using Harré instead. As I understand the centralized movement, it centralizes the decentralized movement by reconnecting with the original point of departure. This I will try to do briefly as a last thing here. To reiterate, the above is not so much a critique as considering the notion of place as a way of overcoming the, I claim, objectified Newton-like space which is still presupposed in Boulanger's (2017) article despite the effort of presenting a view incorporating a dynamic view on space.

As Boulanger notes in the conclusion while DST helps extending SRT, thereby making many of the representational spaces in the school-family relationship visible, some zones are still invisible. Why, asks Boulanger (2017), is the parking lot at the kindergarten not seen as an anchor for the stakeholders? And he answers that it seems that a static logic is still partly presupposed with positions and anchors associated to an entity conception of space, thereby making the parking lot absent “from the researchers’ map identifying the repertory of the subjects’ Self” (p. 29). This worry is exactly what the above considerations tried to address, seeing the parking lot just as an adjacent (and irrelevant) space to the kindergarten, within the map of the geographical region of the city where the kindergarten is located, and not as a place where interactions and communications with and about kids also take place. On a spatial view, the kindergarten and the parking lot are two adjacent and self-enclosed spaces. If we see them as places, the parking lot is instead *a different but related location* to the kindergarten, in both cases where actions and relations to people with kids can take place. It is different from the kindergarten, where people as locations of acts and discourses primarily is unfolded through the parents’ relations to children, their own included (of locating them, finishing playing, saying goodbye, putting on and finding clothes, using the restroom, etc.) as well as in engaging kindergarten teachers (how was the day, did anything happen, how was the weather, etc.), and speaking with other parents (establishing playdates, asking about common problems, etc.). All this is done with different kinds of normative involvements, with the kindergarten as the place—a picking-up-and-getting-information-about-kids-in-kindergarten kind of space. The parking lot, however, is much more like a departure space, getting the kids in the car and driving home. It is a transitory place with basically no other obligation in interaction than waving to and looking out for other parents and kids. You are expected to leave, not hanging around. However, it is related in the sense that information can be exchanged here as well. Mostly between parents addressing the kindergarten –in this sense it is a place for speaking of the kindergarten and not speaking to the kindergarten like above— or when the birthday party for one of the kids commences. In a spatial view the positioning of the parent, or the kids, are two nodes moving from the space of the kindergarten to a not-kindergarten related parking lot space. In a “patial” view, the positioning of the

## A PLACE FOR SPACE?

parents and kids are different but also related, the normative relations between parent and kid in the kindergarten and on the parking lot overlap in the sense that what is expected from a parent in relation to a child and vice versa is the same. But it is different also. The positioning of the child is moving from the kindergarten towards a more private sphere, with other kinds of expectations and perhaps obligations. Some duties in the home are different than in the kindergarten. The positioning of the parent is also different, how the relationship between parent and child is expressed speaking to one of the kindergarten teachers is different from the expression of the same through talking to one of the other parents in the parking lot. Here what is said, is mediated by the relationship between two parents, having a more private relation than between the parent and the kindergarten teacher. So, I conjecture that the reason why the parking lot isn't an anchor, is because it is considered a different kind of space than the kindergarten without considering how both are related places as well. Let this be the final example of the possibility of moving from considering space as objectified and depersonalized, to understanding space as different kinds of normativity taking place.

### References

- Boulanger, D. (2017). Extending social representation theory through dialogical self theory: Subjects' and *alter's* relating with space. *International Journal for Dialogical Sciences*, 10(2), 9-33.
- Harré, R., & Langenhove, L. van (1999). *Positioning theory*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Hermans, H., & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2010). *Dialogical self theory. Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalized society*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Malpas, J. (1999). *Place and experience. A philosophical topography*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Tuan, Y-Fu (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Warf, B. and Arias, S. (2009) *The Spatial Turn. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London, UK: Routledge.

CHRISTENSEN

(This page left deliberately blank)

## **COGNITIVE POLYPHASIA IN THE CONTEXT OF SYSTEMIC POWER AND SEMIOTIC POTENCY**

Maaris Raudsepp  
Tallinn University, Estonia

**Abstract.** Semiotic environment in the functional sense has dual effect on the subject: on the one hand, it directs and constrains the subject through collective semiotic forms (social representations), on the other hand—it provides symbolic resources for subject's self-determinative activity. This duality may be presented as a tension between systemic power and semiotic potency. Heterogeneity of semiosphere and multiplicity of subject's relations to the environment are the prerequisites to the phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia. It is possible to differentiate two forms of cognitive polyphasia: positional polyphasia and intra-positional polyphasia. In both forms of polyphasia the main challenges for a researcher are: 1) to describe and explain the effects of interaction of plural forms of knowledge in different contexts and 2) to explain the choice among the potential representational possibilities by a subject in his or her particular relationships with the environment. The social representation theory and the dialogical self theory can be used complementarily for solving these problems. Empirical illustrations are drawn from a study of trajectories of successive acculturation described in biographical interviews of elderly people. Variation of macro-contexts (different levels of normative pressure, monological vs heterodoxic/dialogical context) and specific social suggestions interact with semiotically potent subjects. Various strategies have been applied for coordinating incompatible representations and for maintaining the sense of agency in different contextual conditions. Both positional and intra-positional polyphasia is creatively used for regulating relations with the environment.

**Keywords:** cognitive polyphasia, holomorphism, holism

A “good dialogue” should be a learning experience that produces innovation, it should recognize and incorporate alterity, and acknowledge the unavoidable role of misunderstandings (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p.174). The social representation theory (SRT) and the dialogical self theory (DST) have the prerequisites for developing a good dialogue—there are similarities in both theories that allow to start a dialogue (e.g., holism and multiperspectivism), and there are differences that create the necessary dialogic tension (e.g., SRT is inspired by modernist ethos of the 1960s, whereas DST is inspired by postmodernist ethos of the 1990s). The research focus of SRT and DST is complementary, each suitable for solving different kinds of problems—

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the author at [maaris.raudsepp@tlu.ee](mailto:maaris.raudsepp@tlu.ee)

SRT dealing with the human meaningful environment (collective culture), and DST illuminating the intraindividual meaning making processes (personal culture). SRT describes collective culture as structured (“structuring structure”) and intrinsically related to group processes. The processes of personal culture—mechanisms with the help of which a person uses the system of social representations (social expectations, role prescriptions) for thinking about social objects and meaning making— is the focus in sociocultural approaches (including DST), which analyse phenomena arising from the interrelations between active individual and his culturally organized context. Both approaches (SRT and DST) agree that individual subject and his or her semiotic environment are mutually constitutive and dialogically related, applying the individual-socioecological frame of reference (Valsiner, 2007). In the paper I will use both theories for describing the dialogical relation between sociocultural environment and semiotically potent subject. Outcomes of this dialogue are individual responses to social suggestions, which may result in various forms of cognitive polyphasia.

Spatial metaphors for theoretical description of mind and sociocultural reality that Pierre Bourdieu (1991) calls the “social field” and Hubert Hermans (2002) the “cultural space” or “landscape of mind” allow me to describe the totality of respective objective and phenomenological realities and to elaborate on the metaphoric potential, using spatial terms like distance, direction, orientation, coordinates. In this article I will follow a metaphoric path in sociology and sociocultural psychology and try to synthesize theoretical views towards positioning at two levels: 1) objective location in some integrated wholes (sociocultural landscape and historical process): structural determinism; and 2) subjective positioning in the landscape of mind (*I*-positions, personal construction of meaning): individual semiotic potency.

### **Interrelated Layers of Reality**

Cognitive polyphasia like any other sociopsychological phenomenon results from the dialectical relationship between a dynamic system and its individual components. It consists of interrelated processes on three levels:

1. Processes in the *societal field*: configurations of social relations and relative location in the sociocultural landscape, the coordination of objective external and internalized structures (*habitus*).
2. Processes in the *shared representational field* (collective culture): the change of regulative principles and the hierarchy of representations, the “battle” of ideas and the repositioning in representational fields.
3. Processes in the *subjective meaning fields* of agents, both on the unreflective level (inertia of the *habitus*) and on the reflective level (taking positions in the landscape of mind), through the realization of semiotic potency.

Complementary theoretical models—relational sociology of Bourdieu and Elias, social representational approach, semiotic cultural psychology, DST—with similar methodological underpinnings—holism, relationalism and attention to dynamic aspect—help me to view these three levels as interdependent and complementary. Here I will focus on underpinnings of cognitive polyphasia on different levels of sociopsychological organization—on the level of societal field, in the field of social representations, and in the field of individual meanings.

### **Processes in the Societal Field: Systemic Power of Objective Configurations**

Spatial metaphor for describing social ontology has been used by Pierre Bourdieu (1991) who depicted the social world as a multi-dimensional space, differentiated into relatively autonomous fields of practice. Individuals occupy certain positions in these fields based on the amount and type of capital they possess. The field, as a “space of relations,” provides structure and guides the activities of its agents through sets of enduring dispositions (*habitus*), which in turn generate intentions and actions that reproduce the structural field. There is a structural isomorphism between field and *habitus*, and a dialectical relationship between macro and internalized (embodied) structures, both of which are objective, “albeit located at different ontological levels and subject to different laws of functioning” (Lizardo, 2004, p. 394).

*Habitus* is conceptualized as an emergent property of the social system, and therefore, fully deterministic and unavoidable. Consequently, an agent falls into *habitus* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and acquires system-specific patterns of perceiving, feeling, thought and behaviour, or a system of habits and dispositions without conscious effort. *Habitus*, as a system of durable dispositions, regulates strategies of action and meanings in the context of the experienced world. Being a generative structure, it has an “infinite capacity for generating products—thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions—whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions for its production” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 55).

Each *habitus*-related position determines a certain viewpoint, or vision of the social world: “Worldviews [...] are views taken from a certain point, that is from a given position within social [...] the vision that any agent has of space depends on his position in that space” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 130). This vision includes not only a “sense of one’s place,” (1991, p. 235) but also a “sense of others’ place,” (Ibid) as well as a sense of distance between these positions. In other words, it reflects a particular position in relation to the societal whole. All positions and respective viewpoints are relational. Although Bourdieu conceptualizes *habitus* as an open system that can be modified through experiences, he stresses the determinacy and stability of the synchronic relations of the *habitus*-field. Bourdieu’s theory enables describing the structural influence, external possibilities and limits of the field(s): how the political, social, and cultural field determine the possible positions the individual can adopt; how the

structure of the field transforms into the individual's habitus—durable dispositions guiding perception and activity, thereby reproducing the conditions that have given them shape.

Analogous relational social systemic constraints deriving from human beings' inevitable participation in dynamic networks of mutual interdependencies with shifting balance of power, have been described by Norbert Elias (Paulle et al., 2012). He demonstrates how these objective figurations as relational wholes shape social practices, shared ideas and self-control patterns among the participants. Figurational chains of interdependencies are “obscured,” invisible to the participants, but nonetheless powerful.

A specific kind of objective position—location in the temporal order—has been analysed in the framework of generations. According to Mannheim (1952), location of a generation in the socio-historical whole creates a specific field of opportunities and constraints. The common social and cultural context in formative years, a similar structure of opportunities during initial socialization, enables to form generational identity and generational consciousness in close birth cohorts. According to Mannheim “the unity of generations is constituted essentially by a similarity of location of a number of individuals in a social whole” (Mannheim, 1952, p. 290). Common location in historical time is an objective fact, irrespective of its acknowledgement and it necessarily forms similar generational major trends and background knowledge (generational habitus).

This layer of reality—system of societal relations—is most basic in relation to other layers—collective symbolic field and individual symbolic field. It is the level of objective interests, resources and barriers. Change in the configuration of relations or location in this field necessarily brings about changes in one's point of view, and any point of view can be kept stable by the stabilization of relations.

### **Processes in the Collective Symbolic Field: The Power of Ideas**

The semiotic level of the society, made up of the totality of meaningful practices and resources of the particular social system, has similar guiding and coercive power over the individual. In terms of dynamics, it could be described as the field of social representations (usually) implicitly or (in cases of conflicts, discussions, contact with the unfamiliar) explicitly guiding the individuals (Markova, 2003). In the broader sense, social representations create a common background of meaning for any interpersonal relations (shared understanding of reality, shared space of potential meanings) and in the narrower sense, serve as the basis for group identity and group world view.

SRT is a holistic model (e.g., Wagner & Hayes, 2005): systemic and hierarchically organized fields of social representations (shared meanings) contain all the symbolic resources that can be used for communication within groups and societies. This symbolic field provides shared intersubjective content and common dimensions of

## *A PLACE FOR SPACE?*

meaning, which form taken-for-granted objective meaning structure of one's culture, the so-called interobjectivity (Sammut et al., 2010). Individuals and groups may position themselves differently in relation to these dimensions, in accordance with the representations they use for constructing social objects and interpreting reality. Positioning is linked to a specific set of meaning-making, and meaning-stabilizing systems, which are revealed in beliefs, images, emotions, activities, lay theories, regulative ideas and other forms of collective thought and interaction (see Wagner et al., 2000).

Following Bourdieu's logic, Doise (1994) analyses social representations as implicit organizing principles ("structuring structures"). These abstract underlying principles (categories, dimensions, reference points) reflect the regulative influence of the social metasystem on cognitive functioning, and they organize symbolic relations between social agents. According to these principles, individuals or groups identify and differentiate themselves, choosing their relative positions within the representational field. These structures determine the symbolic space ("representational field"), which delimits the possible choices of symbolic positioning for members of a group. Diversity in the social field means that individuals position themselves differently, engaging with any phenomenon from a particular point of view relative to other agents (Clemence, 2001). Positioning in SRT is predominantly linked to identities—"Identity is first a social location, a space made available within the representational structures of the social world" (Duveen, 2001, p. 268)—and their dynamic interrelations.

Representational fields are not aggregates of elements but dynamic, heterogeneous and hierarchically organized systems. Therefore the positions within them are hierarchically differentiated (being dominant or dominated, central or peripheral) and systemically related (relations of conflict or compatibility). "If an individual or a group takes up one social position it is because there exists another one towards which this positioning is directed and to which it refers" (Elejabarrieta, 1994, p. 248). Taking a position implies entering into certain relations—domination, opposition, alliance, attraction, repulsion, etc.—with other positions.

Representational field is the arena for "battle of ideas for hegemony." The resulting temporary configuration of representations depends not only on the balance of societal forces behind the processes of concerted action and interaction, but also on the tactics of introduction of new ideas, for example, using different communicative genres in mass communication (Moscovici, 1961/2008) or intentional transformation of symbolic systems (Sen & Wagner, 2009). Societal change is accompanied by more or less radical changes in the collective representational field, which acts as a symbolic legitimation of the new social structure, thereby producing new hegemonic representations. At the same time, older layers of representations are preserved in subordinate positions. The contemporary meaningful world is heterogeneous and polyphonic: various representations and rationalities from different cultural and

historical contexts—competing and even contradictory versions of reality—co-exist and interact with each other.

Comparing the notions of habitus and social representation, Wagner & Hayes (2005) point to crucial differences: habitus is a pre-reflective, non-discursive and inarticulate system of dispositions, while social representations are discursive, always potentially verbalized, and actively used in communication. Habitus cannot be communicated, argued, debated, or negotiated, however social representations are inherently communicative, as they emerge and evolve through discourse and argument. In other words, while habitus represents a pre-reflective level of basic habitual tendencies, social representations function predominantly on a reflective, semiotic level. Representational fields generate explicit and implicit *social suggestions* (Valsiner, 1998) that guide the actions of social subjects. In the unreflective form, habitus and social representations function as an irresistible and coercive power. Both the habitus (the interpretive horizon of the practical consciousness) and social representations (systems of thought supporting a certain social order) create an interobjective reality (Sammut et al., 2010) reproduced as a routine and predictable social order.

Thus, we can distinguish two levels of social guidance: the societal field guides its agents via an inert and unreflective habitus; and the more dynamic representational field guides social subjects with the help of social suggestions. Person-environment relations are mediated by a person's relatively stable and unreflective location in the societal field of objective relations, and his or her more reflective and negotiable positioning in the representational field of collective meanings.

### **Processes on Individual Symbolic Fields: Semiotic Potency**

In addition to objective structural and representational fields, the personal symbolic field of each individual provides additional possibilities of positioning. The ability to construct unique personal symbolic fields and to change positions within them are distinctive of human beings. As a result, there is lack of isomorphism between collective and personal cultures. Each individual is unique, while at the same time being influenced by the common collective culture (Valsiner, 2008).

There are bidirectional relations between the individual and the structures of which he or she is a part. On the one hand, an agent is influenced by the structure of fields and the configuration of forces within them (leading to the formation of a certain habitus); however, he or she has potency to choose semiotic tools (available forms of culture) for regulating their activity.

Field/configurations and habitus provide structural constraints on individual choices of activity. The essentially semiotic character of psychological functioning, using signs and symbols as cultural tools for creating meanings, and using these meanings in the regulation of individual experience, behaviour, and relationships to

reality, forms the basis of individual semiotic potency. The semiotic level entails higher psychological functions that regulate people's reactions after the initial habitual reaction has occurred.

Semiotic mediation is the basis for personal agency. With the help of self-(re)constructed semiotic tools (interpretation of the situation, meaning making) a person can transcend immediate contexts. The modification of distance from the present situation—from maximal distancing to total immersion—constitutes a flexible resource for the personality (Valsiner, 1998). Distancing allows for self-reflection and the retention of personal autonomy.

Semiotic self-regulation takes place through a variety of mechanisms: selective attention towards social suggestions (ignoring directions that are contradictory or impractical from the subject's perspective); using cultural forms as personal resources of meaning (e.g., following the example of literary characters in making sense of and planning one's life; see Zittoun, 2007); dialogical positioning; the choice of *I*-positions; or perspectives in symbolic fields (e.g., "I as an observer or as an actor," see Hermans, 2010 and Raggatt, 2007); the creation of self-models shaping identification that the subjects (e.g., cultures) use to interpret the situation. Any cultural object can become symbolic resources for an individual or a group if it is used for a certain purpose, including it in a system of social representations or a discourse important to the group.

Valsiner (1998) describes the phenomenon of "dependent independence" as a situation where an individual, confronting a system of structural (external and internal) constraints created by the social metasystem and habitus, is relatively free to construct his or her own system of meaning, strategies of action, and beliefs. He or she is dependently independent of the environment. The external system of semiotic resources consists of general guiding principles (redundant cultural messages, patchwork of social suggestions) that channel (direct) and constrain (determine) the range of individual choices in particular situations. Sociocultural constraints provide general principles that organize individual cognition and behaviour.

Semiotic potency in personal culture may be realized by resisting external pressures: "Culture (as the system of semiotic operators) guarantees that any person would be ready to resist and counteract social suggestions by the environment" (Valsiner, 2008, p. 279).

Personal semiotic potency may be realized via different means:

- Through the regulation of distance from the immediate situation or social suggestions.
- By constructing/choosing/changing a semiotic field or representational context.

- Through personal (re)positioning within that field, or shifting one's perspective, constructing different *I*-positions.

An individual can modify his or her position in relation to the sociocultural context along various dimensions, the most general being *distance* and *direction*, for example, between being “in” or “out” of the situation, playing different roles, utilizing different tonalities (playful, ironic, provocative...). One may also choose to be regulated by another representational field. Zittoun (2007) argues that the heterogeneity of social knowledge can be used as a resource for personal adaptation. A person may guide and constrain himself or herself through a self-selected semiotic system, borrowed from the semiosphere. The capacity of semiotic potency creates the flexibility for social agents in relation to social influence.

Thus the power of habitus and the power of ideas are not realized through one-sided social determinism, but engage in dialogical relationship with semiotically potent subjects. Configuration of forces and positioning in the social field, as well as the “structuring structure” of the representational field direct and constrain individual meaning making: *I*-positions speak through social representations and stage their inner dramas within the limits of “domesticated worlds” of social representing (Wagner & Hayes, 2005), which are structured according to the organizing principles of some socio-symbolic whole: systems of practice (Shove et al., 2012), figured worlds (Holland, 2010), discourses. Personal positioning may be understood as freedom and duty: The translation of macrosocial influence (general meanings, social suggestions) into the concrete situations, activities and tasks, with which an individual is engaged, and the coordination of macro- and micro-levels. Taking a position means establishing some relationship with the representational whole and other elements within it. There is a potentially limitless number of semiotic contexts, each of which has specific affordances, obstacles and opportunities for the agent, and each of which provides tools for self-regulation and the construction of meaning. The indeterminacy of subjective positioning requires interpretative efforts from external observers or partners of interaction.

### **Heterogeneity of Meaning Fields and Positions**

Heterogeneity of semiosphere and multiplicity of subject's relations to the environment are the prerequisites to the phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia—coexistence of various (and possibly mutually conflicting) forms of knowledge, discourses and practices.

With the growth of knowledge and social division we have all become polyglots. Besides French, English or Russian we speak medical, psychological, technical political languages, etc. We are probably witnessing an analogous phenomenon about thought. In a global manner one can say that the dynamic coexistence—interference or specialization—of the distinct modalities of

## *A PLACE FOR SPACE?*

knowledge, corresponding to definite relations between man and his environment, determines a state of cognitive polyphasia [...]. Operative or formal judgements habitually represent one of these dominant terms in a field of personal and group preoccupations, while playing a subordinate role elsewhere (Moscovici, 1976/2008, pp. 190-191).

Human semiotic activity (at cultural, group, and individual levels) can potentially produce an infinite variety of meaning systems. The contemporary meaningful world is heterogeneous and polyphonic: various representations and rationalities from different cultural and historical contexts—competing and even contradictory versions of reality—coexist and interact with each other.

Heterogeneity of meaning fields can be described along different lines observing the coexistences of

- temporally distinguished—old and new meaning complexes, e.g. traditional, modern and postmodern self (Hermans, 2010);
- meaning complexes that are related to different spheres of activity (e.g., pragmatic, symbolic, scientific, aesthetic, recreational, spiritual, ethical, emotional, aspects of meaning);
- different modalities in relation to the world (e.g., communicative genres in Bakhtin's sense);
- different levels of reflexivity;
- various expressions of meaning (behavioural, discursive, symbolic).

The representational diversity described above implies the diversity of possible positions in social and cultural fields. Distinguishing social and personal positions reflects not only different degrees of constancy but also different mechanisms of positioning. Most stable and inflexible are socio-political positions (class, ethnicity, gender, and other stable social identities), more transient and ephemeral are discursive positions (distribution of mutual roles in dialogue). Potentially the most flexible are personal positions (inner play of the what-if game, for example “I as ACTOR” versus “I as OBSERVER”). Macrosocial systemic determinants are more important in social positioning, individual semiotic activity is crucial in personal positioning.

Mechanisms of personal positioning are elaborated in the DST, described as a dynamic multiplicity of *I*-positions in the landscape of mind (Hermans, 2001, 2002). Peter Raggatt (2007) has made an attempt to classify the positionings in the dialogical self (DS). He distinguishes between 1) personal positioning, expressed by personified roles (for example, hero versus villain, happy self versus sad self), and 2) social positioning, which may be discursive (positioning within dialogue), institutional (family, work roles), or socio-political (class, ethnic, gender categories). Each position in the objective

sociocultural space or subjective landscape of mind provides a specific view of that space (Bourdieu, 1990); each position affords a unique perspective, providing the person with different sets of cultural resources. Positioning implies the dialectics of constancy and change: each individual has a unique and fixed existential position (Bakhtin, 1986), to which particular social and symbolic positions are added.

### **Positional Polyphasia: Manoeuvres in the Representational Field**

Moscovici (1961, 2008) uses the term cognitive polyphasia to denote various forms of thinking and speaking about the same phenomena. Depending on the task or activity, different relations to an object and other subjects, a member of society can use different social representations of the same object.

I propose to differentiate two levels of cognitive polyphasia: positional polyphasia and intra-positional polyphasia.

Positional polyphasia stems from a plurality of representations corresponding to various individual and group positions in the societal or communicative field—complementary roles in communication (Gillespie & Martin, 2014), multiple group affiliations, variability of tasks and contexts, variety of intentions in relation to objects and other subjects. Intrapsychically positional polyphasia is represented as mutual *I*-positions in the DS. Positional polyphasia can be analysed on synchronic or diachronic levels. Synchronic polyphasia stems from navigating within the forms of knowledge coexisting on the representational field. Diachronic polyphasia introduces the time dimension—applying historically, biographically or developmentally preceding forms of knowledge. Varieties of positioning theories—psychological positioning within the Self (Hermans, 2010), discursive positioning (Harre, 2012), position exchange theory (Gillespie & Martin, 2014)—point to complexes of interdependent social positions in society and possibility of (mutual) position exchange and movement between positions. Cognitive polyphasia is often conceptualized as a resource for various tasks and conditions (Jovchelovitch, 2015). Representational whole is a dynamic reservoir of multiple representations and rationalities. Although the components of cognitive polyphasia may represent different (or even contradictory) systems of knowledge/rationalities, they are united within the same representational field. Only common organizing principles (Doise, 1994) enable them to relate to each other.

Positional polyphasia can realize its potential if it relies on some social reflexivity—image of the whole a position is part of. The whole may be a society, grasped by sociological imagination (Mills, 1959), relevant representational field, grasped by holomorphic representation (Wagner & Hayes, 2005) or micro-semantic field (Salvatore & Venuelo, 2013)—any relevant pattern of coexisting elements. Image of the whole is necessary for orientation in the field: it enables to locate oneself in relation to others and to grasp the universe of options that are simultaneously offered for meaning making.

Holomorphic meta-representations enable to understand the pattern of the whole semiotic field and thus to determine whether a representation is located in the centre or periphery, whether it is hegemonic or polemical, but also to understand the underlying logic of other actors in the society (Wagner & Hayes, 2005). So a competent participant of a culture or member of a community has some necessary knowledge about the representational systems of other groups whom he or she encounters. Representational field acts as an integrated whole and each of its individual participant has some access to this holism. Competent, semi-competent and incompetent members of a community can be differentiated according to the relative adequacy of their holomorphic representations. Each position entails specific point of view and hence has specific bias in meta-representations. Imagined representational whole functions as a context of potentialities to any actualized representation: it provides both imagined opposites (polemic representation) and imagined allies (positionally close but different representations). Positional polyphasia reflects the ability to navigate in various representational field and use collective symbolic resources for solving particular problems in certain relationships to the environment.

#### **Intra-Positional Polyphasia: Manoeuvres in the Subjective Field**

There are multiple variants of performing a position: more or less professionally, in different affective mode, in particular style, with different intensities, in different genres and styles of speech and action (e.g., playfully, dramatically; using humour and irony, romanticizing or poeticizing the reality through elevated style).

Dialogical self theory explicitly considers personal positions and social positions (roles) as interconnected elements of the self as a society of mind. Whereas social positions reflect the way the self is subjected to social expectations and role-prescriptions, personal positions leave room for the many ways in which the individual responds to such expectations from his own point of view and for the various ways in which the individual fashions, stylizes, **and personalizes them** (Hermans, 2010, p. 76).<sup>1</sup>

I understand **intra-positional polyphasia** as a potential for multiple ways of performing the same positional role. Plurality of mental formations, speech genres, word meanings, etc., co-exist as potentialities to *play various keys of the mental organ* (Moscovici, 2014) for an actor in a given position. Here I will not analyse such stylistic intra-positional polyphasia but apply a more formal approach.

Changes in the societal environment introduce new rules and constraints, which can lead to tensions between new and old representations, field and habitus. Thus, cognitive polyphasia is inherent to any social change. It emerges both on the levels of social relations and the representational field, in tensions between different positions in

---

<sup>1</sup> The emphasis (bold) is mine.

a field—horizontal cognitive polyphasia (CP)—but also in the tension between social suggestions and individual (vertical CP). Perceived tensions require a person to choose personal positions in the new whole. The process involves dialogue between the active person and the diverse collective-cultural suggestions, in which the individual chooses a response mode, e.g. buffering, neutralization, ignoring, transforming, or evaluating social suggestions (Valsiner, 1998, pp. 393-394), manoeuvring in relation to discursive practices—playing with them, resisting them, circumventing them, etc. On the one hand, there is more or less explicit social guidance in the form of heterogeneous social suggestions, while on the other, a person actively constructs meanings and conforms or counteracts to (re)socialization efforts. Each social regulator creates at least two possibilities for the agent: to follow the regulation or to transgress it. The open system approach and the concept of semiotic potency imply that within given constraints there is always a range of alternative semiotically mediated responses to any social suggestion (Valsiner, 2007).

In order to formally describe the semiotic transformations of external influence into subjective response, social suggestions can be described as vectors that can be characterized by their direction and strength (Valsiner, 2007). This enables to define possible variability of subjective responses as the result of semiotic modification of direction and distance. Intra-positional manoeuvres can be classified according to their: 1) directionality in relation to the basic choice between acceptance or rejection; and 2) the symbolic modification of distance (between total immersion and rejection). In terms of the modification of distance and directionality, I can differentiate modes of denial (related to distance maximizing), modes of acceptance (convergent directionality of responses), modes of resistance (counter-directionality of responses), and creative transformation (creating new direction of regulators). These basic positions may be regarded as structural basis (“skeleton”) for various figurative forms that different *I*-positions can take. Accepting, resisting, escaping and innovating *I*-positions are relational, always constructed in relation to some external semiotic influence (social suggestions) or other *I*-positions.

The following describes some relatively stable response modes in relation to social suggestions (basic relational positions) (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
Semiotic Transformations Leading to Basic Relational Positions

Modification of direction	Modification of distance	
	<i>Minimization</i>	<i>Maximization</i>
<i>Same</i>	Acceptance, appropriation, compliance, submissiveness, resonance	Pretence, detachment
<i>Opposite</i>	Opposition, negation, resistance	Exit, denial, escape
<i>New</i>	Innovation, creative transformation	

This typology has much in common with empirical classifications of adaptation to coercive external influence (e.g., Riesman, 1950, Sztompka, 2004, Todd, 2005, Hirschman, 1970, Castells, 1997). Such kind of intra-positional polyphasia can be described as a plurality of potential vectors of response to social suggestions—distancing, resistance, compliance and creative synthesis are perspectives that are generated in the dialogue between external catalysers and the subject.

#### Modification of distance

Distancing is the central operation of semiotic transformation, it is the basis for reflectivity and semiotic potency (Valsiner, 2007, p. 33). Self-distancing in the third dimension, placing oneself above the plane of other positions is conceptualized as taking a *meta-position*. Bakhtin (1994 used the term *vnenahodimost* (temporal, spatial and meaning-related outsidedness) as a viewpoint of the author and a reader that integrates all other viewpoints in a novel. Hermans (2010) uses the concept of meta-position as a reflective act of “taking a distance from other positions and reaching some overarching view from which the specific positions are considered in their interconnections” (p. 151). Such meta-position may have unifying, executive, and liberating functions:

As *unifying* it brings together different and even opposed positions so that their organization and mutual linkages become clear. In its *executive* function, it creates a basis for decision making and directions in life that lead to actions that profit from its support from a broader array of specific positions. As *liberating*, it acts as a stop signal for automatic and habitual behavior arising from ordinary and well-established positions. Considering them from the broader perspective of a meta-position increases the chances for innovation of significant parts of the self (Hermans, 2010, p. 151).

Reflective distancing may be performed both in relation to social suggestions and in relation to habitus (see Hilgers, 2009; Adams, 2006), thus it is a means for ignoring systemic power, for releasing oneself from its imperative power (even for a moment, even imaginatively). But distancing from the power of a particular system is at the same time self-positioning under the influence of some other systems.

An example of distance maximization with keeping the orientation of social suggestions, may be the phenomenon of “performative conformism” during late socialism—people performed speech acts and rituals as a reproduction of social norms, positions, relations and institutions, reproducing themselves as a “normal” Soviet persons without being personally attached to these (Yurchak, 2005).

Maximal distancing may take the form of ignoring the novelty, or social suggestion altogether (inattention), taking the position of an unengaged spectator, or vice versa—playing the role of hyper-engagement (Jaroslav Hasek’s literary hero “the good soldier Schweik” is a good example here).

**Total denial** may be realized in exit, retreat, withdrawal, or physical repositioning (emigration). In Bourdieusian terms, it means leaving the field, denial of the game, or choosing another field. On the representational field, such distancing may take the form of absolute intolerance or erecting semantic barriers in relation to the novelty (cf. Gillespie, 2008).

**Partial denial**, remaining in the field but isolating oneself, may take the form of “inner emigration,” self-isolation, preserving the old habitus in the changed field, or the survival of old representations and patterns of behaviour. The external field may change, however, a person preserves his or her inner position in previous or alternative fields, which represent islands of previous mindset in the changed conditions. Hysteresis, inertia of mindset, describes this response mode on the non-reflective level. On the reflective level, a person may consciously try to preserve the old meaning complexes as opposed to changing them.

### **Modification of orientation**

#### ***Negation***

Choosing a response in the opposite direction of a social suggestion results in various modes of resistance, including: expressing dissatisfaction, breaking norms, or following counter-norms/regulations, creating counter-positions, etc. On the non-reflective level, we can speak about “resistance or protest habitus,” an unconscious tendency to oppose any change or to exhibit power in the form of rigid and strong external pressure. Resistance may arise from the incompatibility of social suggestions with the existing habitus (identity). Personal unreflective resistance may be a response to excessive semiotic abundance (“semiotic over-determination”) in the environment: automatic affective resistance can be expressed as ignoring omnipresent advertisements or rejecting

## *A PLACE FOR SPACE?*

monotonously repetitive social suggestions (cf. Valsiner, 2008a). On the reflective level, resistance requires semiotic scaffolding created through argumentation and historical examples (e.g., various forms of civil disobedience).

### ***Acceptance***

In terms of directionality, this response mode converges with the social suggestion. The modification of distance may take the form of amplification or reduction of the social suggestion. Examples of this strategy are the trusting acceptance of the changed sociocultural reality through reinterpretation of one's own position and the positions of others; anchoring new social representation in the existing system of representations, or the adoption of new hegemonic ideas (and "forgetting" previous ones). Compliance, conformity, conversion, obedience, stoic acceptance, and humble submission may be various forms of this response mode.

In a non-reflective form, it describes the situation where habitus coincides with the external structure. In this scenario, the world seems to be "normal," and has a taken-for-granted quality. When changes are smooth and slow, they do not provoke unreflective resistance; people begin to realize only gradually that something radical has changed in the guiding social principles. On the reflective level, this mode of response may include calculated acceptance or opportunism. But compliance may also be an active choice: "The person can, actively, take the role of "passive recipient" of cultural messages. This entails direct acceptance of "cultural messages" as givens, without modifications. By active construction of the role of "passive recipient" the person temporarily aligns oneself with the 'powerful others'" (Valsiner, 1994, p. 255). Kafka's literary hero K. (from *The Castle*) represents such total obedience (Kundera, 1998).

### **Modification of distance and orientation.**

### ***Creative synthesis***

This is one of the mechanisms enabling cognitive polyphasia. Creative synthesis involves some form of transformation—bringing together different influences (different rationalities, old and new social suggestions, treated as dialectical oppositions), through mutual dialogical modification. Such social inventiveness may lead to the construction of hybrid (higher order) affiliations and identities, create new understandings, transform social rules, roles and practices. Jovchelovitch and Riego-Hernandez (2015) present a typology of cognitive polyphasia by differentiating three main strategies in situations of contact between diverse knowledge systems. In case of *selective prevalence* multiple knowledge systems co-exist and are retrieved separately in opportune contexts. *Hybridization* mixes and synthesizes something new out of multiple knowledge systems.

Dialectical solution of the tension between different (and oppositional) social suggestions or perspectives is possible by transcending across the boundaries of the seeming dilemma to a meta-level. Hermans (2010) describes the construction of a third position in which two other positions merge or fuse, thereby conciliating their conflict. This adjustment mode realizes most visibly the generative and creative potential of habitus-producing social inventions and innovations, on the one hand, and semiotic potency, on the other. Choosing this option, an agent is relatively free to modulate both distance and directionality of his or her response to social suggestions and ultimately creates novelty in self-regulatory symbolic tools.

Lotman (1998) has described two possibilities for the integration of divergent systems: 1) creolization (mixing) and 2) creation of a third, metasystem. In the first case, the principles of one language deeply influence another despite the completely different nature of their grammars. In its actual functioning, this is imperceptible to the subject's internal point of view and the hybrid system is perceived as single whole. The creation of hybrid identities, multicultural orientation and dialogue between different perspectives (Kasulis, 2002), as well as increasing the diversity of representational fields (Zittoun et al., 2003) are some examples of strategies based on creolization.

Different strategies may be used in parallel in different spheres of activity and situations. People may resist changes in one field and express complicity in another, there may be different levels of rigidity or flexibility and various dynamics of positions. In the context of DS, there may be dialogues (or lack thereof) between the "conformist self" and the "resistant self" within the same person. The presented scheme of intra-positional manoeuvres gives us an image of realized and unrealized options (actual and possible trajectories) of an individual in his or her dialogue with sociocultural context. In the intrasubjective sphere concrete *I*-positions are built upon this "semiotic skeleton" of distance and orientation modification, using available symbolic resources. Any of the resulting positions realized by social subjects feed back into the sociocultural system, promoting either its stabilization (through compliance and resistance) or change (through innovations). Each position in the societal and symbolic fields contains intra-positional polyphasia.

### **Conditions and Mechanisms of Specific Intra-Positional Manoeuvres**

Mapping the space of possible intra-positional manoeuvres tells us little about the dynamics and mechanisms behind it. In both forms of polyphasia the main challenges for a researcher are: 1) to describe and explain the effects of interaction of plural forms of knowledge in different contexts and 2) to explain the choice among the potential representational possibilities by a subject in his or her particular relationships with the environment. Moscovici (2014) describes the issue with the metaphor of choosing the right keyboard of the mental organ:

## *A PLACE FOR SPACE?*

On this topic, I have previously mentioned cognitive polyphasia [...], the power which we have to play various keys of the mental organ. It is so much an issue of choosing the right keyboard, by leaving aside that which is not, as it is a matter of changing the links between them and to elect the domain in which each is the most efficient (p. 777).

Generally speaking, the choice of a specific manoeuvre stems from the interaction between unreflective and reflective levels of regulation, structural and symbolic opportunities and constraints, and agentic choice. We can suppose that similar external patterns of response (e.g., resistance) are produced by different inner activities and mechanisms—e.g., habitual unconscious dispositions and/or conscious deliberate choice between various alternatives, which depend on the intentions of the subject and available range of interpretative perspectives.

Combinations of structure (high vs low control) and agency (high vs low resources), as depicted in a typology of socialization conditions by Rosengren (1997), may be relevant as a catalyst for specific response modes. For example, exit response is related to the combination of high structural control with high level of agentic resources, whereas accepting response is related to the combination of low resources and high structural control. Tania Zittoun (2007, 2013) has accentuated the role of semiotic resources and sociocultural imagination in enhancing personal potency.

Structural control is related to relation of positional asymmetry (power ratio) and its representation in the symbolic field. Norbert Elias (Paulle et al., 2012) stressed that the scope of agency in any situation is a matter of the prevailing power relations between interdependent people. Differentiation of hegemonic, polemic and emancipatory modes of representations (Moscovici, 1984) refers to different levels of “power of ideas” in relation to agents with specific positions. Hegemonic representations are presented in public space as natural and self-evident, exerting their symbolic power by shaping the perception of social reality according to the interests and habitus of the dominant groups. It requires effort to become aware of their invisible power. Another difference in symbolic power stems from “developmental maturity” of collective ideas: in their trajectory of development social objects may be in “liquid” form, enabling pluralism, multiplicity of positions and dialogue; after passing to reified (institutionalized) form, social representations tend towards monologization and suppression of alternatives (Wagner et al., 2008), evidently increasing their symbolic power. The “weight” or “valence” of particular social representations for a person in a given situation depends on the external force and resonance with personal emotional trajectory (Zittoun, 2013). A very specific environment is formed by hetero-referential representations (Sen, 2012) of antagonistic groups, which catalyse rigid patterns of compliance (with in-group position) and opposition (to the outgroup).

Different combinations of these distance and orientation modification modes may be variously thematized in the collective culture. Taking the form of dialogical oppositions

that give structure to public debate (e.g., obedience-rebellion, participation-distancing) they become a basis for social representations (see Markova, 2003, p. 185) and thus provide an additional symbolic resource for individual meaning making (e.g., resistance narratives and prototypes). Another group of factors, influencing the response mode may be forms of communication (monological vs dialogical, diffusion vs propaganda) and behavioural styles (relations of constraint vs relations of co-operation—see Psaltis, 2012).

### **An Empirical Illustration: Long Life Trajectories and Personal Adaptation Strategies**

Traditionally acculturation has been conceptualized as a relatively short-term process that accompanies contacts between representatives of different cultures (Berry, 2003). Here acculturation has been studied diachronically, as a life-long process of adaptation to different socio-political regimes as qualitatively distinct systems of social suggestions. Divergence in the content of successive hegemonic representations and social suggestions is a fertile ground for cognitive polyphasia. The aim of the study (Raudsepp, 2016) was to describe retrospectively such systems and their succession from the viewpoint of individual agents. How do people perceive the conflict of relevant social suggestions of different regimes? Which strategies were used in circumstances of the clash between divergent social suggestions? How do the research participants use sociological imagination (Mills, 1959) by relating particular life trajectory to societal whole?

The empirical material consists of biographical interviews and autobiographical manuscripts. The focus is on the vital people over 80 years of age whose conscious life started in the pre-war Estonia and who have lived through various political regimes and transitional periods with different levels of contextual pressure (e.g., democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes). The criteria for respondent selection were people's availability and the diversity of their life trajectories in similar conditions (Sato et al., 2007). Another criterion for selection was the incorporation of possibly different life trajectories within a generation (including those that are out of the limelight or non-existent in the memoirs currently published). I aimed to achieve that many different voices and different points of view were represented.

#### **Structural opportunities and constraints through a generational lens.**

Mannheim (1952) distinguishes generations as potentialities (defined by objective location in historical time) and generations as actualities—social (or historical) generations, defined through reflexivity (generational self-consciousness) and the capacity of generating new identities and meanings, new modes of thought and action in society (specific generational culture). Generation as actuality emerges during abrupt social changes. Instead of being only an object of socialization, such generations become agents of transformation. Mannheim stresses that beside sharing similar major trends (*Grundintentionen*) and background knowledge, a generation is internally

differentiated—people in direct contact with each other form groups with different experiences, whose life trajectories diverge. As a result, it is possible to describe a generationally shared life world and different *generational units* (experience communities) within it. Mannheim (1952) has described seemingly uniform Zeitgeist (dominant ideas) as always split up into a number of tendencies, consisting of oppositional rationalities, as a dynamic unity of antinomies, personalized by different generational units (e.g., romantic conservatives vs. rational liberals), which are in dialogical tensions with each other.

Generational consciousness functions as interobjectivity—taken-for-granted objective meaning structure (Sammut et al., 2008). Generations and generational units provide basic positions in a particular social context, different systems of meanings and practice, both on unreflective and reflective levels. Coexisting generations form a specific generational field of diversity that creates another potential for cognitive polyphasia.

Participating in different fields, people develop different habitus, which make up a hierarchical system in a person. When the habitus and the social world are compatible with each other, the person “is like a ‘fish in water’: it does not feel the weight of water, and it takes the world about itself for granted” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). Habitus embodies relative persistence, so that rapid social change leads to a temporary mismatch between the new structure and old inert habitus. Thus, for example, the inconsistency of the habitus shaped during the Soviet period with the new structure of liberal capitalism has been described (e.g., Struck, 2003, Glaeser, 2002, Sztompka, 2004), which also applies to Estonia.

Milan Kundera (1988) has characterized the space of human possibilities in the totalitarian context marked by two polarities: Kafka’s serious hyper-obedience, on the one hand, and the Jaroslav Hasek’s brave soldier Schweik’s non-serious total denial of any sense, on the other.

When the multilayered sociocultural context changes, a person has to change externally and/or internally reconstruct his or her Self, reconsider his or her self-concept, look reflectively at the past and towards the future. The precondition for self-awareness (reflectiveness) is a contact between several different viewpoints (e.g., doer and observer, two different cultures) (Gillespie, 2007). People who have lived a long life have encountered the unknown over and over again, have had to adjust to cultural changes accompanying successive very different socio-political regimes. The latter have given rise to “new rules of play” - qualitatively different systems of social and cultural suggestions, new paradigms of value. Estonia’s chequered recent history has resulted in unique politicized biographies, which describe different life trajectories in constantly changing objective fields. A change in the political regime leads to numerous changes at different levels: changes in the social power field and related cultural field (new

hierarchies of regulative ideas), the transformation of the world of everyday life (new symbols and rituals). An individual as a bearer of personal meanings responds to external changes by choosing a certain adjustment strategy. The multitude of changes experienced over a long lifetime has developed adjustment proficiency in people, e.g., an ability to switch over or to use the experience of previous times as a resource (life asset). Thus the experience acquired in the period of the pre-war Estonia regained its value after the restoration of independence.

### **Strategies of adapting to sociocultural changes.**

The analysis of adjustment strategies in certain contextual constraints reveals a mutual connection between external structural influence and person's agency. The adjustment to changes occurs at behavioural and symbolic levels. People establish certain strategies to adapt to changes: First, by modifying individual meanings. Second, by positioning themselves in a certain way in relation to new values and norms, and the dominant ideas (*Zeitgeist*). And, third, by employing cultural resources to contextualize the new experience.

*Acceptance* of political changes and *resistance* to them, *participation* and *distanciation* form central symbolic pairs of oppositions (themata) that have become the focus of social attention and a source of tension and conflict (Markova, 2003), thus organizing social representations of life trajectories of this generation. There is also a common repertoire of possible *I*-positions on these opposing trajectories, and holomorphic representations of other trajectories and positions.

There are different concrete forms of basic positionings. It can imply maximum distancing physically (departure) or mentally completely ignoring, disregarding the novel, or deliberately taking the position of a (critical and alienated) spectator. It can also involve the so-called inner emigration –retreating into a private sphere, ignoring the public sphere as much as possible is characteristic of both the early (e.g., Chuikina, p. 2006) and the late Soviet period (e.g., Yurchak, 2002). Partial distancing is also possible: one can internally move away from the immediate situation by means of certain cultural forms, for example, observing life from a certain perspective a positive dramatization of life, a romantic and poetic representation of life. This also includes the strategy of mental trauma release by working it through, employing the “narrative restructuration” (Crossley, 2000). A good example of meta-position strategy is humour, which makes stressful situations and blows of fate tolerable and allows people to maintain inner autonomy everywhere.

Negation may manifest as public (collective) resistance struggle (dissidents, “forest brother” guerrillas) or as passive daily resistance (dissatisfaction, criticizing in absentia, disobedience). Different forms of resistance in the conditions of the Soviet regime have been described by Viola (2002), Hellbeck (2006), Kozlov, Fitzpatrick, and Mironenko (2011).

## A PLACE FOR SPACE?

Acceptance of changes and going along with them, extreme flexibility in changing dominant perspectives. In retrospect people perceive their inconsistency (“such were the times”), sometimes they seek justification in terms of today’s hegemonic representations. The acceptance may be complete (the reassessment and replacement of the key ideas, consciously changing oneself to comply with the key ideas—see Hellbeck, 2006) or superficial and hypocritical (externally accepting the new ideas while remaining internally sceptical). The superficial acceptance may manifest in the simultaneous preservation of the old and acceptance of the new, while isolating them from each other, which enables the concurrent coexistence of mutually exclusive ideas/versions of reality. In the descriptions of the Soviet mindset the so-called “doublethink” is often observed, which allowed people to use different forms of thinking and language in the public and private spheres (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 25).

Synthesis of the old and the new, creating a new meaning, integrating divergent influences into a meaningful whole. Jennifer Todd (2005) identifies the so-called assimilative strategy, where the identity is redeveloped to combine the old and the new into a continuous whole. This strategy is attainable by people who have already developed an internal readiness for change (e.g., Estonian nationalism and Soviet mentality). The other option is “ritual acceptance”—adopting new forms of behaviour while filling them with the old content. In spite of the change in the external forms, the continuity of meaning is maintained. Unlike in the strategy of superficial acceptance, here the old and the new are not kept separate from each other but there is discordant interaction between them. Aleksei Yurchak (2002) has described creative synthesis in times of mature socialism as “domestication” of official ideology in everyday practices: by reproducing the ideological system formally, many Soviet citizens transformed the communist values into meaningful in their life context.

The choice of the ways of adjustment is partly conditioned by the logic and positioning of the life trajectory in sociocultural fields, but also by the strength of the external pressure and the richness of personal resources (e.g., education, health, social ties, personality characteristics) (Todd, 2005). The main adjustment strategy may change during the life due to a change in the external pressure or personal resources (e.g., resignation in the old age, giving up resistance and coming to terms with the existing).

Various strategies have been applied for maintaining the sense of agency in different sociopolitical circumstances (e.g., separation of worlds of political necessity and individual freedom): in spite of strong structural pressure, people manage to choose to what extent they allow themselves to be “determined.”

### **Adjustment strategies in different types of life courses**

The *social trajectory of life* describes a journey of a person in the social world, his or her successive positions in the fields of life, the configuration of choices and

events. People in similar structural positions may have different attitudes depending on the different trajectories that have lead them to these positions. “Social actors are the outcome of history, the outcome of the experience gathered during the history of the whole social field and the personal way they have come through” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 136).

A course of life may be viewed at three levels. The first is the external person’s relocation in social and geographical spaces (fields) happens. On the second level, the internal journey takes place through conscious choices and/or dialectical connection with passive espousal under some circumstances; this is the course of experience, feelings and meanings. The third level is the later contextualized presentation of a life course, the life “story,” which may happen through different narrative forms.

People who were born in the 1920s and met the same socio-political challenges in Estonia, could choose three general trajectories: denial (emigration), resistance or loyalty. Important choices that determined the subsequent trajectory have often created a core identity, which includes both the self-concept and how others (stereotypically) view the person (e.g., “a Red Army ‘boy’,” “freedom fighter,” “a guy who fought in the Finnish Civil War,” “an expatriate Estonian,” “a red Estonian”). Societal upheavals have several times reversed the symbolic hierarchy of generational units.

Estonian biographical researchers have distinguished between the so-called national and Soviet biography (Kõresaar, 2005, p. 114), as the dominant interpretative frames. The narratives of my respondents gave a considerably more varied picture. It is possible that a change in the public discursive context has an effect here: the black and white approach to history of the 1990s is giving way to a more diverse picture. Based on the type of choices made in generational focal points (primarily in 1940-1945), it is possible to classify the life courses of the generation in various ways. If I rely on the relative proportion of active and passive ways of adaptation, I can divide the explored life courses into those where passive adjustment prevails and those dominated by active choices.

### ***Passive adjustment***

*The trajectory of suffering.* A separate group is formed of the people who themselves or whose relatives and friends have survived extreme existential situations (in the war, due to repression). For many people it is a central experience that has had a strong effect later in their life.

People have described different ways of adjustment in extreme situations: internal rebellion or submission to fate, religious humility and reconciliation, showing altruism, and preserving the internal identity. Here the role of semiotic potency is especially clear: by creating an imaginary field of representations, it is possible at a symbolic level to distance oneself from an immediate situation.

## A PLACE FOR SPACE?

Adjustment strategies depended on the preceding life trajectory: for some repressed people the Soviet period remained utterly alien, they chose the path of hidden and public resistance or self-isolation. At the time of the new independence they fitted well into the mainstream discourse of victims and suffering, becoming new heroes in the 1990s. Prominent *I*-positions are “I as a victim” and “I as a hero.” There are two forms of life course: smooth life course and undulating life course.

*Smooth life course.* Apolitical biographies describe the lives of common people who have smoothly come through difficult times. They have passively gone along with changes and without any great losses successfully adjusted—they have been good workers and family people, have seized the arising opportunities and reached peaceful old age. The dominating adjustment strategy in their case is non-reflective privacy and the prevailing *I*-position is “I as a normal person.”

*Undulating life course.* Some life trajectories are very motley, with deep ups and downs and unexpected turns. As adjustment strategies, complete or partial acceptance and creative synthesis have been implemented.

### ***Active choices***

This group includes life trajectories where, in critical times, conscious decisive choices have been made, the life has a direction and purpose. I will look at some examples where a critical choice was made in the 1940s.

*The resistance trajectory*—an exemplary (proper Estonian) biography in today’s context, “a national biography” that has become a norm. The dominating life strategy is conscious resistance. An exemplary biography of actively resisting to Soviet regime, being the victim of repression, experiencing rehabilitation. There are cases in which public heroization has produced clear self-image of autonomous reckless fighter, “toughened up in Stalin’s universities.”

*The so-called “Red” course of life.* A contrasting trajectory of conscious pro-Soviet choice and active participation in the Soviet transformations. In the post-Soviet time the agents of this life course were re-positioned from the centre to the periphery of the symbolic field, from hero to anti-hero position. In some cases this has produced a hybrid identity, aimed at reconciliation and compassion towards former victims.

*Opportunistic trajectory.* Conscious control of one’s life can be exercised through successful manoeuvring in different fields of influence.

In the Soviet period, certain politically marked life trajectories were relatively isolated from one another, the choice of one’s social circle was subjected to written and unwritten norms—on certain occasions it was forbidden to communicate with relatives living abroad, and people avoided communication with repressed acquaintances. However, individual choices were always free, in spite of the dominating attitude,

people continued to communicate with “unsuitable” people. Thus mutually exclusive life trajectories came into contact, which allowed people to develop awareness of alternative choices and their (psychological and social) consequences. Today there are no such normative restrictions any more, but psychological barriers may have survived (a former “forest brother” despising a former militiaman, and vice versa).

### **Contextuality of choices and meaning making**

Important choices are not made in isolation, but in the context of direct social relationships. A biography always potentially involves many voices: its characters are the family and significant “others,” companions of meaningful events—all important relationships at the intersection of which the narrator is located, “the subject of a narrative is in certain respect always ‘more’ [...] than an individual” (Kirss, 2009, p. 32). Choices people make may be motivated by a desire to emulate someone or to be different from someone, whereas authorities and guardians (mentors) have a significant impact (cf promoter positions—Hermans, 2010). Many critical choices, decisions that have affected courses of life have been made by someone else, who acts as a catalyst: a friend who in 1940 invited to join the Young Communist League; a spouse who in 1940 supported the Soviet regime; a brother who fought in the Extermination Battalion. The position or choice of a husband also defines his wife’s fate (e.g., repression), a close relative on one or the other side of the frontline or the state border can create either impediments or favourable conditions for her career advancement. The side characters seemingly playing secondary roles in our life drama may actually have fundamental importance.

People perceive their involvement with companions of suffering experience (war, camp, prison) as special. Being survivors, they feel responsible for their fallen comrades, they feel they have an obligation to make headway and pass on the memory of them. The narrators of biographies often put themselves in a wider context (family, generation, the nation), thus indicating that what they have experienced is both personal and collective. Perceiving oneself as part of a greater whole and dependent on others, leads to different categorization and appreciation of one’s experience of differently organized life stories from those who perceive themselves as independent from others (Wang & Brockmeier, 2002).

### **Some general observations**

People born in the 1920s are the last living cohort who have experienced almost all critical periods in the history of Estonia in the 20th century. Based on their experience, people born in the 1920s often define themselves as a generation of bearers of the values of “pre-war Estonian era.” However, this generation can also be viewed in a wider context. These are the people who witnessed the 20th century technological, political and sociocultural developments, including the failure of great utopias. This

## *A PLACE FOR SPACE?*

generation carries the optimistic spirit of the early 20th century: faith in technology and social progress, common hopeful future visions of a just society, anti-clericalism. Their life experience has eventually confirmed their faith in the progressive development of the society, through setbacks and challenges tensions in Estonia have been settled today. Peaceful restoration of the independence of Estonia was a happy ending of a collective path of development for their generation. Trends that originate from the Enlightenment—rationalism and social optimism, which had partly served as a basis already for the pre-war socialization and which were later attempted to realize in the process of building socialism (Bauman, 1976)—are characteristic of this generation. People who were born in the 1920s have lived through several parallel changes: technological development (in their childhood cars and phones were rare, television only came about when they were adults, mobile phones and the internet emerged when they were in advanced age); transformed relationship with nature (most of them have their roots in rural life, being either first or second urbanized generation); alternation of political regimes and hegemonic ideologies; changes in commonplace mentality.

The generation that was born in the 1920s is characterized by strong educational aspirations and appreciation of knowledge, deliberation and absorption. Their pre-mass-culture socialization has facilitated the development of a vivid personality and critical thinking. People of this generation represent very clearly the features of the “modern self” (as differentiated from the traditional and postmodern self) (Hermans, 2010). Over their long life they have acquired valuable experience in how to adjust to changes in diverse ways, how to maintain inner autonomy in the conditions of external oppression and in retaining their identity against the background of radical changes. They have learned to look at events from different perspectives and overcome contradictions in a creative way. They carry layers of varied experience and therefore their outlook on life is many-sided, connecting contradictory historical perspectives. Both Soviet and nationalist viewpoints belong to their repertoire and they are able to combine them through universal framework. They are also able to look at today’s liberal capitalism from a distance, with sophisticated scepticism: for them this is not the best or the only alternative social order. Thus they are competent in using the resources of cognitive polyphasia.

The generation discussed is not homogeneous, different choices in critical points have led them to different life courses. The characteristic features of the generation born in the 1920s and 1930s is the diversity and political markedness of life trajectories. My study revealed intragenerational multitude of different voices and perspectives: as a consequence of earlier choices, people have developed different positions in life, between some of which there is no dialogue (e.g., WWII veterans from the opposing camps failed attempts to reconcile), some trajectories are currently stigmatized and relatively invisible to the public. The unison and dissonance of different trajectories constitute the “complete polyphonic melody” of the generation.

On the societal level I can construct an overarching intergenerational field where different generations are symbolically positioned. The position of the oldest generation in Estonia is ambivalent: on the one hand, its symbolic capital is acknowledged (although polemically), on the other, it is marginalized in terms of diminished consumption capacity. However, a social generation can be considered self-reflexive in the Mannheimian sense whose actions have become socially, culturally or politically significant. This generation can be considered “strategical” (Turner, 2002) in the Estonian context because their initial socialization was marked by deep and abrupt societal transformations, critical for the Estonian history: WWII and the political regime change in the 1940s. This generation was actively involved in the elaboration of new meanings and practices as a consequence of these transformations. The generation born in the 1920s and 1930s has had a strategic role twice: firstly, during the after-war societal transformations (sovetization) where one of the generational units of this generation (those who took pro-Soviet position, had fought in the Red army, etc.) had opportunity to lead the societal transformations and to build up the new society, and secondly, during the restoration of the Republic of Estonia, when another unit of this generation (those who held anti-Soviet position) could provide its own interpretation of history, which became dominant interpretive paradigm (Kõresaar, 2005). Abrupt and fundamental changes in the societal field may promote the rise of the relative status of new strategic generations and diminish prestige of the previous ones. In Estonia, due to political upheavals in the 1990s, the status of generations that were socialized during the Soviet time has been lowered, whereas pre-war generations (carrying the habitus of pre-war republic), as well as the young, unspoiled by the previous regime, became publicly respected. Thus, politicized history has defined the relative symbolic capital of different generations.

### **Conclusion: Two Forms of Polyphasia**

By using various theoretical instruments I tried to show how habitus and social representations interact dialogically with semiotically potent subject. The combination of two mechanisms for realizing semiotic potency—symbolic distancing and directionality—produces a variety of relatively stable response modes, which are evident in the empirical data. The unreflective level of habitus and the reflective use of social knowledge are intertwined in these processes.

I proposed to differentiate two layers of cognitive polyphasia:

1) Positional polyphasia is based on plurality of representations corresponding to various individual and group positions in the societal or communicative field, stemming from complementary roles in communicative contexts, multiple group affiliations, etc. Intrapsychically these are represented as mutual *I*-positions in DS.

2) Intra-positional polyphasia provides for potentially multiple ways of performing the same positional role—either stylistically (using various speech genres,

## A PLACE FOR SPACE?

affective modes, etc.) or through semiotic manoeuvres in relation to social suggestions. Using different potentialities to play various keys of the mental organ (Moscovici, 2014) are accessible to an actor in any particular position.

In both forms of polyphasia the main challenges for a researcher are: 1) to describe and explain the effects of interaction of plural forms of knowledge in different contexts (e.g., tough vs benign, level of normative pressure) and 2) to explain the choice among the potential representational possibilities by a subject in his or her particular relationships with the environment (an issue of choosing the right keyboard; see Moscovici, 2014). SRT and DST can be used complementarily for solving these problems.

### References

- Adams, M. (2006). Hybridizing habitus and reflexivity: Towards an understanding of contemporary identity? *Sociology*, 40(3), 511–528.
- Bauman, Z. (1976). *Socialism. The active utopia*. London, UK: Allen & Unwin.
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1986). Искусство и ответственность [Art and responsibility]. In Bakhtin, M.M., Эстетика словесного творчества [Aesthetics of speech creativity] (pp. 7- 8). Москва: Искусство. Moscow, USSR: Iskusstvo Publishing House.
- Berry, J. (2003). Conceptual approaches to acculturation. In K. Chun, P. Balls-Organista, & G. Marin (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement and applications* (pp. 17–37). Washington, DC: APA Books.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *In other words. Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Castells, M. (1997). *The power of identity*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell
- Chuikina (2006) Чуйкина, С. *Дворянская память: “бывшие” в советском городе* [Memory of nobility; “the former” in a soviet city (Leningrad in the 1920-30s),] (*Ленинград, 1920–30-е годы*). Санкт Петербург: Европейский университет в С.Петербургe. Sankt Petersburg, Russia: European University in St. Petersburg.

- Clemence, A. (2001). Social positioning and social representations. In K. Deaux & G. Philogene (Eds.), *Representations of the social. Bridging theoretical traditions* (pp. 83–95). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Crossley, M. L. (2000). Narrative psychology, trauma and the study of self/identity. *Theory and Psychology, 10*, 527–546.
- Doise, W. (1994). Attitudes et représentations sociales [Attitudes and social representations]. In D. Jodelet (Ed.), *Les représentations sociales* (pp. 220–238.). Paris, France: PUF.
- Duveen, G. (2001). Representations, identities, resistance. In K. Deaux & G. Philogene (Eds.), *Representationsof the social. Bridging theoretical traditions* (pp. 257–270). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Elejabarrieta, F. (1994). Social positioning: A way to link social identity and social representations. *Social Science Information, 33*(2), 241–253.
- Fitzpatrick, S. (2009). Popular opinion in Russia under pre-war Stalinism. In P. Corner (Ed.), *Popular opinion in totalitarian regimes: Fascism, Nazism, Communism* (pp. 17–32). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Gillespie, A. (2007). The social basis of self-reflection. In J. Valsiner & A. Rosa (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of sociocultural psychology* (pp. 678–691). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gillespie, A. (2008). Social representations, alternative representations and semantic barriers. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 38*(4), 375–391.
- Gillespie, A., & Martin, J. (2014). Position exchange theory: A socio-material basis for discursive and psychological positioning. *New Ideas in Psychology, 32*, 73–79.
- Glaeser, A. (2000). *Divided in unity. Germany and the Berlin police*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Harré, R. (2012). Positioning theory: Moral dimensions of social-cultural psychology. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of culture and psychology* (pp. 191–206). New York, NY: Oxford University.
- Hellbeck, J. (2006). *Revolution on my mind: Writing a diary under Stalinism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hermans, H. J. M & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2010). *Dialogical self theory: Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

*A PLACE FOR SPACE?*

- Hilgers, M. (2009). Habitus, freedom and reflexivity. *Theory and Psychology*, 19(6), 728–755.
- Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, voice and loyalty. Response to decline in firms, organizations and states*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Holland D., Lachicotte W. Jr., Skinner D., & Cain C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Jovchelovitch, S., & Riego-Hernandez, J. (2015). Cognitive polyphasia, knowledge encounters and public sphere. In G. Sammut, E. Andreouli, G. Gaskell & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of social representations* (pp. 163–178). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kasulis, T. P. (2002). *Intimacy or integrity: Philosophy and cultural difference*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- Kirss, T. (Ed). *Rändlindude pesad. Eestlaste elulood võõrsil* [Nests of migratory birds. Biographies of Estonians abroad]. Tartu, Estonia: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, 2006.
- Kozlov, V.A., Fitzpatrick, S., & Mironenko, S.V. (Eds) (2011). *Sedition: Everyday resistance in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev and Brezhnev*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Kõresaar, E. (2005). *Elu ideoloogiad* [Life ideologies]. Tartu, Estonia: Eesti Rahva Muuseum.
- Kundera, M. (1988). *The art of the novel*. New York, NY: Grove Press.
- Lizardo, O. (2004). The cognitive origins of Bourdieu's habitus. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 34(4), 375–401.
- Lotman, J. (1988). The semiotics of culture and the concept of text. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 26, 52–58
- Mannheim, K. (1952). The problem of generations. *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (pp. 276–320). London, England: Routledge and Kegan Paul. (Original work published 1927/1928)
- Markova, I. (2003). *Dialogicality and social representations: The dynamics of mind*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Mills, C. Wright (2000). *The sociological imagination*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1959)

- Moscovici, S. (2008). *Psychoanalysis: Its image and its public*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. (Original work published 1961)
- Moscovici, S. (1984). *The phenomenon of social representations*. In R. Farr & S. Moscovici (Eds.), *Social representations* (pp. 3–69). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Moscovici, S. (2014). The new magical thinking. *Public Understanding of Science*, 23(7), 759–779.
- Paulle, B., van Heerikhuizen, B., & Emirbayer, M. (2012). Elias and Bourdieu. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 12(1), 69–93.
- Psaltis, C. (2012). Culture and social representations: A continuing dialogue in search for heterogeneity in social developmental psychology. *Culture & Psychology*, 18(3), 375–390.
- Raggatt, P. T. F. (2007). Forms of positioning in the dialogical self: A system of classification and the strange case of Dame Edna Everage. *Theory and Psychology*, 17(1), 355–382.
- Raudsepp, M. (2016). A happy old age: individual life trajectories through cultural changes. In R. Nugin, A. Kannike & M. Raudsepp (Eds.), *Generations in Estonia: Contemporary perspectives on turbulent times. Approaches to culture theory 5* (pp. 214-255). Tartu, Estonia: Tartu University Press
- Riesman, D., Glazer, N., & Denney, R. (2001). *The lonely crowd. A study of the changing American character*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. (Original work published 1950)
- Rosengren, K. E. (1997). Culture in society: Agency and structure, continuity and change. In M. Lauristin, P. Vihalemm, K. E. Rosengren & L. Weibull (1997), *Return to the Western world. Cultural and political perspectives on the Estonian post-communist transition* (pp. 9–24). Tartu, Estonia: Tartu University Press.
- Sammut, G., Daanen, P., & Sartawi, M. (2010). Interobjectivity: Representations and artefacts in cultural psychology. *Culture & Psychology*, 16(4), 451–463.
- Salvatore, S., & Venuelo, C. (2013). Field and dynamic nature of sensemaking. Theoretical methodological implications. *Papers on Social Representations*, 22, 21.1–21.41
- Sato, T., Yasuda, Y., Kido, A., Arakawa, A., Mizoguchi, H. & Valsiner, J. (2007). Sampling reconsidered. Idiographic science and the analyses of personal life trajectories. In J. Valsiner & A. Rosa (Eds), *The Cambridge handbook of*

## A PLACE FOR SPACE?

- sociocultural psychology* (pp. 82–107). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Sen, R. (2012). Hetero-referentiality and divided societies. In D. J. Christie (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of peace psychology* (p. 506). Chichester; UK: John Wiley and Sons.
- Sen, R., & Wagner, W. (2009). Cultural mechanics of fundamentalism: Religion as ideology, divided identities and violence in post-Gandhi India. *Culture and Psychology, 15*(3), 299–326.
- Shove, E., Pantzar, M., & Watson, M. (2012). *The dynamics of social practice: Everyday life and how it changes*. London, UK: Sage.
- Sztompka, P. (2004). The trauma of social change. A case of postcommunist societies. In J. C. Alexander, R. Eyerman, B. Giesen, N. Smelser, & P. Sztompka (Eds.), *Cultural trauma and collective identity* (pp. 155–195). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Struck, O. (2003). Trajectories of coping strategies in Eastern Germany. In R. Humphrey, R. Miller, & E. A. Zdravomyslova (Eds.), *Biographical research in Eastern Europe: Altered lives and broken biographies* (pp. 211-224). Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Todd, J. (2005). Social transformation, collective categories, and identity change. *Theory and Society, 34*, 429–463.
- Turner, B. S. (2002). Strategic generations: Historical change, literary expression, and generational politics. In J. Edmunds & B. S. Turner (Eds), *Generational consciousness, narrative, and politics* (pp. 13–29). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Valsiner, J. (1994). Culture and human development: A co-constructionist perspective. In P. van Geert, L. P. Mos & W. J. Baker (Eds.), *Annals of theoretical psychology, Vol. 10* (pp. 247–298). New York, NY: Springer Science.
- Valsiner, J. (1998). *The guided mind. A sociogenetic approach to personality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Valsiner, J. (2007). *Culture in minds and societies: Foundations of cultural psychology*. New Delhi, India: Sage.
- Valsiner, J. (2008). The social and the cultural. In T. Sugiman, K. J. Gergen, W. Wagner, & Y. Yamada (Eds), *Meaning in action. Meanings, narratives, and representations* (pp. 273–287). New York, NY: Springer.

- Valsiner, J. (2008a). Ornamented worlds and textures of feeling. The power of abundance. *Critical Social Studies*, 1, 67–78.
- Viola, L. (Ed.). (2002). *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet power and popular resistance in the 1930s*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Wagner, W., Duveen, G., Verma, J., & Themel, M. (2000). “I have some faith and at the same time I don’t believe in it” - Cognitive polyphasia and culture change. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 10, 301–314.
- Wagner, W., & Hayes, N. (2005). *Everyday discourse and common sense. The theory of social representations*. New York, NY: Palgrave.
- Wagner, W., Mecha, A., & Carvalho, M. R. (2008). Discourse and representation in the construction of witchcraft. In T. Sugiman, K. Gergen, W. Wagner, & Y. Yamada (Eds.), *Meaning in action: Constructions, narratives and representations* (pp. 37–48). Tokyo, Japan: Springer.
- Wang, Q., & Brockmeier, J. (2002). Autobiographical remembering as cultural practice: Understanding the interplay between memory, self and culture. *Culture and Psychology*, 8, 45–63.
- Yurchak, A. (2002). *Everything was forever, until it was no more. The last Soviet generation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Zittoun, T. (2007). The role of symbolic resources in human lives. In J. Valsiner & A. Rosa (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of sociocultural psychology* (pp. 343–361). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Zittoun, T. (2013). Valences, traces and new synthesis in social representing. Commentary of J. Valsiner’s creating sign hierarchies. *Papers on Social Representations*, 22, 18.1–18.14
- Zittoun, T., Duveen, G., Gillespie, A., Ivinson, G., & Psaltis, C. (2003). The use of symbolic resources in developmental transitions. *Culture and Psychology*, 9(4), 415–448.

## **DIALOGUING—MORE AND MORE**

Lia da Rocha Lordelo  
Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia, Brazil

**Abstract.** This comment on Raudsepp's (2017) article resumes the main theoretical connections proposed by the author, who presents the particular phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia within social representations theory, along with concepts from Pierre Bourdieu's relational sociology; and also contributions from the dialogical self theory—especially the idea of semiotic potency within the positioning of the Self. After distinguishing two kinds of polyphasias—positional and intra-positional—she then applies this theoretical interconnection in order to empirically understand how Estonians from a pre-world-war generation have dealt with political and social changes throughout their life trajectories. Next, this comment brings the concepts of personal and collective culture to the discussion in order to highlight the importance of analysing concepts in relation to each other. The central purpose of this comment is to argue in favour of a “relational primacy” (Salgado & Gonçalves, 2007)—between the individual and the society as much as between theoretical concepts

**Keywords:** cognitive polyphasia, social representations, dialogical self, dialogue, personal culture, collective culture

Fruitful interactions between psychological and sociological theoretical perspectives are always in order: they constitute great contributions to comprehending human beings from an integrated, interdisciplinary point of view. That stated, Maaris Raudsepp's article “Cognitive polyphasia in the context of systemic power and semiotic potency” (Raudsepp, 2017) figures as a brilliant example of a theoretical dialogue that canalizes its efforts into understanding how people constitute and change their representations of the world and of themselves, and also how complex and contradictory those representations can be. In the article, we can visualize an intercrossing between the particular phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia within social representation theory (SRT), along with concepts from Pierre Bourdieu's relational sociology; and contributions from the dialogical self theory (DST)—especially the idea of semiotic potency—as a conceptual extension of DST—within the positioning of the Self.

SRT is one of the first major theoretical approaches to propose an interface between social and psychological phenomena (Moscovici, 1988), as Moscovici trans-

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the author at [lialordelo@gmail.com](mailto:lialordelo@gmail.com)

formed the Durkheimian notion of collective representations in the making of SRT. Among some of its highly relevant features, there is the reclaiming of an epistemological status of common sense knowledge, according to Raudsepp and others (Raudsepp, 2016; Jovchelovitch, 2011; Marková, 2003); and also the attempt to accommodate the dynamic nature of knowledge construction; the representations we make are not fixed or static. But why is change important? In Moscovici's words, "[i]ndividuals and groups create representations in the course of communication and cooperation" (2000, p. 27). Volklein and Horwarth (2005) remind us of the symbolic space in the development and negotiation of representations, which is precisely the reason why all human beings hold creative power and agency in their formation and use. People think and talk to each other, and this is why representations are complex and change.

The specific concept—or hypothesis, claims Jovchelovitch (2002)—of cognitive polyphasia was also coined by Moscovici and refers to different but coexisting thoughts and discourses on the same object in the same context, group or individual. Cognitive polyphasia would also be defined as the process through which different rationalities operate in the construction of knowledge (Souza, Menandro, & Menandro, 2015), or putting it in another way, as a concept which sees knowledge and belief as similar, and not contrary epistemic forms (Jovchelovitch, 2002).

The Bourdieusian notion of habitus, although used by Raudsepp to express more objective configurations of social relations in the broader, societal field, still stands as a sociological attempt to overcome the unidirectional force of the social structures onto the subject, as much as an attempt to empower the social agent—that is, the person. Bourdieu (2004) calls us to think of habitus in the sense of an incorporated social game; as the expression of the social in the body and being able to produce an infinity of acts of play.

Both sociological perspectives point at the need to address representations as dynamic, complex and contradictory, for they are ultimately constituted by people communicating to one another. That alone would involve some notion of dialogue; but the article takes a step further by organizing what Raudsepp calls “interrelated layers of reality” (Raudsepp, 2017, p. 46)—processes in the societal field; processes in the shared representational field (an intermediary layer of reality); and finally, processes in the subjective meaning fields of agents. For this last layer of reality, Raudsepp presents contributions from DST. It is precisely here that dialogue shows its force.

Dialogue, and more specifically dialogism, have constituted another large and diverse epistemological background for reconciling individual and society, articulating, on different levels, contributions of authors such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Emmanuel Lévinas, Martin Buber and others. DST was proposed as a theoretical and methodological approach, within this background, inspired mainly by two authors from

the beginning of the twentieth century—Bakhtin again and also William James. For the theory, the Self must be conceptualized in terms of a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous *I*-positions in an imaginal landscape (Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992). Those positions of the Self can only be defined in terms of their relation to other positions—of real others or of imaginary audiences; and that is why they are *dialogical* relations. For Salgado and Hermans (2005), that dialogical approach is a fruitful solution for reinstating the place and value of subjectivity in psychological sciences. The question is how flexibility and variability within human minds are created. As I have previously stated (Lordelo, 2014), in order to talk about how these qualities—flexibility and variability—function, one must explore precisely the relationship between social and individual, or personal and collective.

### **Relations Between Concepts: The Heart of the Matter**

Relations are central to this discussion. It is from that relational primacy (Salgado & Gonçalves, 2007) on that I would like to generate a debate.

Raudsepp's article thoroughly theorizes on two basic different forms of cognitive polyphasia—as in positional polyphasia and intra-positional polyphasia. She presents a set of specific positions, or response modes in relation to social suggestions, such as accepting, escaping, denying, resisting and innovating—*I*-positions which represent modifications of distance and direction (Raudsepp, 2017). She defines positional polyphasia as the plurality of representations corresponding to various individual and group positions in the societal or communicative field, stemming from complementary roles in communicative contexts, multiple group affiliations, etc.; on an intrapsychical level, this type of polyphasia would be represented as mutual positions in the dialogical self (DS) (Raudsepp, 2017). She then establishes intra-positional polyphasia as “potentially multiple ways of performing the same positional role” (Raudsepp, 2017, p. 70)—either stylistically (using various speech genres, affective modes, etc.) or through semiotic manoeuvres in relation to social suggestions. But a central question remains: can we conceive a psycho-sociological phenomenon as intra-positional? What is (in) a position?

Salgado and Hermans (2005) claim that the word “position” implies that “everything that is said, is said from one place toward a specific background, and its ‘location’ depends not only on what is said but on the relationship between what is said and the global surroundings” (p. 10). A position, says Hermans (2001), always implies relations: internal-external, internal, external ones. A complex mixture of all these kinds of relations is usually at work—this is the rule and not the exception when it comes to the human mind. Not only social roles, but reflective meanings and affective states would also constitute *I*-positions (Mattos, 2013).

In that sense, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) have recently theorized on different processes of positioning. One basic assumption of DST, from their point of

view, is that people are continuously involved in a process of positioning and repositioning, “not only in relation to other people, but also in relation to themselves” (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 17). They propose to study processes such as the creation of third positions, meta-positions, the coalition of positions and so on. In that particular work, authors remind us that the Self cannot be considered as an entity in itself; for the concept of mind, within DST, might be understood as a dialogical process of communication with other and oneself (Hermans, 2004). With that conception of mind at stake, talking about “intra-positional polyphasia” would be, in a certain sense, to transform positions into things, entities, and not into relationships. A similar difficulty would involve the notion of positional polyphasia on an intrapsychical level, also presented by Raudsepp. If we assume there is something inside a position, we must accept there is something outside. Hence, we could generate an inside X outside dichotomy against which the DS concept has, since its first theoretical formulations, attempted to argue.

I have previously been very interested in this tension expressed in several dichotomies, such as internal X external, the social X the individual, the personal X the collective and have written on the subject a few times (Lordelo, 2013, 2014, 2015). I have claimed that one conceptual proposition that seems fruitful to the study of the intersection between that semiotic potency brought by Raudsepp, the social nature of psychological functions, and the inseparability between individual and society are the two notions of personal culture and collective culture (Valsiner, 2007, Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003). For that reason, although those are mentioned by Raudsepp in the beginning of the article, I believe they deserve a more thoughtful discussion.

Personal culture is the active construction of a personal version of any cultural phenomenon (Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003, p. 730). In a similar way, Ernest Boesch (2008) reflects on what he calls subjective culture, stating that this would be constituted by individual meaning networks; he believes that in spite of the fact that these networks can overlap, they are rarely identical—and that produces diversity and singularity of meanings. The collective culture is the “living field of the suggested meanings, feelings and actions with which the person interacts over the life course” (Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003, p. 726). It is relevant to add that the concept of personal culture cannot be analytically separated from its complement, which is the notion of collective culture—this analytical complementarity is crucial in this discussion. Collective culture is a concept that demands, from my point of view, a more complex empirical translation, because of its properties: while it is considered by Valsiner a relatively stable entity of collective origin (Valsiner, 2007, p. 63), it is also unstable and heterogeneous; such heterogeneity originates from its “episodic nature” (Valsiner, 2007, p. 63) in which this social construction takes place; one can say, then, that collective culture is “an interpersonal bricolage of externalizations made by a varied group of people” (Valsiner, 2007, p. 63). It is important to have in mind, especially in this case, the “ontological

indeterminacy” (Valsiner, 2007) that characterizes collective culture: since it is constantly in the process of being collectively reconstructed, it cannot be described in the form and shape it exists in the present moment. Any representation of it will be a type of delimitation of this unending reconstruction process. When we refer to meanings from the collective culture, we will certainly be dealing with a perceived homogeneity (Mahmoud, 2008); or with a kind of momentary symbolic consensus which is particularly useful to data analysis. This definition is slightly different from referring to processes in the societal field as having “objective configurations” (Raudsepp, 2017, p. 47), or yet understanding habitus as deterministic and unavoidable. I have carried that discussion, in a similar manner, when debating on semiotic mechanisms of meaning construction (Lordelo, 2013). What appears to me as central when discussing these concepts is that, although they can be defined separately, they can only be applied interconnectedly—for the flux between them is the heart of the matter. I refer specifically to personal and collective cultures, but the argument fits into how *I*-positions can be understood, and also how the connections proposed by Raudsepp—between levels of reality, concepts from psychological and sociological traditions, etc.—work: they work at their best when in relation to each other.

### Conclusion

Overall, Raudsepp (2017) proposes a sophisticated theoretical framework, inspired by different concepts, to understand how Estonians from a pre-world-war generation have dealt with political and social changes throughout their life trajectories. She combines two mechanisms of semiotic potency—distancing and directionality—to show that various relatively stable forms of personal response are possible. She also explains how the unreflective level of habitus and the reflective level of social knowledge are intertwined in those processes. But if there is one central thing the dialogical approach has taught psychologists as much as sociologists is that even personal agency—our ability to act and produce change around us—is created through relations (Salgado & Gonçalves, 2007). Still benefiting from the concepts of personal and collective cultures, we bring Valsiner’s claim that there is no isomorphism between personal and collective cultures, and that is what makes all persons unique, and yet supported, all of us, by collective culture’s broad background (Valsiner, 2007). This lack of correspondence between personal and collective symbolic spheres is assured precisely by that semiotic potency present on the third level of reality proposed by Raudsepp (2017)—“processes in the subjective meaning fields of agents” (p. 46). This means that each trajectory of each research participant, although sharing somewhat common backgrounds (the political shifts in Estonia during the twentieth century, for instance), is singular. What one person accepts from a specific change in a social economic scenario is not equal to what another person does. And more, what one person *accepts* from a specific change in a social economic scenario is not a symmetric opposite to what another person *denies* or *resists*. Those responses cannot be captured in

themselves, but only in the relation they establish with other responses or with the context around them. This means we cannot trust the supposed ontological fixed nature of that common background of representations—and that, from my point of view, still remains the true challenge in scientific investigations on the human mind and processes of social change. Marková quotes philosopher Meyerson (as cited in Marková, 2003) and reminds us that human thinking is never fully logical; instead, it is typically antinomic and dialogical. If we accept this premise and agree that to think is to deflect, to take detours (Marková, 2003, p. 161), then cognitive polyphasia might be precisely the movement that characterizes meaning-making processes. In his formulations, Moscovici had already argued that cognitive polyphasia could open up new perspectives in social psychology as it led scholars to study not only correspondences between social situations and modalities of knowledge, but also transformations and trade-offs between these different modalities (Jovchelovitch, 2002). Here, we can see that the need for movement—and dialogue, in a broader sense—has been a concern for psychological and sociological theoretical perspectives since they started to interact in a consistent way. Raudsepp's fascinating examples of Estonians' life trajectories are not only a productive way of attacking the research challenge just mentioned—how to systematically study the subjects' activity in relation to the social environment; they also seriously approach the need for more and more theoretical dialogues between concepts from psychological and sociological traditions.

#### References

- Boesch, E. (2008). Book review reply: On subjective culture: Response to Carlos Cornejo. *Culture & Psychology, 14*(4), 498–512.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. (2004). *Coisas Ditas [In Other Words: Essays toward a Reflective Sociology]*. São Paulo, Brazil: Editora Brasiliense.
- Hermans, H. J. M.; Kempen, H. J. G., & van Loon, R. J. P. (1992). The dialogical self: Beyond individualism and rationalism. *American Psychologist, 47*(1), 23–33.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2001). The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning. *Culture & Psychology, 7*(3), 243–281.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2004). The dialogical self: between exchange and power. In: H. J. M. Hermans & G. Dimaggio (Eds.), *The dialogical self in psychotherapy*. (pp. 13-28). Hove, UK: Brunner-Routledge.
- Hermans, H. J. M., & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2010). *Dialogical self theory: Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Jovchelovitch, S. (2002). *Rethinking the diversity of knowledge: Cognitive polyphasia, belief and representation*. London, UK: LSE Research Online. Retrieved from <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/2628/>
- Jovchelovitch, S. (2011). *Representações sociais e polifasia cognitiva: notas sobre a pluralidade e sabedoria da Razão em Psicanálise, sua imagem e seu público* [Social Representations and cognitive polyphasia: notes on rationality's plurality and wisdom in psychoanalysis. Its image, its public]. In A. M. de O. Almeida & Z. Araújo, (Eds.), *Teoria das representações sociais – 50 anos* (pp. 159–176). Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: TechnoPolitik Editora.
- Lawrence, J., & Valsiner, J. (2003). Making personal sense: An account of basic internalization and externalization processes. *Theory and Psychology, 13*(6), 723–752.
- Lordelo, L. da R. (2013). Meanders of meaning: Exploring semiotic mechanisms to overcome psychology's research problems. *Psychology & Society, 5*(3), 122–131.
- Lordelo, L. da R. (2014). Children and the meanings of work: Between personal culture and collective culture. *Psychology & Society, 6*(1), 28–43.
- Lordelo, L. da R. (2015). School as work or work as school: meanings in-between for children from different cultural contexts. In M. V. Dazzani, M. Ristum, G. Marsico & A. C. Bastos (Eds.), *Looking at educational contexts and borders through a cultural lens: Looking inside, viewing outside* (pp. 335-344). New York, NY: Springer.
- Mahmoud, H. W. (2008). Negotiating the place of culture and emotion in the dialogical self (Commentary on Choi & Han). *International Journal for Dialogical Science, 3*(1), 225–240.
- Marková, I. (2003). *Dialogicidade e Representações Sociais: a dinâmica da mente* [Dialogicality and Social Representations]. Petrópolis, Brazil: Vozes.
- Mattos, E. de (2013). *Desenvolvimento do Self na transição para a vida adulta: um estudo longitudinal com jovens baianos* [Self development in the transition to adulthood: A longitudinal study with youth from Bahia] (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). UFBA, Salvador, Brazil.
- Moscovici, S. (1988). Notes towards a description of social representations. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 18*, 211–250.
- Moscovici, S. (2000). *Social representations: Explorations in social psychology*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

- Raudsepp, M. (2017). Cognitive polyphasia in the context of systemic power and semiotic potency. *International Journal for Dialogical Sciences*, 10(2), 45-76.
- Salgado, J., & Hermans, H. J. M. (2005). The return of subjectivity: From a multiplicity of selves to the dialogical self. *E-Journal of Applied Psychology: Clinical Section*, 1(1), 3–13.
- Salgado, J., & Gonçalves, M. (2007). The dialogical self: Social, personal and (un)conscious. In J. Valsiner & A. Rosa (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of sociocultural psychology* (p. 608–621). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Souza, L. G. S., Menandro, M. C. S., & Menandro, P. R. M. (2015). Polifasia cognitiva nas representações sociais do alcoolismo [Cognitive polyphasia in the social representations of alcoholism]. *Psicologia e Saber Social*, 4(2), 224–245.
- Valsiner, J. (2007a). *Cultures in minds and societies: Foundations of cultural psychology*. New Delhi, India: SAGE Publications.
- Valsiner, J. (2007b). Personal culture and conduct of value. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology*, 1(2), 59–65.
- Voelklein, C. & Howarth, C. (2005). A review of controversies about social representations theory: A British debate. *Culture and Psychology*, 11(4), 431–454.

## **A SEMIOTIC-DIALOGICAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL ACCOUNT OF SUICIDE**

Catarina Rosa  
University of Aveiro, Portugal

Sofia Tavares  
University of Évora, Portugal

**Abstract.** Research in suicidology has focused on the analysis of interindividual differences and has neglected the subjective and intersubjective dimensions of human experience. Suicidal behaviour must be understood in the complex convergence between personal, interpersonal, social and cultural elements. Every human action (e.g., suicidal behaviour) should be placed and conceived in continuity with the sociocultural world. Both societal discourses and personal meanings are constitutive elements of such experience. The representational systems shared by communities or groups are multiple resulting in diverse representations of suicide. In a dialogical self-system these social representations of suicide are personified by collective identity positions. Whenever an experiential moment activates the self-system dynamics, these sociocultural positions take their place in the intrapersonal dialogues constraining the individual's thoughts, feelings and actions. In this sense, we suggest a semiotic-dialogical and sociocultural model of suicide, grounded on the dialogical self theory and the social representation theory.

**Keywords:** suicide, dialogical self, social representations, collective identity positions

In modern Western thinking, identity is conceived as an autonomous entity (i.e., stable centre of experience), independent (i.e., distinguished from Others) and endogenous (i.e., internal to the person) (Gonçalves, 1995, 2003). This perspective emphasizes the “exclusive separation” (vs. inclusive, see Valsiner, 1998, 2007) between the identity and the social surroundings, assuming a person's independence, self-determination, as well as the privacy of mental phenomena. Such exclusive separation

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Catarina Rosa is affiliated with the Department of Education and Psychology, University of Aveiro, Portugal; CINTESIS.UA, Aveiro Unity of Center for Health Technology and Services Research – University of Oporto, Portugal; Psychology Research Center (CIPsi), University of Minho, Portugal & is a Member of the Portuguese Society of Suicidology. Sofia Tavares is affiliated with the Department of Psychology, University of Évora, Portugal; Education and Psychology Research Center (CIEP), University of Évora & is a member of the Portuguese Society of Suicidology. This research was supported by the Postdoctoral grant SFRH/BPD/80671/2011. Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the first author at the Department of Education and Psychology, University of Aveiro, Campus Universitário de Santiago, 3810-193 Aveiro, Portugal. Email: catarina.rosa@gmail.com

means that either the environment is believed to unilaterally influence the individual or the individual is believed to unilaterally influence the environment.

Studying the individual person within this paradigm implies its isolation from relational context and its definition through its stable, unique and definite characteristics (Quartilho, 2006). Problems of the *psyche* are understood as pre-existing and therefore the aim of the research is usually to identify and categorize the discovered problems into a set of fixed categories or locate them in a coordinate system of stable dimensions (Walton, 2010). Following this line of thought, research on suicide has been dedicated, mostly, to the exploration of causality between a discrete entity (located in the suicidal person) and its behaviour. It has tried to identify demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, education level, religion) and clinical variables (e.g., depression, anxiety, abuse of substances, traumatic events) common to individuals at risk for suicide to predict their behaviour (Everall, 2000). This analysis assumes a reversible conception of time and focuses on inter-individual differences, looking to suicidal behaviour as a linear manifestation of a demographic or psychological variable (or the interaction of these factors), but disconnected from their immediate contexts. Despite the relevance of identifying these factors or generalized patterns, a considerable and diverse group of authors has been alerting to the need to study and investigate the suicide in alternative ways to the dominant biomedical model (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Hjelmeland & Knizek, 2010; Sarchiapone & D'Aulerio, 2015; White, 2012). The paradox between a long tradition in suicide research and the increasing incidence of this phenomenon seems to appeal to the development of different perspectives to understand and study suicidal behaviour (Arthi, 2008).

The postmodern movement has changed the way human phenomena are conceptualized and studied generating alternative conceptual frameworks. Its influence in psychology resulted in the development of new paradigms of which we highlight the social constructionism and the narrative perspective. Social constructionism posits that the understanding of psychological phenomena is not contained in the minds of individuals, but rather in the social processes, that is, in the relationships established between people through discursive practices (the focus shifted from the individual to the relationship). In this sense, the psychological processes can only be understood if they are contextualized and analysed in the light of the context and the relationships that the person is part of (historical and cultural positioning). There is no external and unique reality, pre-existent to the individual; instead the subjects themselves negotiate and actively co-construct the realities (i.e., meanings) to which they respond (relational construction of meaning). Central to this approach is then the process of assigning meaning to the experience. More than portray the “reality,” assign meaning is a relational construction in which, through language, experience becomes intelligible to oneself and Others. The language is not restricted to a communication vehicle of a pre-

## ACCOUNT OF SUICIDE

linguistic reality, rather is seen as constitutive of human experience (i.e., the words do things), as a joint action through which people create and experience the meaning of their social and psychological realities (Botella, 2001; Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Gergen, 2000, 2009).

According to the narrative perspective, rather than a fixed and unchanging entity to be discovered, each person is like a story that is being told. It is through the narrative, as a product of storytelling about us and the Others and for us and for Others, that we construct and make sense of our experience(s) and ourselves—the identity as a narrative phenomenon (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Bruner, 1986, 1987, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988; Sandelowski, 1991). This self-narrative is understood as a highly interactive phenomenon and as a dialogical co-construction between narrators and listeners (Hermans, 1996; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995). This reading emphasizes the active role of the individual in the construction of meaning for his or her personal existence, within a conversational relationship with Others. In this sense, several authors (e.g., Botella, 2001; Hermans, 2003; Ho, Chan, Peng, & Ng, 2001; Josephs & Valsiner, 1998; Salgado & Gonçalves, 2007; Valsiner, 2004) argue that the minimum unit of psychological conceptualization is not the person as an isolated entity but the person-in-relationship.

In line with this, the concept of social representation, positioned at the interface between the psychological and the social, is of particular instrumental value. The study of social representations allows us to access the appropriation of external reality by the subject and simultaneously the process of psychological elaboration of social reality. The social representation of suicide, as a representation of the phenomenon (object) and of someone (subject), is a process of symbolization, interpretation and construction of meanings. These meanings result from an activity that turns the representation in a construction and an expression of the subject (Jodelet, 1989).

In this article, we integrate the dialogical self theory (DST) and the social representations theory (SRT) to suggest a semiotic-dialogical and sociocultural model of suicide, which assumes that human phenomena, such as suicide, consist of an active and intense relational co-construction of meanings (Gergen, 2000, 2009). The emphasis on interdependence (not to be confused with fusion) of the individual and social dimensions of subjective life, and on the central role of the person towards its ongoing (re)construction is, in our opinion, the greatest potential of this approach.

Research in suicidology has been somehow “entrapped” by theoretical and methodological constraints, leading to the neglect of the subjective and intersubjective elements of the human experience (Bell, Stanley, Mallon, & Manthorpe, 2015). Several authors argue for the need to change the way of studying or “making suicide” and recognize this change as a shift from explanation to understanding the phenomenon

(Hjelmeland & Knizek, 2010; Lester, 2013). We will use the phenomena of suicide for the purposes of integrating DST and SRT.

### **Dialogical Self: Self as Multiple, Social and Contextual**

DST conceives identity as a highly dynamic multiplicity of identity positions (*I*-positions), each representing a perspective or a voice on the current experience. Therefore, various narratives can emerge from different voices about the same experiential phenomenon. In this context, the notion of voice goes beyond the expression of a particular point of view on certain personal experiences (i.e., content) but also reflects, in every moment, the positioning of the person towards an audience. These different *I*-positions negotiate meanings (through dialogue) to make sense of the experiential flow, in an always unfinished process marked by novelty and need for change.

According to Hermans (2001*a*, 2001*b*, 2003), the dialogical self (DS), as a repertoire of multiple positions, comprises internal positions (i.e., those that are perceived as parts of the person, usually introduced by the personal pronoun “I”) and external (i.e., those that are felt to be aspects of environment, but that the person identifies as belonging to him or herself, usually preceded by the possessive pronoun “*Mine*,” “*My*”). The subjective meaning of internal and external *I*-positions emerges from mutual reference; it is created in the dynamic interactions they establish over time with one another through dialogue. Thus, external *I*-positions consist of environmental aspects that are relevant to the individual from the perspective of one or more internal positions (e.g., “my son,” “my client”); likewise, the internal positions acquire their meaning through their relationship with one or more external position (e.g., “I as a mother,” “I as a psychiatrist,” respectively). Not only significant Others take place in the identity, but also the social groups to which the individual belongs (e.g., professional, political, religious, age, nationality, gender). Hermans and Kempen (1993) postulate that social communities have their own voice (i.e., a collective voice) that is able to tell stories that reflect the perspective of the community members on a wide variety of subjects from everyday life.

The human ways of *being*—living as divided between different contexts (sociocultural and temporal) and multiplied by the plurality of experiences in each context inevitably leads to the question: how are individuals able to orchestrate their “crowd” of voices to generate in every moment new and functional meanings, maintaining a sense of personal continuity? As an alternative to individualistic and static tradition, in which human psychological functions are understood as “given” or predetermined, in a dialogical perspective these functions refer to dynamic self-organized and self-innovative processes (Valsiner, 2002). These dynamic properties of psychological processes allow the person to make sense of the phenomenological variety (sensory, perceptual, emotional and cognitive) of his or her “here and now”

## ACCOUNT OF SUICIDE

experience and simultaneously enable the person to adapt to changes in life situation (in terms of time and space), while maintaining a sense of personal consistency. Valsiner (2002, 2004) even claims that the structural flexibility of the DS (i.e., the permanent construction and reconstruction of relations between different I-positions) is its central quality, more than its multivocal and polyphonic character.

Identity is designed as a process of interaction between several voices, each one defending a particular point of view, but having the ability to change or develop when considering another voice(s)' perspective(s) (Hermans, 1996; 2001*b*; Hermans & Kempen, 1993). The construction of meaning about a life event is thus a negotiated narration process, a negotiation that takes place between the various perspectives presented as relevant to the phenomenon—in a narrate, appropriate and (re)narrate cycle (or positioning, counter-positioning and repositioning). In this sense, meanings are not preexisting, but emerge from a dynamic field of forces and counter-forces (e.g., tensions, oppositions, conflicts, integrations, creations) generated by—and acted on — dialogues between *I*-positions. These dynamics allow maintaining and updating the sense of personal identity (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Valsiner, 2002).

The DS operates not only through the construction of dialogical relations between different *I*-positions, but also through the continuous organization (i.e., construction and reconstruction) of the structure of the *I*-position repertoire (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Valsiner, 2002, 2004). The dialogical exchanges between different *I*-positions (and the consequent emergence of meaning) are made possible by the self-organization of these positions in a power structure, in which some positions have a temporary most influential status over the Others. The domain (or power), as intrinsic characteristic of the dialogue (i.e., when a voice, or a coalition of voices, talk, the other voices are temporarily silenced), works as an organizer of the plurality of meanings generated about the same experience. The prevalence of a meaning necessarily implies the neglect (although temporary) of alternative ones. To remain functional, this hierarchical system must be highly dynamic, and permanently subject and available for updates: dominant positions in a given time can easily migrate to a secondary role, and positions previously no significant can assume a more central and leadership role (Hermans, 1996).

Valsiner (2004, 2007) complements this approach by theorizing that the *I*-positions that prevail over the Others personify perspectives or voices that communicate meta-meanings or promoter signs (i.e., meanings with a high level of generalization). This means that the temporary domain of these *I*-positions' voice is associated with the fact that the meanings they construct when they dialogue with other *I*-positions—that we designate as argument, are the most relevant to the current experience. Also, according to Valsiner (2004, 2007), the process of synthesis and hierarchy of meanings (mediated by signs and guided by meta-meanings) regulates the flow of the vertical structure of *I*-positions (i.e., the positioning and repositioning) and provides integrity to

identity. Therefore, the structural flexibility of this plurality of *I*-positions is regulated by the existence of dominance dialogical relations, based on the confrontation between more or less relevant arguments, communicated by the positions, in relation to the current moment.

Collective voices take part in these dialogues and catalyse the construction of meaning in the deepest levels of self-narratives. These voices do not replace the creativity of the speaker (i.e., motivations, values, interests and individual points of view), but shape the words and the discourses produced by colouring the subjectively elaborated meanings, dialogically committing them with past, present and future audiences. At every moment, the set of possible identity positions (i.e., the polyphony) depends on the linguistic resources available in the sociocultural world in which the individual is located. It is the diversity of discourses, norms and practices offered by the different cultural voices—a *heteroglossic* world in Bakhtin's terminology (1981)—that allows the appropriation of different perspectives. As the individual is guided by culturally available meanings (e.g., transmitted by collective voices), sometimes his or her personal speech may resemble the more familiar or socially dominant voices. However, the mere reproduction of these meanings is highly unlikely, precisely because of the heteroglossia manifested in various social languages.

According to Hermans (2001*b*; Hermans & Kempen, 1993), these voices or collective *I*-positions form coalitions with personal voices colouring the meanings constructed in their relations. Therefore, even the said personal meanings are not built in the absence of social, historical and cultural constraints; on the contrary, these personal meanings are not only influenced, but may even be invalidated and suppressed by the collective voices that represent the social groups to which the individual belongs. Still, we (re)emphasize that the influence of collective voices in identity should not be understood as deterministic. The meanings are actively constructed and reconstructed by the author or actor of the narrative from a particular position (e.g., opposition, challenge, agreement, disagreement with the dominant collective perspective). From this position he or she enters into dialogue, and addresses or responds to the Others and the world (Skinner, Valsiner, & Holland, 2001).

### **Social Representations: Shared Semiotic Processes**

According to SRT, we can only truly understand the way people think and act about a segment of reality (e.g., object, phenomenon, experience) if we take into account the dynamic relationship between the individual cognition and the knowledge shared by social groups of belonging (e.g., beliefs, values, ideas, practices). Unlike more traditional models in psychology, based on individualistic methodologies and in an epistemology that functionally separates the subject from the object, in this approach “there is no break between the outer world and the inner world of the individual, the subject and object are not essentially different” (Moscovici, 1969, p. 9).

## ACCOUNT OF SUICIDE

A social representation is, by definition, “a form of knowledge, socially elaborated and shared, with a practical objective, that contributes to the construction of a common reality for a social group” (Jodelet, 1989, p. 36). The representation is socially constructed and shared, through interactions and communication phenomena within a social group, justifying its social character. Its practical nature results from its role in regulating interactions, communication and social behaviour, thus taking a status of practical and social theory (Jodelet, 1989). SRT focuses on the analysis of the construction and transformation of social knowledge (Jovchelovitch, 1998; Marková, 2000). Social representations are: a) relational and dynamic organizations of knowledge and language shared by a group of individuals (Marková, 2000); b) dynamic sets that aim to guide behaviours and social interactions; c) both product and process: as product, they are the content (structure) that circulates as the real version, impregnating the speeches, images, opinions and attitudes; as process, they refer to the psychological and social mechanisms that underlie the formation, organization and processing of such content and their social functions and effectiveness.

Social representations can be found in the cognitive and symbolic activity of a group. They do not represent accurate copies of objects, but emerge from a process through which the individual not only reconstructs, but also creates and innovates shared knowledge, presenting the same reality in a new way (social, cultural and historically). The two processes that are at the origin of social representations—anchoring and objectification—highlight the interdependence between psychological activity and social conditions. In objectification, concepts are associated with images, making concrete previously abstract notions. Objectification is the process by which a representation crystallizes: abstract notions are converted into images whose inner content forms a figurative nucleus (through decontextualization) that transforms the images into elements of reality seen as natural (Moscovici, 2000). Anchoring is the process by which what is strange is turned into something familiar, that is, the unknown is anchored on existing representations. Thus, the new object of representation acquires sense, becomes known; what is new becomes an integral part. This representation, in turn, becomes part of the integrational system of the individual in the social world, because what is common to a group allows its members to share communication and influence the action (Moscovici, 2000). Objectification and anchoring are two deeply intertwined processes, concomitantly developed to give meaning to social representations.

Social representations perform two basic functions: a normative function of cognitive integration of novelty and interpretation of reality and a prescriptive function of guidance of the behaviour and social relationships (Moscovici, 2000). On the one hand, social representations transform what is strange in familiar, by adding novelty to existing knowledge structures endowed with some stability. This way, events of social life are classified in a grid or template of common interpretation, allowing members of a

group to act in accordance. This means that social representations constitute a consensual reality for the members of a group. On the other hand, they rule and guide the way people interact with the world and with Others, organizing the behaviour and the communication exchanges (Jodelet, 1989). It can be said that the social representations help individuals to orient themselves in their material and social universe, justifying their behaviour in relation to social norms as well as their integration into the social context (Abric, 1994; Vala, 1997).

According to Valsiner's (2003) semiotic-cultural perspective on social representations, they belong to the category of pre-adaptive means; they are semiotic mediating tools that guide the construction of meaning about everyday life events. This means that social representations are meaning complexes (macro-level) that function as cultural constraints of human conduct in its present—future temporal path. These macro-level meanings, or promoter signs, generate micro-level constraints that guide the thoughts, feelings and action processes of individuals (Tavares, Salgado, & Gonçalves, 2006; Valsiner, 2003). As they exist both in the communication system of the society and in the individual minds (as *I*-positions), they constitute themselves a link between the social and personal worlds (Valsiner, 2001, 2007). If we consider that suicide is intensely personal yet socioculturally situated, this emphasis on the confluence of individual and social elements conveyed by SRT makes it adequate for guiding the investigation of the cultural meanings of suicide (Arthi, 2008). Furthermore, such a reading of suicide, as a border phenomenon between the subject and the sociocultural and historical context, between the subjective and intersubjective, appeals to a dialogical perspective: the construction of meaning for suicide happens through the dialogues between *I*-positions located in the internal and external domains of the self-system.

### **A Semiotic-Dialogical and Sociocultural Model of Suicide**

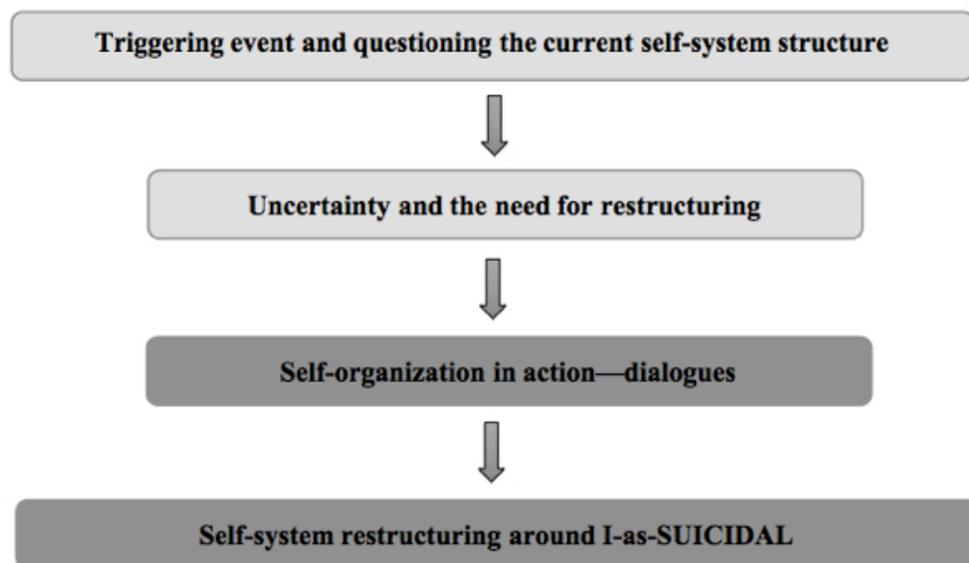
Identity is seen as historically and culturally constructed, which is not a property of individuals, but rather is constructed in discourse, shaped by a range of social, cultural and historical forces (Prokopiou, Cline, & Abreu, 2012, p. 496).

The self-organization of the self-system is based on a hierarchical operating system. In every experiential moment, a position (or a set of positions) occupies the “stage of the self-system” and brings arguments of relevance to the operational centre, which are gradually organized in arguments of higher abstraction order. These macro-level arguments, promoter signs in Valsiner's (2004), have properties of self-evaluation and self-regulation that ensure the stability of the current self-system structure until a new one is required. This organization is not the result of a commanding voice from a static and permanent higher order structure; it is a property that emerges from the combined dialogue between different *I*-positions. The functional character of this self-

## ACCOUNT OF SUICIDE

organizing capacity is tested in moments that require a restructuring of the identity system and it is influenced by personal and contextual variables.

Assuming that human experiences have a dynamic and multifaceted nature, suicide can be thought of as a dialogical process of social and semiotic negotiation resulting from the continuous dialogues within the individual and between individuals. The understanding of what drives a person to assume an identity position, in this case “*I as suicidal*,” will have to be explored in these dialogues. To become “*I as suicidal*” is what happens to us, or what we are, when this personal dimension takes the stage of dynamic interactions with the Others. This position emerges as a way of “making yourself” according to a particular constellation of positions at a given time in a personal space. It is a personal reality created under the influence of social prescriptions, based on a network of intrapersonal, interpersonal and intergroup relations. If we analyse suicide from this self-organization perspective, this behaviour emerges as an intentional and conscious act (contrary to neutral role that has been linked to the individual) that requires a previous work of projective imagination and narrative ownership (Hustvedt, 2013; Kaiser & Renberg, 2012). This work is based on the dialogues (relational dynamics) and arguments (personal, social, and cultural content) around the “*I as suicidal*.” We will now detail a proposal about the path that can lead the “*I as suicidal*” to a commanding voice of the self-system (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Schematic Summary of the Semiotic-Dialogical and Sociocultural Model of Suicide

We suggest that when a subject fails to make sense of an event, resorting to the set of meanings constructed by its present self-system, this event will challenge this systems' structure. The rupture in the temporary stability of the self-system will demand the construction of a new organization. To do so, the different *I*-positions enter dialogue and end up being reorganized around the “*I* as Suicidal”.

### **Triggering Event and Questioning the Current Self-System Structure**

A stressful situation, an unexpected or too demanding event with negative character that challenges our perceptions and expectations about ourselves, Others or the world, can become a triggering event (Rogers, Bromley, McNally, & Lester, 2007). Momentarily, this experience threatens the organization so far achieved, questioning the degree of adaptation of the existing identity structure. For example, let us think in a situation of unemployment as triggering event. In contemporary society, the position “*I* as professional” occupies a prominent place in the self-system (elaborated in Rosa, 2009). In this sense, a situation of unemployment will activate arguments around the loss of standards, security and stability and positions like “*I* as incompetent,” “*I* as marginalized” and “*I* as excluded” can emerge. Therefore, a previously central and functional *I*-position loses its main arguments and other arguments that emerge can push this position out of the central zone and lead it to a secondary role or a state of “hibernation” (Prokopiou, Cline, & Abreu, 2012).

This concept of hibernation reinforces the idea mentioned above that the positions that are not active (in a given time in the construction of self-meaning) do not disappear. They just leave the stage or the centre of the self-system and will now be “behind the curtains,” but always remain available. In the example of unemployment, when the “*I* as professional” (a previously central *I*-position) undergoes a negative change, it becomes a hibernated *I*-position as a coordinated strategy to protect the system as a whole. Interestingly, when this hibernated *I*-position returns to the active centre, it is able to have a reused utility (Prokopiou, Cline, & Abreu, 2012).

### **Uncertainty and the Need for Restructuring**

This threat to the previous identity structure and its organizational capacity will increase the levels of uncertainty and ambivalence, leaving the system vulnerable to surrounding information. Uncertainty is not in itself a negative experience. In fact, it is the permanent alternation between different levels of uncertainty (absence to maximum) that enables and feeds the meaning-making process (O’Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010). However, when unresolved and sustained, it generates anxiety and insecurity (Hermans, 2007), because “the human being does not tolerate the uncertainty towards the future and searches for stability” (Rosa, Duarte, & Gonçalves, 2008, p. 166). In order to survive, the self-system has to risk leaving the actual unstable structure and look for a more viable and adaptive solution. To resolve uncertainty, to restore a functional

## ACCOUNT OF SUICIDE

organization and to find a new structure that guarantees identity continuity, the system activates the dialogues between *I*-positions (Abbey, 2002; Hermans, 2001).

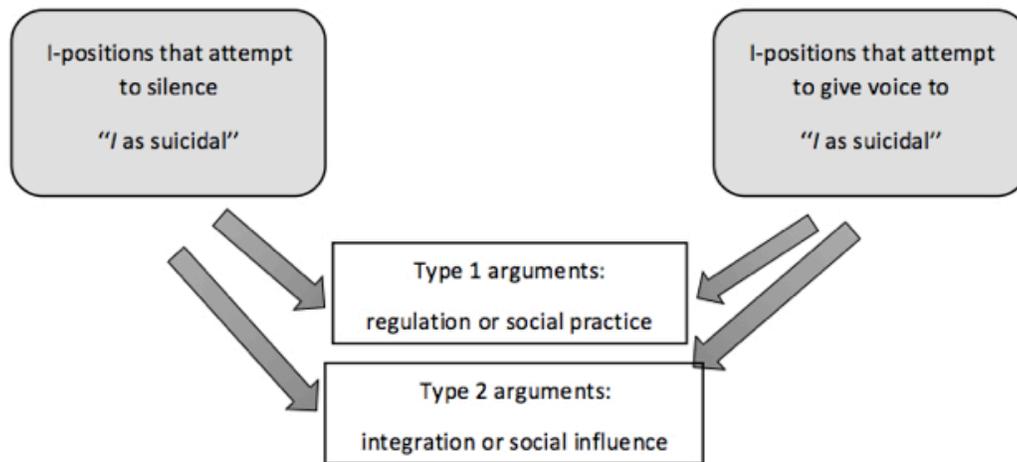
### Self-Organization in Action—Dialogues

The meanings constructed in every experience of the individual are part of the DS in the form of arguments voiced by different *I*-positions. Throughout life we are exposed to different meanings related to suicide, which become part of the field of argumentative possibilities for *I*-positions to use. Each and all the meanings that we face have the potential to be aggregated in an identity dimension (in this case, “*I* as suicidal”) (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). In different social and cultural contexts, and even at different times in history, these meanings can be more frequent, more dominant in the shared meanings’ repertoire. According to Marbe’s law there is a “direct relation between the frequency of an associative response and the speed of its utterance” (Dany, Urdapilleta, & Lo Monaco, 2014, p. 5), so the words that appear at first in our mind are more cognitively available. Therefore, a particular experience (i.e., a triggering event) can generate (in some people more than Others) suicidal thoughts, or in other words, can put in the “self-system’s stage” *I*-positions that come into dialogue with the “*I* as suicidal.” In these dialogic and semiotic dynamics of self-organization, sociocultural *I*-positions, which personify social representations, play a central role.

Next, we will reinterpret a range of factors that have been identified as protective or as risk in relation to suicidal behaviour. According to the model presented here, these factors will be analysed in the dialogues (and arguments) between the “*I* as suicidal” and sociocultural *I*-positions, such as “*I* as religious” and “*My* Religion,” “*I* as member” of a community and “*My* community” (friends, neighbours), “*I* as cultural” and “*My* Culture” (dominant or minority) and the values of *My* Culture. It is important to note that the complexity and contextual dependence of these *I*-positions make it possible that the same position (in a different context) may convey arguments to try to silence (protective), or give voice (risk) to, the position “*I* as suicidal.” We decided to divide these arguments into two types, which overlap with two dimensions highlighted by other authors: type 1 - regulation (Durkheim, 1897) or social practice (Abric, 2001; Moliner, 2001) and type 2 - integration (Durkheim, 1897)<sup>1</sup> or social influence (Galand & Salès-Wuillemin, 2009). The first relates to the content, standards and societal habits that shape a person’s relationship (through the desires and emotions) with the object of representation, in this case with suicide. The second refers to the relationship, since the self-referential meanings are constructed in interaction with Others, to which we are linked through social networks. Both positions that oppose or support the “*I* as suicidal” may employ arguments of type 1 and/or type 2 (Figure 2).

---

<sup>1</sup> Regulation is associated with an external constraining of the person by the societal norms; it has to do with obligations and responsibilities. Integration is related to the support or the feeling of support that a person receives from its social groups; it has to do with feelings of comfort and affiliation.



**Figure 2.** Types of Arguments Used by the Collective *I*-Positions

We will start with examples of type 1 arguments seeking to silence the “*I as suicidal*” (protective factors). In a person with an active religious involvement, the positions “*I as religious*” and “*My Religion*” will surely enter into a dialogue with the “*I as suicidal*.” In Christian doctrine (we are considering the Catholic religion for its emphasis in the Portuguese culture), human life is a central topic and suicide represents a violation of that principle. Therefore, these positions will use the argument of commitment towards certain central religious beliefs, which consist of meanings like “do not kill,” “only God has the power to give and take life,” “suicide is prohibited, it is a sin” (Dervic et al., 2004; Goldston et al., 2008; Nelson, Hanna, Hourri, & Klimes-Dougan, 2012). Another group of positions that can verbalize such arguments are “*I as cultural*” and the values of *My Culture*. For example, in some cultures, these positions can activate the argument of the “shame” value, which consists of a sense of failure and disappointment in the face of expectations of Self and Others (individuals or society/culture as a whole). This argument may involve meanings as “the shame caused to the family, shame for being a coward or shame for having given up” (Goldston et al., 2008; Sarchiapone & D’Aulerio, 2015).

Also in relation to arguments that seek to silence the “*I as suicidal*,” we will now analyse type 2. The positions “*I as religious*” and “*My Religion*” may use the argument of the benefits for being an active element of the formal activities or religious rituals—broader social networks, more favourable perceptions of the quality of their support networks and a greater sense of belonging (Dervic et al., 2004; Goldston et al., 2008; Koenig, George, & Titus, 2004; Moxey, McEvoy, Bowe, & Attia, 2011; Nelson, Hanna, Hourri, & Klimes-Dougan, 2012; Pescosolido & Georgianna, 1989; Robins &

## ACCOUNT OF SUICIDE

Fiske, 2009; Stack & Lester, 1991). Along the same lines, the positions “*I as member*” of a community and “*My community*” may bring to arguments like “you are part of who we are,” “without you the group will not be complete,” “you’re not alone,” seeking to satisfy the basic need for belonging and social support (Durkheim, 1951; Heikkinen, Aro, & Lonnqvist, 1993; Joiner, 2005; Lester, 2001; Maimon & Kuhl, 2008; Trout, 1980; Van Orden et al., 2010). The same argument can be used by the “*I as cultural*” and the values of “*My Culture*” through, for example, the value of “collectivism” (Goldston et al., 2008; Sarchiapone & D’Aulerio, 2015).

We will now focus on the opposite pole, which includes the arguments used by other positions to give voice to the “*I as suicidal*” (risk factors), primarily through type 1 arguments. In certain cultural contexts, the “*I as cultural*” and “*My Minority Culture*” present powerful symbolic meanings such as “make your voice heard; manifest yourself; fight for the rights of disadvantaged,” which legitimize and promote the voice of the “*I as suicidal*” (Counts, 1988). We cannot ignore that we now live in a time of suicide bombers, murder-suicide, self-immolation. A break of continuity in culture, as a common element in the experience of suicide, might also validate the script of “*I as suicidal*” as a dominant voice (Lakeman & Fitzgerald, 2008). The experience of emigration (acculturation) or belonging to a micro-culture of the country of origin (enculturation), represents the challenge of building a functional balance between the assimilation of the dominant culture and the retention of cultural specificity (Goldston et al., 2008). In this situation, the “*I as cultural*” and “*My dominant culture*” or “*My minority culture*” verbalize arguments that evidence its vagueness such as “I no longer know who I am,” “I need to redefine myself,” “I have to make sense.” In this sense, another position can assume the centrality of the system and the “*I as suicidal*” emerges as an option as valid as any other (Ball & Chandler, 1989; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998, 2008; Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003).

Finally, we refer to the arguments of type 2 that give voice to the “*I as suicidal*.” Social groups (“*I as a member*” of a community and “*My community*”) and cultural groups (“*I as cultural*” and “*My culture*”) may, contrary to what was previously described, exert a regressive and oppressive function (Quartilho, 2006). The argument around the value “collectivism” can arouse to the awareness of racial oppression and discrimination, meaning non-integration (Goldston et al., 2008; Sarchiapone & D’Aulerio, 2015). On the other hand, when belonging to a group requires levels too high of commitment and loyalty, the person becomes unable to make decisions in crisis situations (positions refuse to dialogue) and merely follows predefined options (Quartilho, 2006).

### **Self-System Restructuring Around “*I as suicidal*”**

We argue that, as a result of these identity meetings, a new structure is developed around the “*I as suicidal*,” which now occupies a central role in the self-system. Suicide becomes a viable option, or “*I as suicidal*,” has voice and power, when the identity system is exposed to a triggering event that questions the adaptive nature of the current structure and thus activates self-organization strategies (Lester, 2013). The new structure enables to restore the narrative coherence and the temporal direction, that is, the continuity of identity (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Therefore, “the suicide [it is constructed as] a form [...] of taking charge of his narrative and ending it” (Hustvedt, 2003).

### **Conclusion**

The socioconstructionist perspective that promotes a holistic view of human experience and existence is directed to the search for interactions and meaning. It is important to note that this view does not reject the analysis of individual characteristics, but argues that they should be read in terms of their personal and social meaning. Accordingly, suicide does not seem reducible to the effect of certain attributes. Personal attributes and behaviour are permeated with meanings not decipherable from its mere measurement (e.g., effect size, proportion of variance). It is by understanding these meanings that human experience can be understood.

Suicide is now widely recognized as a phenomenon multi-determined by individual, psychological and sociocultural factors (e.g., Roy, 1985; Roy, Nielsen, Rylander & Sarchiapone, 2000). These factors have, however, deserved a distinct attention from the scientific community, with a greater emphasis on individual and psychological factors, either alone or taken in relation (Sarchiapone & D’Aulerio, 2015). It seems to us particularly important that research on suicide contemplates the active role that the Self can play in the decision to die by suicide, considering the identity multiplicity and relating it to the sociocultural influences that shape it. We believe that the conceptual framework presented here allows for some conceptual movement between the individual and social levels of analysis of human behaviour by integrating subjective and intersubjective dimensions. The future direction of our research line is to develop studies to study how the meaning of suicide is constructed. We intend to explore the meaning-making processes in the story of those who have already appropriated of suicide (suicide attempts), analysing the meanings (attitudes, values) conveyed by different sociocultural agents. This will be the starting point for the development of prevention and intervention strategies that consider the cultural specificities.

## ACCOUNT OF SUICIDE

### References

- Abbey, E. (2002). Ventriloquism: The central role of an immigrant's own group members in negotiating ambiguity in identity. *Culture & Psychology, 8*(4), 409–415.
- Abric, J.-C. (2006). *Pratiques sociales et représentations* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Arthi (2008). “There’s a weakness in them”: Representations of suicide among Tamil Singaporeans. *Psychology & Society, 1*(1), 29–41.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981/1975). *The dialogical imagination: Four essays* (M. Holquist & C. Emerson, Trans.). Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Ball, L., & Chandler, M. (1989). Identity formation in suicidal and nonsuicidal youth. *Development & Psychopathology, 1*(3), 257–275. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0954579400000444>
- Bell, J., Stanley, N., Mallon, S., & Manthorpe, J. (2015). Insights into the processes of suicide contagion: Narratives from young people bereaved by suicide. *Suicidology Online, 6*, 43–52.
- Botella, L. (2001). Diálogo, relações e mudança: Uma aproximação discursiva à psicoterapia construtiva. [Dialogue, relationships and change: A discursive approach to constructive psychotherapy]. In M. M. Gonçalves & O. F. Gonçalves (Eds.), *Psicoterapia, discurso e narrativa: A construção conversacional da mudança* (pp. 91–124). Coimbra, Portugal: Quarteto Editora.
- Brockmeier, J., & Harré, R. (2001). Narrative: Problems and promises of an alternative paradigm. In J. Brockmeier & D. Carbaugh (Eds.), *Narrative and Identity: Studies in autobiography, self and culture* (pp. 39–58). Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1987). Life as narrative. *Social Research, 54*(1), 11–32.
- Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry, 18*(1), 1–21.
- Chandler, M. J., & Lalonde, C. E. (1998). Cultural continuity as a hedge against suicide in Canada's First Nations. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 35*(2), 191–219.
- Chandler, M. J., & Lalonde, C. E. (2008). Cultural Continuity as a protective factor against suicide in First Nations youth. *Horizons - A Special Issue on Aboriginal*

*Youth, Hope or Heartbreak: Aboriginal Youth and Canada's Future*, 10(1), 68–72.

- Chandler, M. J., Lalonde, C. E., Sokol, B., & Hallett, D. (2003). Personal persistence, identity development, and suicide: A study of Native and non-Native North American adolescents. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, Serial No. 273, 68(2).
- Counts, D. A. (1988). Ambiguity in the interpretation of suicide. In D. Lester (Ed.), *Why women kill themselves* (pp. 87–109). Springfield, IL: Charles Thomas.
- Dany, L., Urdapilleta, I., & Lo Monaco, G. (2014). Free associations and social representations: Some reflections on rank-frequency and importance-frequency methods. *Quality and Quantity*, 48(2), 1–19.
- Dervic, K., Oquendo, M. A., Grunebaum, M. F., Ellis, S., Burke, A. K., & Mann, J. J. (2004). Religious affiliation and suicide attempt. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 161(12), 2303–2308. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.161.12.2303>
- Durkheim E. (1897). *Le suicide. Étude de sociologie*. Paris, France: Librairie Felix Alcan.
- Everall, R. D. (2000). The meaning of suicide attempts by young adults. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 34(2), 111–125.
- Farberow, N. L., & Shneidman, E. S. (1961). *The cry for help*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Fitzpatrick, S. (2011). Looking beyond the qualitative and quantitative divide: Narrative, ethics and representation in suicidology. *Suicidology Online*, 2, 29–37.
- Galand C., Salès-Wuillemin E. (2009). La représentation des drogues chez les étudiants en psychologie: Effets des pratiques de consommation et influence de l'entourage [The Representation of Drugs in Psychology Students: Effects of Consumer Practices and Influence]. *Les Cahiers Internationaux de Psychologie Sociale*, 84, p. 125–152. doi: 10.3917/cips.084.0125
- Gergen, K. J. (2000). *An invitation to social construction*. London, England: Sage Publications.
- Gergen, K. J. (2009). *Relational being: Beyond self and community*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

## ACCOUNT OF SUICIDE

- Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (1988). Narrative and the self as relationship. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology, Vol. 21* (pp. 17–56). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Goldston, D. B., Molock, S. D., Whitbeck, L. B., Murakami, J. L., Zayas, L. H., & Hall, G. (2008). Cultural considerations in adolescent suicide prevention and psychosocial treatment. *Am Psychol.*, *63*(1), 14–31. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.63.1.14
- Gonçalves, M. M. (1995). *Autoconhecimento e acesso introspectivo: Do self reificado ao self introspectivo [Self-knowledge and introspective access: From the reified self to the introspective self]*. Braga, Portugal: Serviço de Publicações do Instituto de Educação e Psicologia da Universidade do Minho.
- Gonçalves, M. M. (2003). *Psicoterapia, uma arte retórica: Contributos das terapias narrativas [Psychotherapy, a Rhetorical Art: Contributions of Narrative Therapies]*. Coimbra, Portugal: Quarteto.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (1996). Voicing the self: From information processing to dialogical interchange. *Psychological Bulletin*, *119*, 31–50.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2001a). The construction of a personal position repertoire: Method and Practice. *Culture & Psychology*, *7*(3), 323–366.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2001b). The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and culture positioning. *Culture & Psychology*, *7*(3), 243–281.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2003). The construction and reconstruction of dialogical self. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, *16*, 89–130.
- Hermans, H. (2007). Self, identity, and globalisation in times of uncertainty: A dialogical analysis. *Review of General Psychology*, *11*(1), 31–61.
- Hermans, H., & Hermans-Jansen, E. (1995). *Self-narratives: The construction of meaning in psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Hermans, H., & Kempen, H. (1993). *The dialogical self: Meaning as movement*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Hjelmeland, H., & Knizek, B. L. (2010). Why we need qualitative research in suicidology. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, *40*(1), 74–80.
- Ho, D., Chan, S., Peng, S., & Ng, A. (2001). The dialogical self: Converging east-west constructions. *Culture & Psychology*, *7*(3), 393–408.

- Hustvedt, S. (2013). Suicide and the drama of self-consciousness. *Suicidology Online*, 4, 105–113.
- Jodelet, D. (1989). Les représentations sociales: Un domaine en expansion [Social representations: An expanding field]. In D. Jodelet (Ed.), *Les représentations sociales* (pp. 31–61). Paris, France: PUF.
- Josephs, I. (2002). The Hopi in me: The construction of a voice in the dialogical self from a cultural psychological perspective. *Theory & Psychology*, 12, 161–173.
- Josephs, I., & Valsiner, J. (1998). How does autodiologue work? Miracles of meaning maintenance and circumvention strategies. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 61(1), 68–83.
- Jovchelovitch, S. (1998). Representações sociais: Para uma fenomenologia dos saberes sociais [Social representations: Towards a phenomenology of social knowledge]. *Psicologia e Sociedade*, 10(1), 54–68.
- Kaiser, N., & Renberg, E. S. (2012). Suicidal expressions among the Swedish reindeer-herding Sami population. *Suicidology Online*, 3, 102–113.
- Koenig, H. G., George, L. K., & Titus, P. (2004). Religion, spirituality, and health in medically ill hospitalized older patients. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 52(4), 554–562.
- Lakeman, R., & Fitzgerald, M. (2008). How people live with or get over being suicidal: A review of qualitative studies. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 64(2), 114–126. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2008.04773.x
- Lester, D. (2013). An essay on loss of self versus escape from self in suicide: Illustrative cases from diaries left by those who died by suicide. *Suicidology Online*, 4, 16–20.
- Marková, I. (2000). Amédée or how to get rid of it: Social representations from a dialogical perspective. *Culture & Psychology*, 6, 419–460.
- Moliner, P. (2001). Une approche chronologique des représentations sociales [A chronological approach to social representations]. In P. Moliner (Ed.), *La dynamique des représentations sociales* (pp. 245–268). Grenoble, France: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.
- Moscovici, S. (1969). Preface to C. Herzlich, *Santé et Maladie, Analyse d'une Représentation Sociale* [Health and Illness, Analysis of a Social Representation]. Haia, Netherlands: Mouton.

## ACCOUNT OF SUICIDE

- Moscovici, S. (2000). *Social representations: Explorations in social psychology*. Cambridge, England: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd.
- Moxey, A., McEvoy, M., Bowe, S., & Attia, J. (2011). Spirituality, religion, social support, and health among older Australian adults. *Australian Journal on Aging, 30*(2), 82–88. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-6612.2010.00453.x
- Nelson, G., Hanna, R., Houry, A., & Klimes-Dougan, B. (2012). Protective functions of religious traditions for suicide risk. *Suicidology Online, 3*, 59–71.
- Nowak, A., Vallacher, R. R., Tesser, A., & Borkowski, W. (2000). Society of self: The emergence of collective properties in self-structure. *Psychological Review, 107*(1), 39–61. doi: 10.1037/W33-295X.107.1.39
- O’Sullivan-Lago, R., & Abreu, G. d. (2010). Maintaining continuity in a cultural contact zone: Identification strategies in the dialogical self. *Culture & Psychology, 16*(1), 73–92. doi: 10.1177/1354067X09353207
- Pescosolido, B. A., & Georgianna, S. (1989). Durkheim, suicide, and religion: Toward a network theory of suicide. *American Sociological Review, 54*(1), 33–48.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Prokopiou, E., Cline, T., & Abreu, G. d. (2012). “Silent” monologues, “loud” dialogues and the emergence of hibernated I-positions in the negotiation of multivoiced cultural identities. *Culture & Psychology, 18*(4), 494–509. doi: 10.1177/1354067X12456885
- Quartilho, M. J. (2006). Suicídio: Aspectos sociais e culturais [Suicide: Social and cultural aspects]. In B. Peixoto, C. Braz Saraiva & D. Sampaio (Eds.), *Comportamentos suicidários em Portugal* (pp. 55–74). Lisbon, Portugal: Sociedade Portuguesa de Suicidologia.
- Rogers, J. R., Bromley, J. L., McNally, C. J., & Lester, D. (2007). Content analysis of suicide notes as a test of the motivational component of the existential-constructivist model of suicide. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 85*, 182–188
- Rosa, C. (2009). The dialogical identity from an empirical prism: A study on conjugality. Braga, Portugal: Unpublished PhD thesis.
- Rosa, C., Duarte, F., & Gonçalves, M. M. (2008). Self and dialogical articulation of multivocality: Proposal of an analysis model. In S. Salvatore, J. Valsiner,

- S. Strout & J. Clegg (Eds.), *YIS: Yearbook of idiographic science - Volume 1* (pp. 1–23). Rome, Italy: Firera Publishing Group.
- Roy, A. (1985). Suicide. A multidetermined act. *The Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 8(2), 243–250.
- Roy, A., Nielsen, D., Rylander, G., & Sarchiapone, M. (2000). The genetics of suicidal behaviour. In K. Hawton & K. van Heeringen (Eds.), *The international handbook of suicide and attempted suicide* (pp. 209–221). West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Salgado, J., & Gonçalves, M. (2007). The dialogical self: Social, personal and (un)conscious. In A. Rosa & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of socio-cultural psychology*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Sandelowski, M. (1991). Telling stories: Narrative approaches in qualitative research. *Image: Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 23(3), 161–166.
- Sarchiapone, M., & D'Aulerio, M. (2015). The role of the culture into the multifactorial approach to suicidal behavior. *Suicidology Online*, 6(1).
- Skinner, D., Valsiner, J., & Holland, D. (2001). Discerning the dialogical self: A theoretical and methodological examination of a Nepali adolescent's narrative [34 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (on-line journal), 2(3).
- Tavares, S., Salgado, J., & Gonçalves, M. (2006). The psychotherapist's social role under a dialogical perspective: A study of the personal construction of «I as psychotherapist». *European Journal of School Psychology*, 4, 349–372.
- Vala, J. (1997). Representações sociais: Para uma psicologia social do pensamento social [Social representations: For a social psychology of social thought]. In J. Vala & M. B. Monteiro (Eds.), *Psicologia social* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (pp. 353–384). Lisbon, Portugal: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
- Valsiner, J. (1998). *The guided mind*. Cambridge, England: Harvard University Press.
- Valsiner, J. (2001). *Comparative study of human cultural development*. Madrid, Spain: Fundacion Infancia Y Apendizage.
- Valsiner, J. (2002). Forms of dialogical relations and semiotic autoregulation within the self. *Theory & Psychology*, 12, 251–265.
- Valsiner, J. (2003). Beyond social representations: A theory of enablement. *Papers on Social Representations*, 12, 7.1–7.16.

## ACCOUNT OF SUICIDE

- Valsiner, J. (2004). *The promoter sign: Developmental transformation within the structure of dialogical self*. Paper presented at the symposium Developmental Aspects of the Dialogical Self, in July. Ghent, Belgium.
- Valsiner, J. (2007). *Culture in minds and societies: Foundations of cultural psychology*. London, England: Sage Publications.
- Walton, G. (2010). The problem trap: Implications of policy archaeology methodology for anti-bullying policies. *Journal of Education Policy*, 25(2), 135–150. doi: 10.1080/02680930903428630
- White, J. (2012). Youth suicide as a “wild” problem: Implications for prevention practice. *Suicidology Online*, 3, 42–50.

(This page deliberately left blank)

## **DEVELOPING A DISCUSSION AWAY FROM BIOMEDICAL APPROACHES TO ONE EMBEDDED IN THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE OF INDIVIDUALS**

Cathy Nicholson

London School of Economics and Political Science, England

**Abstract.** Understanding suicide has long been a subject of great interest across many disciplines since the late nineteenth century when Durkheim stressed the significance of collective cohesion as a factor related to individual behaviour. Over time this relationship has shifted more to the study of individual behaviour affected by a plethora of varying variables. Rosa & Tavares (2017) suggest a move away from an inter-individual biomedical approach discussion on suicide, to one that takes into account the context of the cultural and social life of individuals. A theoretical argument for this perspective centres on the significance of meaning making within the dialogical self theory, coupled with the significance of how suicide is represented –referring to social representation theory—within the social and cultural life of the individual. The ensuing model derived from this theoretical positioning suggests how the relationship between the Self and the sociocultural setting can serve as a base from which to pursue supportive programs in order to steer individuals away from the act of suicide. This commentary adds a further theoretical dimension to discuss how the role of identity in suicidal behaviour can also be developed by thinking of suicide as an act dialogically immersed in the sociocultural context, rather than solely as an individual identity position related to a particular sociocultural context.

**Keywords:** suicide, the dialogical self, social representations, identity construction

Suicide as a phenomenon remains an individual elusive human act yet at the same time is profoundly connected to the individual's world of Others. The paper by Rosa & Tavares (2017) suggests an innovative psychological perspective to the study of suicide by outlining a model that encompasses both the individual and the sociocultural relationship in this discussion. Their prerogative in following such a journey was based on their questioning and challenging of mainstream psychological research that has tended to concentrate on fixed inter-individual demographic differences within a biomedical model, disconnected from any cultural or social context. By exploring the possibilities of meaningful contextual and social experience in individuals, the authors discussed how dynamic social processes can be conceptualized to develop further understanding of suicidal behaviour. By exploring how the meaning of suicide might be

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Cathy Nicholson, London School of Economics and Political Science, Queen's House Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK. Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the author at [c.g.nicholson@lse.ac.uk](mailto:c.g.nicholson@lse.ac.uk)

constructed across a range of these contexts, from both a subjective and intersubjective perspective, they anticipate developing a conceptual strategy to suggest alternative suicide prevention and intervention strategies. To that end, the paper is a useful contribution to the psychological discussion of suicide, both as a theoretical and conceptual development and as a way of effecting theory into the exploration of an empirical reality.

This commentary examines how the theoretical construction that underpins the semiotic-dialogical and sociocultural model can be unravelled to reveal the usefulness of such an approach and how this positioning might be developed further. First, the nature of suicide will be briefly alluded to. Second, a discussion of how the two theoretical trajectories, that of dialogical self theory (DST) and social representation theory (SRT) are interpreted by Rosa & Tavares (2017). Third, the concept of dialogism that encompasses both the theoretical trajectories is discussed and finally, the model resulting from the authors is discussed to demonstrate how such an approach can be a useful starting point for empirical work, the results of which can refine, enhance and develop the discussion further.

### **Suicide in Context**

It can be argued that the relationship between the individual and the cultural context in which the representations of suicide are rooted is central to any discussion surrounding the phenomenon. Religious faith and beliefs are often referred to when discussing the acceptability or unacceptability of ending one's life, for example, commandments around killing and the subsequent shame brought to the family within Judeo-Christian belief systems. The tradition of *sati* in Sikh religious beliefs, where the wife of a deceased man committed suicide through burning at the time of his cremation endowing honour upon her family is now banned, but still remains in the representational field. Ideological beliefs around suicide, for example, the Western liberal ideology of euthanasia through individual choice when terminal illness can no longer be endured, is a more modern phenomenon. The mix of both religion and ideology can also be a factor in suicidal behaviour, for example, the practice of suicide bombing as an act of aggression to kill Others as well as themselves, in a state of perceived intractable conflict that bestows martyrdom to the individual within a framework of an afterlife existence. Finally, individual mental suffering resulting in suicide is one that is the most prominent in the literature that is discussed in terms of the biomedical model and inter-individual demographic approaches.

### **DST as a Theoretical Tool for Understanding the Act of Suicide**

Rosa & Tavares (2017) suggest DST is central to exploring the relationship between the self and the sociocultural context of suicide in which the individual is embedded. As they suggest, central to the DST is the placing of the individual within a

## DEVELOPING A DISCUSSION

multiple, social and contextual sphere through a relationship of diverse *I*-positions, each coloured by the prevailing cultural milieu (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2012). This perspective fits well as a theoretical tool for understanding how individuals can host a series of dialogical positions at any one time, where internal dialogue across a myriad of different selves allows a cross-fertilization of identities, that develop and operate according to a particular cultural or individual context. The dynamism of such an approach opens a forum of inner multi-perspectives, the exploration of which gives rise to the analysis and interpretation of an array of conflicting positions the individual may have at his or her disposal, in order to come to an identity position about a particular phenomenon related to a behavioural outcome, in this case, suicide. Of significance in this approach is the hierarchical nature of the dialogical self (DS), where a power structure gives rise to meta-meanings to manage a plethora of meanings. This is defined as a self organizing stabilizing system where macro level arguments act as promoter signs for the purpose of self-evaluation (Rosa & Tavares, 2017). Internal dialogue between *I*-positions plays a major role in their positioning, as meaning is constructed and reconstructed to adapt to prevailing contexts. The position of “*I* as suicidal” can thus be interpreted both as a semiotic negotiation within the DS, influenced by the external world through interpersonal and as an intergroup positioning, derived from social and cultural linguistic resources. As Rosa & Tavares (2017) argue, and exemplified by the work of Valsiner (2002), meaning making is not pre-existing but arises through the dynamic interplay of tensions generated by and between the prevailing patterns of multiple *I*-positions which give rise to an individual’s sense of identity. It is argued that the resulting constructions and reconstructions continually fluctuate and organize positions into a power structured framework, where a coalition of voices can result in the silencing of some over others, in a continually evolving pattern (Hermans, 1996), related to and influenced by the sociocultural context in which the individual is rooted. Rosa & Tavares (2017) stress that “the influence of collective voices in identity should not be understood as deterministic” (p.), but arises from an individual’s constructed and reconstructed positions that may agree or disagree with a dominant collective position, reflecting a sense of autonomy within the said individual.

This interpretation of DST in this exploration of suicide relies on the description of the construction of identities within the Self, mediated through a matrix of collective positioning, which accounts for a position as “*I* as suicidal.” Yet suicide can also be described as an individual act when individuals carry out the means of their own self-destruction. At that moment in time he or she has arrived at a decision to follow a specific course of action, counter to the human instinct of preserving one’s life. The DS position fades away at that moment in time, as an overriding motivation for annihilation occurs, suggesting that something over and above an identity position might also be at play. The act itself can be described as a process that is conceived by the individual as paramount and yet relates to a particular context, where a system of beliefs is

characterized by his or her perceptions of the world and a place from where he or she acts.

Constructions of identity as dialogically developed as suggested by DST, where a cross-fertilization of different selves results in a myriad of identities, demonstrate how suicidal behaviour might develop in a particular individual within a particular context and at a particular time. However, I argue that “*I* as suicidal” discussed as an identity position can alternatively be discussed as a state of being, as a dynamic process rather than an identity as an ontological entity. Identities can be described as concepts that relate to a position taken by a subject, for example, “*I* as a clinically depressed individual,” “*I* as a terminally ill patient”, “*I* as a resistance fighter,” may give rise to reaching a state of being that relates to the suicidal context, but does not preclude it from any particular action based on the related identity position. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2012) discuss the Self as a socially constructed phenomenon where concepts, images and understanding are deeply determined by power relations rather than by self-contained individualized entities. The multiplicity of voices in the Self, rather than identities, where dialogues across internal positions play a role in positioning the individual (Hermans, 2002) is further enhanced by the extension of the Self where the collective voices, whether real or imagined, from friends, allies, strangers or enemies can become a transient addition to the positions in the Self-space (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2012). Thus, to have a sense of Self is to be disposed to express oneself in particular ways and in particular contexts (Harré, 1998). Selves cannot be described as entities as such and can only perceive and act from one point of view at any given space and time.

Constructions of identity positions, as discussed by Tavreres and Rosa (2017), suggest a structural approach with a dialogical interplay across them to make sense of a perceived reality under consideration. Stocks of knowledge can be suggested as being socially created through action processes where personal beings are real enough, the source of which is socially sustained and collectively imposed as a cluster of theories and beliefs (Harré, 1983). These clusters and beliefs can be seen as being transmitted through three aspects of human psychology, namely, consciousness, agency and identity, which combine to view humans as cultural artefacts defined by the character of their beliefs. Thus *I*-positions can be a useful resource to explore how individuals might perceive these characters of their beliefs. However, the use of structural elements to conceptually interpret theoretical arguments can perhaps lead to a discussion that contains reified entities which hold the possibility of inhibiting alternative approaches. By stressing the concept of identities within DST as a structural concept, rather than one of process, a gap between the Self as a positioning being and one embedded with the Other to define the Self, can be problematic when designing a model to incorporate these theoretical ideas. We can talk of an identity structure as a type of category, for example, “*I* am a Christian, a woman and a mother.” But I might add a more

## DEVELOPING A DISCUSSION

descriptive entity to that – “*I am a lapsed Christian,*” “*I am a fulfilled woman*” (on a good day) and so on, adding layers to this basic category. Furthermore, there are more dynamic aspects that one might attune to, for example, a constructed set of Christian beliefs that have led to a possible preferred positioning of the recognition and acceptance of the Other and at the same time might be discounted under certain contexts, for example, feeling threatened as a mother to protect one’s children or being stigmatized, either personally or institutionally.

The interweaving of the dialogical relationship across the “different selves” whether they be identity constructions embedded in sociocultural life as suggested by DST, or clusters of theories and beliefs following Harré (1983), complements the interrelated self/sociocultural approach to the understanding of suicide, as Rosa & Tavares (2017) eloquently suggest. But is this enough? The addition of SRT into the author’s account adds a further layer of theoretical enquiry that encompasses both the Self and the sociocultural world.

### **SRT as a Theoretical Tool for Understanding the Act of Suicide**

Rosa & Tavares (2017) interpret SRT as the “dynamic relationship between individual cognition and knowledge shared by other groups” (p. 90) that both constructs knowledge systems and guides behaviour. Social representations of suicide are thus communicated throughout the contextual landscape to both illuminate and develop a particular notion of an object, and so be discussed through the cultural landscape to illuminate a particular explanation, for example, how the act of suicide is perceived and understood, dependent on the knowledge system of any given social group. Thus social representations of suicide as interpreted by the authors, act as semiotic mediating tools (Valsiner, 2003) that can guide constructions of meaning that exist both within the individual and act as communication across social groups, linking them both within a sociocultural and historical context (Valsiner, 2007). The choice of SRT as party to the discussion of suicide is suggested as “the confluence of individual and social elements conveyed by SRT makes it adequate for guiding the investigation of the cultural meaning of suicide” (Rosa & Tavares, 2017, p. 92). And although they suggest the dialogical appeal of the construction of meaning between individual *I*-positions located in the internal and external domains of the self-system, further clarification of this relationship would add to the discussion. Moreover, SRT represents a dialogical theoretical trajectory based on the importance of the Other in regard to the Self in any dyadic relationship. As Marková (2003) argued, this can be understood in terms of the *ego-alter* (or as Self/Other) and the object in question, in this case, that of suicide. This dialogical relationship introduces the *ego-alter* or Self/Other where “other’s worlds become part of our conscious and all aspects of culture fill our own life and orientate our existence towards others” (Marková, 2003, p. 256). This relationship in essence remains a dialogical one as each subject cannot be separated from the relationship with

the Other, as they each act on the perceptions of the Other's positioning. In the case of suicide, the relationship between the Self of the individual as "I as suicidal" and the social life in which the individual is embedded, cannot be easily separated or categorized, as they are entwined with each other, and any explanation of one would require an explanation of the other. The state of "being suicidal" as a relational process linked to a constructed identity and permeating from social representations related to a specific time, place and social context, opens a discussion as to how these concepts might be interpreted, as to what might trigger the individual act of self-destruction. This is not necessarily a causal exploration but one that reflects an understanding of the array of different processes intertwined across this dialogical matrix.

Social representations are both a product and process which illuminate a consensus of a reality under observation, where the former suggests a structure as a particular version of an event, or part of a knowledge system that informs ideas and beliefs, and the latter, as a mechanism that underlies the development, processing and organization of such a structure.

Their sociocultural nature addresses the relationship between Self and social life that has demonstrated its usefulness in the theoretical discussion of suicide. Not only can these modalities of knowledge be explored, but also the functions derived from them that shape action, communication and the creation of social realities can be inferred (Moscovici, 2000). At the same time, social representations swirl within the community inform and construct our identities (Howarth, 2011) within a particular contextual and cultural framework. The relationship between the Self and society is central to SRT where an external stimulus is understood by the individual to warrant a certain kind of response, according to the way that the social representation represents a meaningful entity in that particular context (Wagner, 1993). What appears to stand between the discussion of DST and SRT by Rosa & Tavares (2017) is the emphasis on the perceived prime influence of the theoretical base trajectory, that is, of the individual as a subjective being in DST and the social being through an intersubjective relationship in SRT. I argue that both trajectories can be considered to be dialogical processes and both contain forms of content and process within their theoretical explanation that assumes the significance of the relationship between Self and Other. However, it is the discussion around the Self/Other relationship at the core of both and how this is discussed that is of interest.

Whilst DST acknowledges the Self as a dynamic and dialogical system where the Other acts as a way of colouring this Self-system and so affects knowledge and behavioural outcomes, SRT places the Other as central to the Self at every psychological turn. Attempting to divide this relationship into two separate, although interconnected components, becomes a challenge. Entity as a structure can then take over from a process based discussion, leading to further compartmentalizing of the Self that may ignore the very aspects of Other that may hold the key to further understanding

## DEVELOPING A DISCUSSION

suicide as a phenomenon. Devising a model that can describe a process can then become locked into accepting theoretical constructs as entities with inbuilt assumptions which may not take into account this embedded dialogical Self/Other relationship.

### **The Semiotic-Dialogical and Sociocultural Model of Suicide**

The model proposed by Rosa & Tavares (2017) focuses on the interweaving of both DST and SRT as a theoretical base where both constructions of identity across dialogical *I*-positions where “*I* as suicidal” results from a semiotic negotiation within the social and contextual representational sociocultural field. The authors suggested that “*I* as suicidal” might be triggered by a life event that affected the individual self-system leading to uncertainty and a need to restructure the Self through internal dialogues for stability to counteract the rising anxiety of provoking further the unresolved status. The social representations of suicide, as perceived by that individual, might then be positioned to lead to either a silencing of, or giving voice to, the constructed identity of “*I* as suicidal,” that is, whether the individual will contemplate and carry through the act of suicide or not.

There is an assumption that this model refers to suicide as a personal act of despair, rather than one exemplified earlier as being temporally predetermined. However, all suicides would follow a pattern of restructuring following uncertainty but over different time frames; even during a process of despair, the Other in the Self will remain dialogically present. The Other will be integrated into both Type 1 and Type 2 arguments as suggested by the authors, first, as desires and emotions shaped by social regulation and societal habits and second, as self-referential meanings constructed during interaction with Others. The desire to integrate the subjective and intersubjective dimensions is one that is alluded to, yet all behaviour can be described as having an intersubjective base from which to act even though it is the individual who carries out that act. Durkheim’s (1897) classic study of suicide demonstrated this relationship between the Self and society, categorizing the act of suicide into processes of egoism, altruism and anomie. Of significance in his theoretical idea was the balance between the individual and collective experience in behavioural outcomes. Individuals could be protected, or not, from suicide through processes of which they may be quite unaware, for example, through social institutions in the form of cultural rituals, rather than through themselves providing social cohesion, demonstrating the Self/Other link.

The design of the model by Rosa & Tavares (2017), taking two theoretical trajectories, that of DST and SRT at its base, where the Self/Other relationship and a semiotic-dialogical and sociocultural account of suicide can illuminate the processes that can remain hidden from view when exploring the understanding of motivations of suicide, is a fruitful one and open to further discussion. Empirical work can further elucidate and develop this theoretical positioning. Choosing a methodology with which to continue refining the model by empirical research will be an interesting exercise. For

example, researching individuals' perceptions when in the position of "I as suicidal," as mediated through trained staff from charities such as the Samaritans, could provide a foundation from which to start an empirical exploration of this dialogical relationship. By connecting two theoretical paradigms that of DST and SRT, Rosa & Tavares (2017) have exemplified how each trajectory can be complemented through the discussion of dialogism to further not only our understanding of suicide, but also many other socio-individual acts, where the relationship between the individual and society is key to our understanding.

#### References

- Durkheim, E. (2006). *On suicide*. (R. Buss, Trans.). London, UK: Penguin Classics. (Original work published 1897)
- Harré, R. (1983). *Personal being*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell
- Harré, R. (1998). *The singular self*. London, UK: Sage.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (1996). Voicing the self: From information processing to dialogical interchange. *Psychological Bulletin*, *119*, 31–50.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2002). The dialogical self as society of mind: Introduction. *Theory and Psychology*, *12*, 147–160.
- Hermans, H. J. M., & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2012). *Dialogical self theory: Positioning and counter positioning in a globalizing society*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Howarth, C. (2011). Identity and resistance in communication. In D. Hook, B. Franks & M. Bauer (Eds.), *Community and culture: The social psychology perspective* (pp. 153-168). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Marková, I. (2003). *Dialogicality and social representations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Moscovici, S. (2000) *Social representations: Explorations in social psychology*. Cambridge, UK: Blackwell.
- Rosa, C., & Tavares, S. (2017). A semiotic-dialogical and sociocultural account on suicide. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, *10*(2), 85-105.
- Valsiner, J. (2002). Forms of dialogical relations and semiotic autoregulation within the self. *Theory & Psychology*, *12*, 251–265.

## DEVELOPING A DISCUSSION

Valsiner, J. (2003). Beyond social representations: A theory of enablement. *Papers on Social Representations*, 12, 7.1–7.16

Valsiner, J. (2007). *Culture in minds and societies: Foundations of cultural psychology*. New Delhi, India: Sage.

NICHOLSON

(This page deliberately left blank)

## **REPRESENTING THE VAGUENESS WITHIN THE DIALOGICAL SELF: PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF THE OBJECT IN BETWEEN SELF AND COMMUNITY**

Dany Boulanger

Aalborg University, Denmark & Catholic University of Salvador, Brazil

**Abstract.** In this paper, I try to enrich both the social representation theory (SRT) and the dialogical self theory (DST) by integrating the concepts of *vagueness* and *boundary case* borrowed from modern philosophy. These concepts are linked to SRT and DST through an illustration based on the analysis of stakeholders (professionals from the school and other community organizations) discourses in a Canadian partnership program.

**Keywords:** dialogical self, social representation, vagueness, boundary case, school-family relationship

In this paper, I will try to enrich both the social representation theory (SRT) and the dialogical self theory (DST) by integrating the concepts of vagueness and boundary case borrowed from philosophy. This is done by first showing how the recognition of vagueness is missing in both theories by expressing their limits and by providing examples relating to the relationship between school and community (including family) in a context of impoverished families in the Quebec area in Canada. Then, with respect to our type of argumentation and narration, I will switch from a critical to a descriptive approach by presenting the concepts of vagueness and boundary case. I will link them to SRT and DST through an illustration based on the analysis of stakeholders (professionals from the school and other community organizations) discourses in a Canadian partnership program. I will conclude by referring to the concept of open texture as applied to space and time.

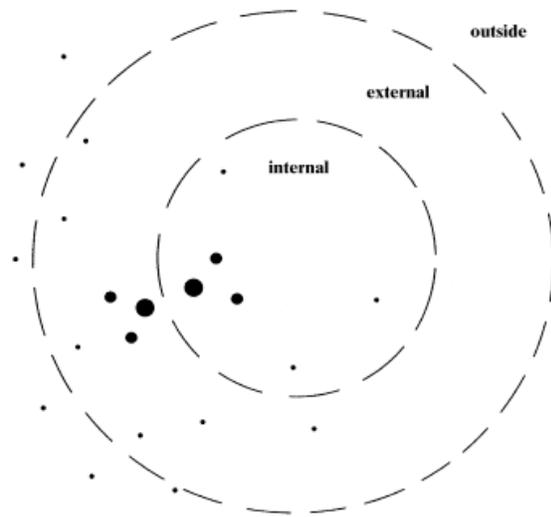
### **From Points to Holes in Contexts Involving Uncertainty: Vagueness and Transitional Zone**

Even if both DST and SRT recognize, to varying degrees, that the socio-cognitive environment of the person is *uncertain*, they also identify some *clear* points of reference—*anchor* (and objectified content) and *position*, respectively—that are

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the author at [danyculturalpsychology@gmail.com](mailto:danyculturalpsychology@gmail.com)

partially stable entities involving the entification of reality. In the case of the DST, the “repertory of the Self” partially entails a static conception of culture (Adams, 2001) as with other concepts or complexes such as “repertory of practice” (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003), “community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1998) and “funds of knowledge” (Moll & Diaz, 1989). Yet, Hermans (2001a) opposes himself to entity concepts such as set and typology.

Both in DST and SRT, the entities are located in a space demarcated with *clear* boundaries.



**Figure 1.** Repertory of the Self<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1 illustrates the “repertory of the Self” (DST) containing tick marks representing the clear positions that are well delimited in the environment. The size of the points symbolizes their salient nature. Some are in the centre and others in the periphery. Whether fully or partially permeable, the boundaries imply a clear demarcation of the points situated on the map of the Self. What happens if I add holes (empty points) in this schematic representation of the dialogical self (DS)? What does the background, that is, the blank space, symbolizes? What is invisible?

There is a parallel issue present in SRT. In an apparent logic, the social representation processes—anchoring and objectivation—suggest the fitting of tick structures (anchors) with objects, the new ones (the unfamiliar, the psychoanalyst in the study of Moscovici, 1961) having to be objectified with respect to anchors (certain *clear*

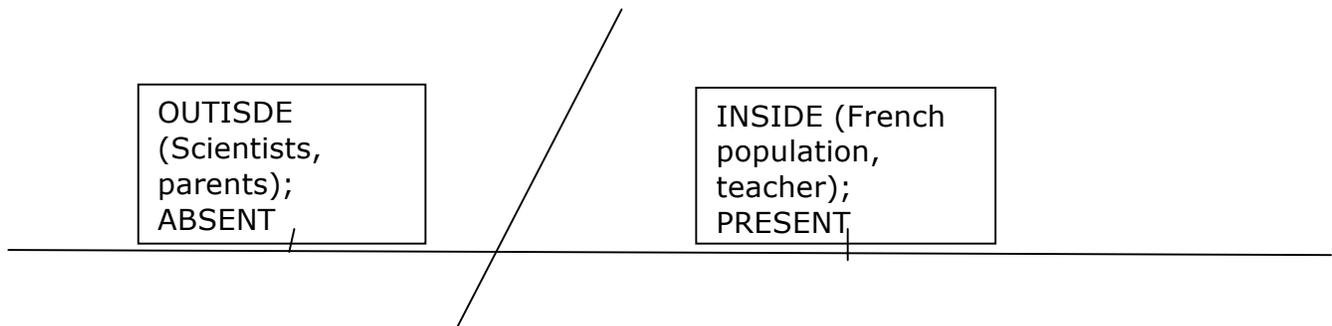
<sup>1</sup> From Hermans (2001a, p. 252).

## REPRESENTING THE VAGUENESS IN THE DIALOGICAL SELF

domains like religion) that are *already present*—before the arrival of the object from the external world, that is, the science in Moscovici’s study—in the environment. The emphasis is on making *present* the absent object. So, the uncertain and vague absent object coming from the external world—for instance, when the French population heard for the first time about Freud and the psychoanalytic theory (Moscovici, 1961)—has to be objectified and anchored, thus made present and clearly circumscribed. One of the functions of social representation is to maintain and create such delineation:

This invisibility is not due to any lack of information conveyed to the eyeball, but to a pre-established fragmentation of reality, a classification of the people and things which comprise it, which makes some of them visible *and the rest invisible*. [...] In each of these cases we note the intervention of representations which either direct us towards that which is visible and to which we have to respond; or which relate appearance and reality; *or* again which define this reality (Moscovici, 1984, pp. 4-5).<sup>2</sup>

In the last sentence of this excerpt, Moscovici places social representation to a large extent in a reductionist paradigm based on an “either/or” logic because the clear choice (between making present or absent) potentially entails the exclusion of the aspects not chosen.



**Figure 2.** The Choice of Making the Object Absent or Present Based on a Reductionist (“Either/Or”) Logic

Figure 2 symbolizes this clear delineation of the environment. In the study of the penetration of psychoanalysis (as a system of ideas) in the French population (Moscovici, 1961), the outside is clearly outlined and contains what is absent and not yet present. To be represented, the stranger has to appear as present in the internal world. To take a contemporary example, in a poor area, parents are generally absent in school, but teachers need them to support the children’s academic success. Making the parent present allows the teachers to familiarize themselves with him or her (Boulanger, Larose, Couturier, Saussez & Grenier, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> The emphasis (italics) is mine.

While Moscovici focuses on the clear delineation of space, he considers that after moving in the internal zone, the object is *at the same time* there (present) *and* not there (absent).

He may experience this sense of non-familiarity *when frontiers and/or conventions disappear*; when distinctions between the abstract and the concrete become blurred; or when an object, which he had always thought of as abstract, suddenly emerges in all its concreteness, etc. This may occur when he is presented with [...] any *atypical behaviour, person or relation* which might prevent him from reacting as he would before the usual type. He *doesn't find what he expected to find*, and is left with a sense of *incompleteness* and randomness. It is in this way that the mentally handicapped, or people belonging to other cultures, are disturbing, because *they are like us, and yet not like us*; so we say they are '*un-cultured*', '*barbarian*', '*irrational*' and so on (Moscovici, 1984, p. 25).<sup>3</sup>

Moscovici explains the simultaneity of the two qualifications of the object, that is, its presence and its absence, by the paradoxical fact that the presence (near to me, in my environment) of the object makes its absence (what contrasts with my anchors, with the conventions of this environment) apparent. While the stranger is present and absent at the same time, let's insist on the fact that he or she is "not yet like us" (ibid.), which means that he or she has to be or become like us. Some characteristics of the object (a person in the case we are discussing) are rejected because they are *made absent* with respect to what is already present (the conventions) in the environment of the subjects receiving this object. In Moscovici's study, the strangers are uncultured like the parents, who, after showing up at school, are generally represented as incompetent. While in the last excerpt, Moscovici refers to *the suspension of clarity* of the object and its boundary, the process at stake indicates a quick *resolution* of this lack of clarity through a *clear* demarcation signalling an "either/or" logic.

The choice is clear: the emphasis is on making the object present (keeping *present what fits* and suits me) with respect to already present conventions.

Which means that we are never provided with any information which has not been distorted by representations 'superimposed' on object and on persons which give them a certain *vagueness* and make them partially inaccessible (Moscovici, 1984, p. 6).<sup>4</sup>

While, in general, Moscovici focuses on the (quick) resolution of vagueness, in this excerpt, he admits that it *remains* vague. Yet, the logic is the same: vagueness does not come from the object, but from the superposing (clear and already present)

---

<sup>3</sup> The emphasis (underlining) is ours.

<sup>4</sup> The emphasis (italics) is mine.

## REPRESENTING THE VAGUENESS IN THE DIALOGICAL SELF

conventions that render absent some of its properties that are invisible and not seen. The stranger is seen *as he or she must be* seen, with respect to conventions. The point of placing the object at the boundary—when he or she is at the same time present and absent—is to select specific characteristics that fit with the conventions so that the strange characteristics are rejected, at least, the ones that do not fit. For example, in a poor area, the informal aspect of learning at home is generally unseen and so not represented (Boulangier, 2016).<sup>5</sup> In this sense, the *boundaries* remain *present* and *clear* all the time; the space is cut in three zones: the external (where the absence lies) and internal worlds and the boundary between them. This demarcation entails the risk of keeping the strange aspect outside and absent.

Regarding DST, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) provide an interesting asset with which to answer this challenge. They situate the object and the person (the *alter*; the parent from the point of view of the teachers) in an extended landscape of the Self, in a *transitional field* composed of objects (called *abjects*) that are *at the same time* present and absent.

[It is] a field of transition between internal and external, where an individual knows at some level of consciousness that the “bad guy” is part of the internal domain *and at another level* that this position is part of the external domain. Moreover, these results suggest the existence of a dynamic self that allows, *under special conditions*, the movement of an enemy-other from the external to the internal domains of the self. If this happens, there is a chance that the abject-other, rather than being silenced or excluded, becomes an accountable voice in the polyphony of the self (p. 44).<sup>6</sup>

The object that is both present and absent (the hidden part of the Self)—in this circumstance the object is called the *abject*—can thus move from one position (present and absent) to another *in* the extended environment. Moreover, although secondary in their overall presentation, the vagueness and ambiguity of this field is mentioned by Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010):

Some *I*-positions are located in the vague and ambiguous border-zone between self and non-self which can be characterized as “identity-in-difference (Gregg, 1991), that is, they belong and do not belong to me *at the same time* (p. 162).

Albeit very useful for the purpose of my paper, these avenues, particularly relative to the last excerpt, seem for a large extent ground in an environment composed of well-outlined boundaries (Figure 1) since the present position is assigned to one level

---

<sup>5</sup> I will identify two illustrations of what I mean by selecting an object by situating it at the boundary. Parents coming to school have to go to the secretary office (boundary near the open door) in order to be oriented in X or Y school zones regarding school conventions. International travellers have to stop at the customs office where their luggage will be selected in regard to local conventions.

<sup>6</sup> The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

and the absent to another level. So, this field is not vague or, at least, it does not remain so for a long time as with Moscovici's analysis.

An example provided by Hermans (2001*b*) is a mother meeting her daughter's friend for the first time and comparing her to Peter, the daughter's brother. She anchors (SRT) and positions (DST) this unfamiliar but visible and thus accessible (to her and to the researcher) object with respect to Peter, a position that is already present. The excerpt below describes how the dialogical dynamic ends up:

From a theoretical point of view, the two external positions are 'functionally equivalent', which means that they evoke, consciously or unconsciously, the same pattern of internal positions. The two internal positions, in turn, are also functionally equivalent as they are both directed toward the same pattern of external positions. In other words, patterns of internal and external positions emerge from person-world interactions (Hermans, 2001*b*, p. 325).

So, while the DST is characterized by innovation, the emphasis here is based on what is *already present* in the environment. In this way, the distinction between absence and presence is clear—or made clear, which suggests the quick resolution of uncertainty as in Moscovici's analysis—and the stranger is made "*functionally equivalent*" (ibid.)<sup>7</sup> in the same way as the object the members of the French population in Moscovici's study receive has to *fit* their anchors (what is present before the arrival of the stranger).

Both Moscovici and Hermans perceive that the stranger (e.g., a traveller or a parent showing up at school) runs the risk of being represented as uncultured, as not yet like us. While these authors, in particular the latter, partially develop a dynamic conception of space and promote both going into the uncertainty and confronting the strangeness and unfamiliar, the underlying clear and well-demarcated space potentially reinforces certainty and thus possibly restrains the dialogical confrontation with the stranger as a condition of innovation. While the DST allows me to see social representation as a transitional zone, vagueness is still missing.

Yet, I need here to explore a third and *strange theoretical world* to borrow other concepts as tools to mediate and expand SRT and DST in an innovative way; this mediation is the function of a third position (here theoretical) in DST. Through the concepts of vagueness and boundary case, philosophy furnishes complementary tools in this regard, thus permitting the conceptual extensions of both SRT and DST, theories that recognize in some way the uncertainty of space. I don't have space to fully elaborate on the concepts that I borrow from philosophy nor do I want to make a contribution to this field as I am not philosopher. Essentially taking a contextual stance<sup>8</sup> (applied to thinking and communication), I will present in a general way these concepts

---

<sup>7</sup> The emphasis (italic) is ours.

<sup>8</sup> For a presentation of the different approaches, read Cook (2015).

by suggesting some complements that they provide to SRT and DST. I will need to move from a critical to a descriptive approach in order to present the concepts that I will apply in another section.

### **Conceptual Extensions: Vagueness and Boundary Case**

While vagueness is still often considered as an instance of irrationality to eradicate (forming noise to eliminate as implicitly shown by SRT and DST's emphasis on clearness), many philosophers (Gaiffman, 2010; Sainsbury, 1990; Shapiro, 2006; Raffman, 1994, 2014) consider that it does not suggest ignorance or not *knowing* (knowing being central to SRT) and deviation, but that it constitutes a core feature of our way of thinking and communicating.

Raffman (2014) expresses well the general idea of vagueness<sup>9</sup> that transcends scientific discord among contemporary philosophers:

Perhaps the only point on which all theorists of vagueness agree is that vagueness is a form of unclarity—specifically, an unclarity about the boundaries of things. In language, vagueness concerns the extent of a term's application: There is no clear or definite boundary between the items to which the term applies and the items to which it does not (p. 2).

So, vagueness implies unclarity in the application of a term with respect to, at least, two regions (A and B): the internal and external zones in Moscovici's study or the zones of presence and absence.<sup>10</sup> The object located in the gap *between* regions A and B is called a boundary case.

Words like 'rich', 'heap', 'red' and even 'looks red', are vague. That is, they have blurred boundaries of application: there is no sharp division between cases in which they clearly apply and cases in which they don't. There is, for example, no sharp division between objects that are clearly red and objects that aren't (clearly red), people who are clearly rich and people who aren't (Raffman, 1994, p. 41).

For different reasons pertaining to standard logic (see Raffman, 2014) and to the open nature of vagueness and its environment, we cannot force an object to fit in a particular region by adding artificial criteria that would enable boundaries to apply,<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Vagueness is not equivalent to ambiguity, but Scheffler (1979) characterizes the second as a special case of the former.

<sup>10</sup> For some authors, there is nevertheless a *demarkation* in *three regions*: terms that fall in region A, the terms that fit with region Non-A or B and the terms without boundaries that neither fit in A nor B (Raffman, 2014). Note that C is a default region and does not form an option. If this were the case, there would be a clear boundary and the vague term would fall between region C and a new "blind" area (Gaiffman, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> If such thing happens, as the field of application is still open (a feature of open texture), a transference of ambiguity to other regions will happen (Waismann, 1945).

for instance by fitting parents in school's formal activities while their actions are sometimes neither formal nor informal. In fact, vagueness entails indecision about boundary cases lying between different poles, that is, for my concern, presence and absence (of the parents) in a specific zone (school).

Philosophers place terms (B and C) along an ordered scale<sup>12</sup> with two poles (A and D). They are preoccupied with how the shift happens when placing B and C (two boundary cases) in A or D, knowing that such a switch (from A to D or the opposite when the person hesitates) should happen (since A and D are different), but knowing there is no significant difference between B and C. Imagine ranking bald people where the first one (A) is clearly bald and the last one (the 10<sup>th</sup>; D) is clearly not bald. Is the fifth (C) bald or not bald? As a boundary case, we can neither say if he or she is bald or not nor if he or she is not bald or not non-bald. But he or she *can* become bald or non-bald, depending on the context (Shapiro, 2006) and on the psychological process (Raffman, 1994, 2014).

Vagueness involves tolerance (Gaiffman, 1990). From the point of view of many philosophers, social actors will tolerate the fact that a person with four hairs (B) and another one with five hairs (C) could both be considered as bald. This is so, thanks to the vague nature of the object and its (*possible*) localization (Shapiro, 2006). The choice is then arbitrary and non-legislative; the “*either/or*” is not a static zone, but *suggests possibility*. By mentioning that the choice is not grounded in specific institutional rules (or conventions), authors tend to distance themselves from a “governing view” based on the *certainty* of applying (strict) rules (Raffman, 2014). However, the authors often recognize that vagueness could be culturally and ideologically loaded, as when deciding if a foetus (boundary case) is or is not a person (vague concept). The point is that certain cases are not (yet) determined by practice, representation, and language, even if culturally canalized.<sup>13</sup>

Boundary cases imply hesitation on the part of the subject; these cases are problematic and *polemical*, possibly giving rise to controversy. For this reason, they are always *open*, partly because there is tolerance (even partially) and because the space is open (to the possible, to the not yet explored—invisible—horizons). It is always possible to (re)negotiate how to *position* (DST) or *anchor* (SRT) the object (Shapiro, 2006) and modify how it is *represented* (Raiffman, 1994).

The concepts of vagueness and boundary case, borrowed from philosophy, enable me to describe social representation (SRT)—as an environment (Moscovici,

---

<sup>12</sup> The ordering does not have to possess clear gradations nor to be linear (Raffman, 2014), considering his non-transitive nature (Raffman, 1995). The very fact that boundary cases are vague implies that the logic of set and typology (“entity”) does not apply (Gaiffman, 1990). In this case, to prevent this “entity” logic, Scheffler (1979) uses an inscriptionalist stance based on token. In our case, we insist on the zoning of the object with respect to some polarities (Lewin, 1935).

<sup>13</sup> The rules themselves are contradictory (Cook, 2015).

1984) which is more precisely for me (as mentioned earlier) a transitional zone—and the transitional field of the Self (object; DST) as *vague zones* entailing negotiation and the tolerance of uncertainty. I will illustrate it to make sense of it. Is the parental engagement at the library a case of parents' presence or absence in the school? What if it is neither? And what if it is one *or* the other?

**Vague Representational and Transitional Zones of the Self: Application to the School-Community (Including Family) Relationship**

I will briefly illustrate the representational and transitional zones of the professionals (actors from school and other institutions intervening with the parents and children) participating in a partnership program (2003-2009) implemented in poor areas in Canada (Quebec) and interviewed in focus groups carried out in 2007.<sup>14</sup> They receive instructions from political agents to develop activities to reach parents. The professionals define these activities through group discussions. I will focus on their representation of the presence versus the absence of the parents in school—or in line with school matters—in relation to parental engagement.

Parental engagement is often represented in a traditional way where engagement equals parent's physical presence in school:

The parent who is *there* is a parent saying, "Me, I am involved," and who is already engaged at other levels in school. But it's *complicated*. The approaches are outreach approaches. And that's that. But they don't always give results. [...] There have been *holes* but we generally almost always have one [parent] (Subject 1).

In this excerpt, the zone of anchoring is related to school positioning in a way that parental school presence is a sign of engagement. The hole that is expressed here symbolizes the absence of the parent. While the demarcation between presence and absence is clear, what is not (complicated) is the way to reach the parents and the results of their presence. One of the vague zones is the engagement of parents as students (returning to school by investing in vocational activities).

And because at the level of statistics it's been *hard to prove*, me, I know there are parents who have gone back to school. But *is it really related?* Is there really a connection? But, me, I know that there are parents who have chosen to continue their studies (Subject 2).

The absence of proof of parental engagement reflects its vagueness. The two terms in the expression "parental engagement" (the parent and his or her engagement) are vague. The status of the parent is an object of tension in the group. Below, I present a part of the dialogue between two participants in the focus group.

---

<sup>14</sup> The analysis is presented elsewhere. For more details, the reader can refer to Boulanger (2016).

## BOULANGER

It *could* also be a grandparent. They're often in school workshops, they have room, they're on the ground (Subject 3).

I have nothing against grandparents, but *I'm not sure it's the right person to come sit here* because, me, I don't have children in school presently. I'd prefer parents *with children in school* (Subject 4).

*Actually*, there're many grandparents coming to school to do activities and to replace parents. They're *more involved than we think!* But, of course, if the grandparent has no *link with the school*, they don't necessarily have the best point of view. But there are many grandparents helping school activities by giving them (Subject 3).

The controversy is on the status of the educator representing the child. From the point of view of Subject 3, the status does not depend on the level of family lineage, but on the actor's proximity to school matters. Seeming to become more flexible in the course of the discussion, Subject 4 expands the dialogue mentioning that a parent can engage in another school than the one in which his or her children are officially registered.

Group participants do not agree on the clear demarcation of boundary case, but they *agree to disagree*. The space given to the definition of educator or parent is open to discussion, *redefinition (representation)*, and innovation since (yet unseen, invisible) possibilities (using the word "could") are constructed in the dialogues that emerge.

The participants hesitate to define parental presence in school:

They aren't *here*, but it doesn't mean that they're not *happy* or *close* to the school... Happy, *no*, but still closer to the school because they *communicate* better since they *feel* more welcomed, *maybe* (Subject 5).

In this excerpt, the *hesitating* subject admits the *possibility* that proximity to the school not only necessitates *physical* (visible) presence, but also implies the way parents communicate and their feeling of being welcomed. Communication and feelings are tacit (invisible) elements representing the boundary case of parental presence (presence in mind, emotion, and communication). In fact, there is *openness* to boundary cases that *don't fit usual conventions* as also expressed in the following excerpt:

And there it provides an occasion to *see* the school *from another angle*. And it gives them [parents] a place. There are many parents who did not feel well with the school and who came to do *other kinds of acts* in schools compared with being students. I see that it changes their ideas about, and relationship with, the school (Subject 7).

In this excerpt, parents can now engage in the school in more informal ways whereas the professionals do focus on the formal aspect. The informal forms of

## REPRESENTING THE VAGUENESS IN THE DIALOGICAL SELF

engagement are *both possibilities and reality*. Certain participants refer to parental engagement at the community library. Others refer to the informal conversation between teachers and parents in the school corridors (a zone that is not fully *rule-governed*). What was seen as parental absence—more precisely *not seen* as a possible presence, thus expressing blindness to certain zones of the environment (Boulanger, 2016, 2018) or refused forms of engagement—are now seen as possibilities and in some cases constitute current practices (actuality)!<sup>15</sup> This is related to the vague nature of some cases that are (re)negotiated.

The third theoretical position that I use in this paper enables me to make sense of the suspension of clarity (Moscovici, 1961) and the vagueness of the transitional field (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). To this end, I must delve into uncertainty (a principle promoted by DST and associated to dialogicality and post-dialogicality) in a vague environment instead of seeking the quick resolution of this uncertainty in and through a clear demarcation of space. It appears *clear* to me that, in these particular conditions of vagueness, the status of what is present and absent with respect to school is contextually relative and based in discussion as well as, in some cases, debate. My analyses, based on philosophical concepts, enriches the sense of the movement of the abject by situating it in a vague space, in a way that boundary cases *could be* cases of presence or absence, depending on the contextual and psychological dimensions evolving.

The hidden part of ourselves (abject in a transitional field) that is rendered absent and invisible, thus potentially excluded in Moscovici's (1961) theory, is considered a resourceful portion of the Self, as expressed by Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010). Moscovici's *moment of* (related to the content of his theory) uncertainty and Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's vague nature of the transitional field—two more or less secondary principles in SRT and DST—are key to being open to the unknown, as the suspension of clarity (Moscovici, 1961) is a fruitful dialogical context.

The process that occurs in a vague environment (recognized as such by the researchers) implies modifying the spatial representation (my extension of SRT using DST) in an innovative way (DST) because what is vague is not excluded but taken as a possibility. As the conception of the parents moving supposes tolerance and authorization of possibilities (not yet seen), the invisible is considered a "*possible actuality*." The hidden part of the parents that would otherwise have been rejected—in particular in the case of SRT—is seen here as a resource. Let's think for instance about informal parental engagement outside of the school. In this perspective, the parents, as

---

<sup>15</sup> We can consider that there is here resolution of vagueness, but it does not mean that all that is vague is clear! As the space of vagueness is still open, vagueness is transferred to other domains (Scheffler, 1979; Waismann, 1945)—a phenomenon that we neither demonstrate nor illustrate here—as movement that occurs in the transitional zone of the abject.

abjects, *move* through space and *time*! The parents not only move through (in) the school, but they move at the boundary of the school and the community (including the family)!

### **Conclusion: Toward Spatiotemporal Openness**

I made a first step toward making the dynamic aspect of both SRT and DST *visible* by introducing vagueness. For instance, Moscovici's suspension of clarity does not imply clear demarcation of the space. Precisely because of the suspension of clarity (Moscovici, 1961), vagueness entails not only tolerance to uncertainty and unfamiliarity, but also the exploitation of these uncertain conditions as a way to get beyond what now seems visible to us.

What appears salient in my analysis (illustration provided) is not only that the object appears vague, but that its very space remains open. In this respect, I should push my theoretical development further by introducing the concept of open texture (from philosophy; see Scheffler, 1979 and Waismann, 1945), which expresses the idea of open space (open to the invisible) and time (open to the unknown). It could help me more fully grasp the spatial restructuring of space—for instance, by showing how vagueness is transferred from one domain of the transitional zone of the abject to another—and the orientation toward the future. Grounding the time dimension of open texture in an irreversible conception of time (Bergson, 1907) could also allow me to make sense of (and probably expand) what some philosophers (see for instance Raffman, 2014) refer to as switching (from one vague case to another in a non-linear ordering; from the informal engagement of parents in school to informal meetings at the grocery store).

The concept of open texture supposes that novelty and innovation come from elements of surprise! It is precisely the open nature of space that forms the element of surprise in my analysis, in particular openness to the possible (the not yet visible and the unknown). But to mobilize researchers, this effect must occur in an open space. Yet, as some authors suggest, in SRT (Litton & Potter, 1985) and DST (Adams, 2001) the objects are *transparent*—consciously visible—both to the subjects and to the researchers studying their discourse. Here, to become possible, the not-yet-visible implies the theoretical and epistemological openness of the mind as well as a creative dialogue directed toward the future. However, some zones of parental engagement remain partly invisible in my analysis, for example when parents and teachers meet informally by chance (in an unexpected manner) at the grocery store, the promotion of parents and children *not* going to school (as in the case of children who are being schooled at home by their parents) or the resistance of parents to formal school outreach practice. Further analysis is needed to understand these invisible phenomena that would probably have to be grounded not only in vagueness, but also in invisibility. And yet, could it be a (possible) theoretical case?

## REPRESENTING THE VAGUENESS IN THE DIALOGICAL SELF

### References

- Adams, G., & Markus, H. R. (2001). Culture as patterns: An alternative approach to the problem of reification. *Culture & Psychology*, 7(3), 283–296.
- Boulanger, D. (2016). *Dynamiques représentationnelles à l'interface de l'école et de la famille* [Representational dynamics between school and family]. Germany: Éditions Universitaires Européennes.
- Boulanger, D. (2018). Parental engagement through the ecosystemic foundations of the field of school-family-community partnership: Toward a psychosocial, dialogical and developmental perspective. In G. Marsico & L. Tateo (Eds.), *The emergence of self in the educational contexts*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Boulanger, D., Larose, F., Couturier, Y., Saussez, F., & Grenier, N. (2014). Making the unfamiliar familiar: Social representations of teachers about parental engagement in a intervention program in Quebec. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Journal*, 116(21), 106–112.
- Cook, R. T. (2015). Vagueness and meaning. In G. Ronzitti (Ed.), *Vagueness: A guide*. (pp. 83–106). New York, NY: Springer.
- Gaiffman, H. (2010). Vagueness, tolerance and contextual logic. *Language and Vagueness*, 174(1), 5–46.
- Gutiérrez, K. D., & Rogoff, B. (2003). Cultural ways of learning: Individual traits or repertoires of practice. *Educational Researcher*, 32(5), 19–25.
- Hermans, H. (2001a). The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning. *Culture & Psychology*, 7(3), 243–281.
- Hermans, H. (2001b). The construction of a personal position repertoire: Method and practice. *Culture & Psychology*, 7(3), 323–365.
- Hermans, H., & Hermnas-Konopka, A. (2010). *Dialogical self theory. Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalised society*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lewin, K. (1935). *A dynamic theory of personality. Selected papers* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.; D. K. Adams & K. E. Zener, Trans.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc.

## BOULANGER

- Litton, I., & Potter, J. (1985). Social representations in the ordinary explanation of a “riot”. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 15, 371–388.
- Moll, L. C., & Diaz, S. (1989). Change as the goal of educational research. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 18(4), 300–311.
- Moscovici, S. (1961). *La psychanalyse, son image, son public* [Psychoanalysis, its image and its public]. Paris, France: PUF
- Moscovici, S. (1984). The phenomenon of social representations. In R. M. Farr & S. Moscovici (Eds.), *Social representations* (pp. 3–70). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Raffman, D. (1994). Vagueness without paradox. *The Philosophical Review*, 103(1), 41–74.
- Raffman, D. (1995). On the persistence of phenomenology. In T. Metzinger (Ed.), *Conscious experience* (pp. 293–308). Paderborn, Germany: Schoningh Verlag.
- Raffman, D. (2014). *Unruly worlds. A study of vague language*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Sainsbury, R.M. (1990). Concepts without boundaries. In R. Keefe & P. Smith (Eds.), *Vagueness: A reader* (pp. 251–264). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Scheffler, I. (1979). *Beyond the letter. A philosophical inquiry into ambiguity, vagueness and metaphor in language*. London, UK: Routledge & Gegan Paul.
- Shapiro, S. (2006). *Vagueness in context*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Waismann, F. (1945). Verifiability. *Processings of the Aristotelian Society*, 19, 119–150.

## ON VAGUENESS: A WITTGENSTEINIAN DISCUSSION

Bo Allesøe Christensen  
Aalborg University, Denmark

**Abstract.** I will here use Wittgenstein's scarce comments on vagueness in *Philosophical Grammar* as a perspective for discussing Boulanger's use of the same concept. The aim is presenting a view on the vagueness not presupposing that vague concepts can be treated as determinable in the same way as non-vague concepts, instead vagueness calls for a high degree of context sensitivity and understanding of purposefulness.

**Keywords:** Wittgenstein, vagueness, ambiguousness, philosophical grammar

Boulanger's (2017) focus in this issue centres on the lack of a concept of vagueness in both the dialogical self theory (DST) and the social representational theory (SRT). Despite both theories recognize that the socio-cognitive environment of a person is uncertain "[...]they also identify some clear points of reference—anchor (and objectified content) and position respectively—that are partially stable entities involving the entification of reality" (Boulanger, 2017, p. 117-118). The primary idea behind both DST and SRT involves versions of making the unfamiliar familiar, i.e. the vagueness of the unfamiliar is made functionally equivalent to familiar. Generally this takes place by providing a space where the unfamiliar (the stranger, the absent) is seen as *not yet* familiar, that is, a space for familiarizing the unfamiliar. This space, then "[...]potentially reinforces certainty and thus possibly restrains the dialogical confrontation with the stranger as a condition of innovation" (Boulanger, 2017, p. 122). Hence, the result is that vagueness is not really an option, because any unfamiliar piece of object or person is inherently determinable.

The point of Boulanger's (2017) paper is remedying this, by discussing concepts of vagueness complementing DST and SRT in the following way:

[V]agueness implies unclarity in the application of a term with respect to, at least, two regions (A and B): the internal and external zones in Moscovici's study or the zones of presence and absence. The object located in the gap between regions A and B is called a boundary case (p. 123).

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the author at [boallesoe@hum.aau.dk](mailto:boallesoe@hum.aau.dk)

So, as in many other paradoxes the boundary case makes us indecisive of whether it is either A or B. If we ask, for example, how many hairs on one guy's head does it take for him not to be bald, we can easily imagine a whole lot of cases in between a little hair and a lot of hair, where people, depending on context, will claim some guys bald and others not. It wouldn't be easier to coin a formal rule here either. Say, formally adding one hair continuously to a bald head,  $n + 1$ , we end up with a head full of hair but still being bald. Furthermore, this would be unable to account for the different contextual dimensions, even culturally and ideologically loaded uses of vagueness. Boulanger's (2017) point is, then, "that certain cases are not (yet) determined by practice, representation, and language, even if culturally canalized" (p. 124) and should entail negotiation and tolerance of vagueness.

Boulanger (2017) shows this by presenting and questioning a concrete case, whether the parental engagement in the community library is "a case of school's presence or absence of parent? What if it is neither? And what if it is one *or* the other?" (p. 125). The solution is seeing vagueness not as something to be excluded but as a possibility. Hence conceptualizing parents as embodying "tolerance and authorization of possibility (not yet seen)" (p. 124) implies considering the vagueness involved, the invisible, as a "possible actuality" (p. 127, for a similar point also see Marshall, 2008). What is not recognized in the parents, and would have been rejected if it was, is rather seen as a resource, and vagueness therefore "entails not only tolerance to uncertainty and unfamiliarity, but also the exploitation of these uncertain conditions as a way to get beyond what now seems visible to us" (p. 128).

I agree basically with Boulanger's (2017) claim on being tolerant of vagueness, which also echoes Marshall's (2008) claim that vagueness within assessments of educational settings does not imply unreliability due to lack of evidence, but instead the need to emphasize a different and equally important notion of judgemental competence working within fuzzy situations. Despite this, however, I will question this idea of vagueness as some sort of resource, as being essentially determinable, by using Wittgenstein's considerations on vagueness. The problem entailed by the last quotations above is that there might be something *hidden* within the vagueness that can be exploited to get beyond what is visible to us now. As I see it, this might end up trading the tolerance in for certainty, of making right what cannot be determined, or making clear what cannot be made clear. I assume this is very close to what Boulanger would also claim (despite the metaphysical urge to claim something hidden), hence this critique is more of a joint work in progress in understanding the role of vagueness in social science. In the following I will first present Wittgenstein's thoughts on vagueness, I will then relate this to Boulanger's discussion, and point towards understanding vagueness as context related but without having relativistic consequences.

### Wittgenstein on Vagueness

As Umberto Eco has claimed it is part of European heritage to think (dream) about a perfect and clear language, the one language serving as the basis of all languages (the language of Eden, or the common language presented in the myth of the tower of Babel, Genesis 11:1-9) (Eco 1995). Modern examples of this involves Frege's effort of creating a *Begriffsschrift*, a perfect conceptual notation, the function of which was formalizing and serving as a foundation of mathematical language, but not everyday languages, which was less capable due to its inherent vagueness (logic can only recognize sharply delimited concepts, he writes to Peano in 1896).

In his early years, Wittgenstein rejects Frege's denigration of everyday language by understanding vagueness as a surface phenomenon, the meaning of which depends on this everyday language being essentially determinable and not vague: "The requirement that simple signs be possible is the requirement that sense be determinate" (Wittgenstein, 1921/1961, 3.23) All we have to do is discover the sense of a vague expression, which was all along there but just hidden. And it is this notion of determinateness, which Wittgenstein (also) questions in his post-*Tractatus* writings including *Philosophical Grammar*, which I will refer to below.

Let me first notice that vague is not the same as ambiguous. Ambiguous words and concepts are ambiguous in a direct sense; they have multiple meanings. Vagueness on the other hand is more indirect through words having a vague sense. Ambiguity can be resolved by stating which of the multiple meanings one intended. When the taxi driver asks, "Should I go left here?," and the passenger says, "Right," the ambiguity can be solved fairly easy by the taxi driver pointing while saying, "Right as in we go left, or right?" This is not possible in the same sense when we deal with vagueness, for we cannot just restate a vague concept and thereby, through an act of intending, resolve the vagueness. Think about the vagueness of how many grains it takes to make a heap. Is it three hundred, four hundred, or some other number? If we say three hundred, does that dissolve the vagueness? It might or it might not, for would it not make sense to claim that 299 grains also make up a heap? And if we just claim that 300 makes up a heap, we have, as Wittgenstein claims, created a new rule, one which fails to bring any light to our previous inquiries. So in the case of Boulanger (2017) above, a first point would be to ask whether the example of the parents is a case of vagueness, or more likely a case of ambiguity. When the dynamic aspect of both SRT and DST are to be made *visible* by introducing what is claimed as vagueness (Boulanger, 2017), could that not be handled by using ambiguity?

If I leave this question and proceed focusing on the notion of vagueness, the new rule created when deciding on three hundred grains implies that the concept of "heap" would be altered as well. "For that, there exists no delimitation (and if we fix one, we are altering the concept); it is just that there are cases that we count as within the

extension of the concept, and cases that we no longer count as within the extension of the concept.” (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 240). As an example imagine I say, to you, “go stay over there” you do, even though I haven’t specified exactly where. You probably even have a conception of the area within which you think I would want you to stay in, expressed by your saying “here” and therefore also if you stay too far away. The vagueness involved implies “staying over there” as a borderline case, with “there” and “here” denoting, not an exact spot, but what Wittgenstein compares to intervals without any precise limits. And this means that

it is bounded not by points, but by converging intervals which do not converge on a point (Like the series of binary fractions that we get by throwing heads and tails.) The special thing about two intervals which are bounded in this *blurred* way instead of by points is that in certain cases the answer to the question whether they overlap or are quite distinct is “undecided”; and the question whether they touch, whether they have an end-point in common, is always a senseless one since they don’t have end-points at all. (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 237).

Hence, to approach a vague concept as if it is a non-vague one—as we are able to *decide* about it once and for all, thereby dissolving the indeterminateness of exactly *where* by making *there* and *here* converge in an endpoint—is a wrong way to go about vagueness, according to Wittgenstein. Also misplaced is the idea, again referring to the “stay over there” example, that both you and I have a determinate sense of where to stay, but the concept itself, the “stay over there” is indeterminate. This way the concept is made to function just like a non-vague one, whereby we can close in on the exact spot as if both of our determinate senses can converge or approximate towards the spot as an endpoint. Why is this misplaced? Because in most cases where “stand over there” is uttered, the exact spot down to the exact centimetre does not matter. The utterance does not express the intention of placing someone at an exact location, but more like intentions of “don’t get in my way”, or “watch out for what I am doing”. So, Wittgenstein seeks to dissolve this idea of three clearly demarcated zones, determinate-indeterminate-determinate, with our progressing towards making the indeterminate area smaller and smaller, instead providing an alternative way of conceiving vague concepts, namely as converging intervals. The coin-tossing example he refers in the quote above aims to show that.

When tossing a coin, the number of times it shows heads or tails does not converge on one value, rather it oscillates between the two. Hence, when tossed many times the dispersion between heads and tails will show proportionality, where sometimes the number of heads is bigger than tails and vice versa. The convergence claimed by Wittgenstein is therefore not directed towards an endpoint, but to a proportion or a relation instead. I take this to mean that it makes no sense to claim a progression towards resolving vagueness, i.e. either heads or tails, because each toss does not bring me closer to a final decision of the sum of either/or. All I can say is that

convergence implies that a stability over time will occur. If I transfer this to the “stand over there” example, then I can imagine a number of uses where this is meant to convey “watch out”, perhaps by similar contexts—a repetition of experiments, or dad drilling yet a hole in the wall—creating a familiar resemblance. But I can also imagine a case where “stand over there” means do not get in my way, hence as a result of irritation, not caring, or as a kind of punishment. All uses will express a certain convergence by being stabilized practices over time (think of a big brother annoyed by his kid brother, or certain older school practices punishing children by making them stand in a corner); they will be connected but different also. Already here I can see how the phrase “stand over there” can mean a whole lot of things. By itself it is vague, but when I contextualize the claim, and tries to understand the specific purpose behind it, the vagueness seems to dissolve. There is no essence behind the vagueness, the different uses of the expression cannot be explained by being of a similar nature, i.e. caring and irritation display different contextual and functional understandings. Nevertheless, a familiar resemblance exists between the examples, someone is told by someone to stay at some place. Hence, the vagueness seems to evolve from instances of de-contextualization; as long I do not question what the particular circumstances are, “stand over there” seems quite indeterminate and a vague expression. But what does this show in relation to Boulanger (2017) above?

### **When Does Vagueness Matter?**

I think Read (2012) can help supplement this interpretation in a way relevant for Boulanger’s (2017) case of the parents above. First of all, there is a sense in which a pure logicist or a priori approach will never serve as a solution. It isn’t a numbers game as Read (2012, p. 117) terms it, the actual numbers of hair on the head is less important than the context in which baldness is addressed. The indecisiveness Wittgenstein puts forth as central in my interpretation above revolves around not being able to resolve the vagueness once and for all using logical methods, or any other method wanting to discover some hidden meaning within the vague expression. Instead it is the “relationships of *cases of baldness to one another*, their complicatedly overlapping resemblances, that is the ‘basis’ for our understanding of what are and what are not cases of baldness, etc.” (Read, 2012, p. 127). There is a tapestry of cases where baldness is addressed and expressed, different converging intervals, which form the background on which baldness matters for our understanding and discussion. The same would apply to the use of the notion parent, how this is used is observable in Boulanger’s (2017) examples. The use of a concept like parent, of course, changes over time and space, but again if I look close at how it is used, it need not pose a challenge unless I consider the use of the concept as predetermined. I look to the concrete cases where different understandings of parents matter to different people, “Context matters. And part of context is the mattering of the case. It matters whether it matters or not.” (Read, 2012, p. 130). Because it matters to people, it is easier to dissolve the vagueness

concerned, than from a disengaged and predetermined view on what hides behind vagueness.

Second, any pre-determinateness implies context independency, so I risk ending up with what I take as a vague notion as “*both context-bound and context-independent* in its use” (Read, 2012, p. 130). Now I will claim that Boulanger’s (2017) considering vagueness as a sort of invisibility, as a “possible actuality”, comes close to claiming a context independence, or indeterminateness. Now I might not consider anything wrong with considering or focusing on possibilities, and I basically agree, but it might also blind us for situations with no need for considering possibilities, or where they actually do not exist. In these situations, a possible actuality becomes metaphysical construct, the essence of vagueness, as a result of an urge to transcend context, instead of tolerating the possibility of not being able to dissolve the vagueness. This is the indecisiveness Wittgenstein speaks of, there are situations of a tragic character, where vagueness is expressed by people unintentionally not understanding each other, or situations of a sad character where the lack of understanding is intentional.

Third, my discussion here is not to be understood as yet another context-independent theory of vagueness. It is, as Read 2012 claims, foremost a kind of indexical approach to vagueness, emphasizing the different purposes and context-related trajectories of vague expressions, but also without ending up in a relativism that vagueness, the role of being a parent, is just what we each choose to denote as such. Since being a parent *matters* in different ways to those involved, it is not reducible to what each take it to be.

### **Conclusion: Need and Non-Need for Vagueness**

When I become aware that there is no essence within a vague term, there is no determinate “stuff” beneath it, but that there are several different ways words are used, some related more than others, then I become aware of the real differences the use of words have in different contexts. Hence, the use of the word “parent” (how parenting is understood) matters to people within these contexts in different ways, and as the quotes by Boulanger (2017) expressing the different views on parents and schools, it is right there in front of us. Nothing is hidden. The many ways of being a parent, the resemblances and differences involved in parenthood as this relates to schools, is there in the quotes. I do not need a metaphysical theory of vagueness, about possible actuality for example, at least not *at first*, I just need to be attentive to the differences on display in different contexts, and then the vagueness will often be dissolved. I say *at first* deliberately, because there might be cases, which eventually call for understandings involving larger frames than the particular context. I am not thinking of metaphysical but more in the vicinity of macro-oriented sociological and social-psychological frames, like political-economic changes involving how the school-parent relationship is conditioned.

## ON VAGUENESS: A WITTGENSTEINIAN DISCUSSION

Returning to the focus on context I will at first be able to draw some more or less stable boundaries of the vagueness in question, by focusing on what really matters in the given context. Whether a guy is bald or not, has less to do with the number of hairs on his head but with the circumstances and purposes for my enquiring into it. In most cases I will just claim of a bald guy that he is bald, I don't need to count his hairs. Or I will say he is bald on top of his head and not in the sides. Some monks, valuing baldness as a sign of religiousness, will envy people with a natural bald spot on the top of the head, other people's religious or not, will try to hide a beginning baldness. In both cases we understand the circumstances and purposes for addressing baldness even when they are different, they display two related but still different intervals in Wittgenstein's sense. They are convergent, since both valuations of baldness can be understood as practices developed and stabilized over time. The first, the practice of tonsure, is a well-known practice in different religions, the second, wig-making, has been known since the ancient Egyptians; which is not to say that the problems about parent-school will go away, but vagueness in itself need not always be a problem. There are, of course, instances where the vagueness cannot be dissolved, but that shouldn't come as a surprise. Sometimes vagueness calls for specification or making its meaning precise, and at other times we need to fail in that. In either case, what I need is first of all to look closely at the circumstances in which I use these allegedly vague words.

### References

- Boulanger, D. (2017). Representing the vagueness within dialogical self: Presence and absence of the object in between self and community. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 10(2), 117-130.
- Eco, U. (1995). *The search for the perfect language*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Marshall, R. (2008). Working with vagueness: Competence and vagueness in UK educational assessment. *Teaching English: Practice and Critique*, 7(1), 91–102.
- Read, R. (2012). *A Wittgensteinian way with paradoxes*. Plymouth UK: Lexington Books.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1961). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (D. F. Pears & B. F. McGuinness, Trans.) London, UK: Routledge. (Original work published 1921)
- Wittgenstein, L. (1974). *Philosophical grammar* (Anthony Kenny, Trans.). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

CHRISTENSEN

(This page left deliberately blank)

**THE NARRATIVE FUNCTION OF MUSIC IN A CONTEMPORARY  
SOCIETY: DESIGNING AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH THROUGH  
DIALOGICAL AND REPRESENTATIONAL PRACTICES OF  
THE SOCIAL SELF**

Aris Lanaridis  
Leeds Beckett University, UK

**Abstract.** The ability of music to transmit emotional intention is a widely acknowledged phenomenon across a range of musicological, psychological and semiological research disciplines. Much of this research has focused on the description of the narrative qualities of music within the communication process. However, there is still insufficient explanation of the underlying reasons for the ability to transmit emotional ideas, and little empirical research has been undertaken on the extent and accuracy of the narrative functionality of music. This article considers the reasons, level and extent of the narrative capacity of music in the context of a contemporary society. For this, it looks at the Self from an angle of internal dialogical activity, in order to investigate the subconscious interaction between individual and society. The article also considers the factors that may influence the shaping of musical taste and that may be responsible of setting the mode through which listeners perceive and filter music in the contemporary culture. Specific emphasis is given to the role of the media not only as an important source of information but also as a mechanism for influencing our perception of societal reality.

**Keywords:** plurality of cultural voices/personas, plurality of promoter positions, intersubjectivity, social identity, dialogical self, social representations

Music holds a significant part in our lives. It is experienced in various facets whether out of choice or as a consequence of its seemingly omnipresent nature. Music is present when we establish social awareness in family and peer environments. It becomes an integral component of our remembering and demonstrates the capacity to activate emotional responses, to recall faces, images, and evoke situational memories. In addition, music is able to create premises for social bonding or for inner-regression and self-reflection. These final facets evoke the concept of self which, in the context of modern society, has transcended from being inner-directed to being Other-directed (Riesman, Glazer, & Denney, 1950; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). In such a state, the Self is still strongly oriented by personal goals that may override traditional mandates. At the same time, the Self is also strongly influenced by societal imprints developed in part because of the learned importance of being a participant in the consumerist society. In a novel viewpoint of what is a complex relationship, the dialog-

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the author at [A.Lanaridis@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:A.Lanaridis@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

ical self theory (DST) (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) proposes the multivoiced extended Self, drawing significant attention into the interaction between Self and society into the subconscious milieu. This article explores the way music functions as a narrative stream, taking into consideration the way we build musical appreciation in domains of external and internal societies with which the Self interacts.

The narrative stream can be understood as a communicative process which allows us to specifically consider the emotional meaning that music communicates to the individual. In this way, music is seen as an expressive artefact that establishes information channels which stimulate an emotional response. To investigate this idea, the article draws on elements of DST as a way to develop an understanding on how emotional intention is shared through music. The viewpoints of social identity theory (SIT) and social representation theory (SRT) are explored in order to lay the necessary foundations for the way individuals build social and musical identity. A range of theoretical models of psychology is also considered in order to provide a framework on how individual and collective thinking structure and interact. Particular concern is drawn on memory and on how musical taste is shaped by sociocultural factors, especially the phenomenon of significant Others.

### **Music and the Representational Dialogicality of the Self**

#### **The Internal Society of Voices—The Dialogical Self**

DST proposes that the actual human voices a person interacts with in their social environment, even from the very early stages of their lives, become embedded into a person's subconscious. This results in an internal society with which that person interacts through the multi-voiced capacity of the brain. In today's post-modern society humans make subconscious use of their multivoiced brain and experience the Self from a number of different and diverse positions. They create characters that agree or contradict each other, operate their voices and have beneficial dialogues between them (Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992; Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). In a similar way to the external society, the relationship between Self and emotion in an internal society is intertwined and bidirectional. In the internal society emotions can inherent or facilitate dialogues and, in reverse, dialogues can change emotions (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Such emotions can be aroused in the process of an internal dialogue between, for example, the voice of my personal *I* and a second *I*, "My mother's" voice, to which the voice of my personal *I* will agree or contradict regarding an important decision I need to make (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Since DST negotiates the subconscious interplay between the voice of the individual Self and voices that belong to other selves and societal groups, the role that music holds in such an internal community may have the same characteristics and values as in the external one. Since this article explores the narrative functionality of

music I suggest that, if music holds narrative qualities, those qualities initiate in the sphere of the subconscious. I subsequently suggest that, in order to explore such qualities, it is of primary importance to investigate possible similarities and differences between the external and the internal world of the individual.

### **The External Society of Voices—The Social Representations**

SRT addresses the need of the individual and society to face the unknown and to integrate it within the balance and harmony of a structured environment. What we already know and accept assumes judgemental role towards anything that is new and therefore under critical evaluation. Moscovici (1961) presented the basic tenets of the theory illustrating the importance of a pre-existing and already established belief system that every societal group utilizes as to communicate responses towards facts of novelty (Moscovici, 1961; Wagner, 2012). Moscovici describes social representations as a system of values, ideas and practices that individuals use in order to understand the social and material world they live in and in order to establish a shared code of communication as members of the same social group (Moscovici, 1972; Sammut & Howarth, 2014). Because of the phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia through which different kinds of knowledge and thinking can co-exist in the same individual or group, Moscovici divides social representations into hegemonic, emancipated and polemic. Hegemonic representations are the representations that are shared by most members of a solid structured group such as a nation or a political or religious party. Emancipated representations concern subgroups that share their own, relatively autonomic to the rest of society variation of a representation. Lastly, polemic representations are the representations that relate to social conflicts such as, for example, the one between totalitarianism and democracy (Höijer, 2011).

I will now examine how both internal and external societies of voices develop in the life of an individual and how music relates to this.

### **Prenatal Period and Infancy**

Experimental research has suggested that humans are responsive to music and sound from the prenatal period (Bunt & Pavlicevic, 2001; Juslin, 2001; Thompson, 2009). The foetus has been observed to be responsive to sounds coming from their mother's environment during the pregnancy period. The type of sounds experienced at the listening onset includes the heartbeat, general bodily sounds and external sounds including music. In infancy, curiosity and exploration are observed to drive humans through their effort to understand their own body and subsequently the world (Fogel, De Koyer, Bellagamba, & Bell, 2002). The infant uses voice and gestures to express important needs such as the need for food, protection and mentorship. Mothers respond to their baby's signals and establish bridges of communication through the use of a verbal language of specific pitch and contours that have been observed to be similar

across cultures (Dissanayake, 2000; Thompson, 2009; Tagg, 2012). In this early stage of life, mothers can be seen as the individual's first person of great importance, that is, the first significant Other. In this phase, collective remembering and SRT can be found in the way the mother provides the necessary knowledge and suggests the representations through which the infant will objectify the world.

One form of communication between infant and mother is music and in this way, musical sounds (as distinct from the voice) become part of the narrative stream that facilitates communication between the infant and mother. Since the idea of the Self emerges from a set of regularly practiced routines between mother and infant, these routines, or frames, can be seen as narrative themes and plots that are communicated through a bodily and sonically articulated language. This early-life language, of which music is a valuable component, develops to be both external and internal as the infant soon starts to experience the interaction with the mother even when the mother is absent. In such case, mother is perceived by the infant as an "evoked companion" (Stern, 1985), manifests the existence of the dialogicality of the Self from the first days of life (Fogel et al., 2002) and implies the onset of an embodied narrative functionality of music.

At these early stages of human development, I can assume that the similarities in experience of the sonic environment could be described as near-universal. However, our reactions to music—as opposed to sound—come through the enculturation process that develop as the individual grows and meets with a wide range of ethnic and cultural experiences beyond the sphere of the mother (Fish, 1980; Becker, 2001; Thompson, 2009; Tagg, 2012). In today's modern world of globalization the enculturation process may involve a blend of a considerable variety of cultures of ethnic diversity and the term "culture-oriented" may need to be seen under a different light. In such light musical identity gains cultural polyphony and, the Self, although significantly attached to a collective attitude, becomes all the more critical. To explore such issues I first look into the development of the identity in childhood and adolescence. I then explore adulthood and the way individuals and societies cross-influence, with specific reference to the collective memory notion. Particular emphasis is given to the role that significant Others play in all periods of human life.

### **Childhood and Adolescence**

Concept of musicality begins to formulate in childhood and is primarily influenced by the family members (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Script theory (Byng-Hall, 1995, 1998) proposes that the relationships and communicational dynamics in the family domain are based by large in patterns that solidified in previous generations and appear as transferable into the present ones. This can be understood as "family culture" renewing itself in each new generation. Such previous generations' influence is also expressed through the notion of collective memory, namely the past experience upon

## *NARRATIVE FUNCTION OF MUSIC*

which societies base their understanding of the present and build ways to move towards the future (Bartlett, 1932; Wagoner, 2015). Since collective remembering is always social and created with cultural tools, music may qualify to be an integral component of significant worth. SRT views social representations as carriers of collective remembering that a particular group, in this case the family, objectifies in the environment in order to make the unfamiliar familiar and maintain the group's sustainability (Bartlett, 1932; Moscovici, 1961; Wagoner, 2015). The role of the media should also be viewed as of particular importance as they impose the figure of the parent as model and dictate the values that parents should perceive as significant for their children's future (O'Connor & Joffe, 2013). In light of the dialogicality of the Self, family dynamics can be understood as a teaching/learning process between the family setting and the infant/child. The newborn, and later the child, entrusts the mother and the whole family with the receiving of the appropriate cultural and social training, including musical preferences. DST suggests that the sociocultural formations take effect straight after birth. It may then be assumed that this initial Self positioning towards culture, society and music embeds into the subconscious and constantly influences the child.

There are, however, other acknowledged sources of influential importance outside the family that come from individuals or groups. SIT suggests the influence of peer group memberships to be important in the way identity shapes. SIT describes individuals as characters that organize their responses depending on the context and the environment the response in subject is called (Tajfel, 1978). This viewpoint comes in accord with the tenets of SRT as the latter supports the birth of social representations and their embodiment into the collective thinking to be an inside-a-group process (Bartlett, 1932; Moscovici, 1961; Halbwachs, 1992). According to Renedo, social identities and social representations are closely related as "they have a relational genesis and are co-constructed side by side through dialogue with others in the multiple locations in which we live" (Renedo, 2010, p. 12.2).

### **Adulthood**

In adulthood the Self, although more solidified, tends to reposition through the interaction with other individuals. We seem to perceive as strong and most valuable the friendships we create with people of similar enthusiasms and to show disbelief or lack of interest towards a potential relationship with people who vibrate differently (Trevanthen, 2002). Music, song and dance can constitute very powerful and spontaneous elements people can share, especially when they share with persons of significance, cross-influencing and empowering their identity (Dissanayake, 2000).

A very important consideration in the way musical appreciation shapes is the communicational environment which in the current era includes the significant influence of the media which has the ability to manipulate social perception and

cultivate collective thinking and cognition (Höijer, 2011). This particular perceptual dimension comprises representations of the results of technological, scientific, political, economic, environmental and societal changes that require comprehension and integration within what currently makes sense. Communication systems are dynamic and fluid, are constructed to have the functionality of a group membership (Wagoner, 2015) and constitute the premises that SRT investigates (Moscovici, 1961; Wagner, 2012). Individuals engage in this pluralism of systems of knowledge regardless their level of compatibility and create social representations in a two-stage process: anchoring and objectification.

Anchoring is the process through which a person brings new and incomprehensible events into familiar premises (Sammut & Howarth, 2014). The members of the community repeat this process constantly, resulting into one's social representation being anchored into other social representations continuously, transforming each other's meaning and creating that way, according to Höijer, "a kind of cultural assimilation" (Höijer, 2011, p. 7). Once a new event is anchored, it goes to the next stage and gets objectified. Objectification is the process that turns something unknown into something known by giving it a sensory empirical status (Höijer, 2011). Objectification is according to Moscovici a much more dynamic process than anchoring and takes action almost immediately when we are experiencing new events (Höijer, 2011).

Through anchoring and objectification a new piece of information, introduced either verbally or visually, shifts from being an uncanny notion into being attached to established forms of knowledge that our memory stores and draws upon when needed. Due to the phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia, such shift may trigger debates between the individuals that share the experience. If these debates resolve into a communal consensus of a long-lasting importance, the representation becomes hegemonic and constitutes part of the group's subconscious automatic thinking, thus becomes part of the social norms (Wagner, 2012). Once a social representation is established it integrates with the group's beliefs and values and, based on SIT tenets, it can become a potential influence and regulator of social behaviour and a catalyst into the identity-shaping process (Sammut & Howarth, 2013). As a collectively agreed and established cognition social representation is also responsible for producing bonds in societies, communities and groups (Höijer, 2011). Most importantly, if I take into account of, first, the Bakhtinian logic and the DST tenets about a Self that is dialogical between *I*-positions of potential diversity and conflict, and, second, Moscovici's viewpoints about the diversity and contradictive way of thinking that exists in the same individual, I may then look at polyphony of the Self and cognitive polyphasia as "two sides of the same process" (Renedo, 2010). In such light I may have to consider social representations as a process that functions in both conscious and subconscious levels and lay this way a significant overlap between DST and SRT.

## NARRATIVE FUNCTION OF MUSIC

SIT gives special attention to figures of significance and of leadership, as power is one of the most acknowledged dynamics in the societal interplay. Similarly, SRT and theories about collective memory embrace the individual-to-individual influence alongside the society-to-individual one. This is expressed through the notions of heteroglossia and cognitive polyphasia, that is, the variety of diverse societal and cultural beliefs living inside the same group and individual. DST extends this notion into the subconscious when it refers to promoter positions as voices of extreme regulatory power and significance. It is therefore essential to investigate the influential importance that particular groups and persons hold in the life of an individual, that is, their significant Others.

### **Significant Others**

In everyday life, individuals often demonstrate reconsideration about life positioning through their interaction with significant influential Others. Because of the way music socially functions, I suggest that significant influential Others may also considerably account for potential repositioning of an individual's musical appreciation. Further to this, since DST tenets take effect since infancy (Fogel et al., 2002), it is likely that significant Others also exist on a subconscious level and are equally responsible for such influence and continuous re-evaluation of our *I*-position (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). It may therefore be that significant Others affect the way we shape and re-evaluate music we like, operating on both our conscious and subconscious world. In other words, such form of influence attributed to significant Others of the conscious (social interaction-SIT-SRT) and subconscious (multivoiced brain's social interaction-DST) domain may result into an individual's increase of exposure to a specific musical piece or genre. Consequently, this may maximize the individual's probability of liking that musical piece or genre and enhance positive predispositions and emotional openness towards it.

Significant Others in their broad sense can serve as promoter positions, that is, a *I*-position higher in hierarchy and able to regulate the organization of the Self in moments of emergency. People of importance that are real, imaginary, connected to memory or anticipation, celebrities that come from arts, politics, religion, etc., and that register as inspiring, even places of established intimacy and value can become promoter positions and be consulted by the Self in moments of instability (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). It is, nonetheless, obvious that both the individual and their people of distinct significance may frequently be parts of the same, narrower or broader, societal environment. Such environment cultivates collective patterns of perception, emotional interaction and memory. It is therefore important to take into account the way those patterns construct and reconstruct and the role music plays into this process.

## **Music as a narrative stream of emotion**

### **Emotion and Music**

Theorists and researchers offer various approaches to the way music and emotion connect. From a philosophical point of view, Davies (2001, 2005) supports the idea of the inherent power of the performer to suggest specific emotions to the listener through their posture, movement, facial expression and general attitude. Other approaches focus on the cognitive response to music listening, where music automatically triggers emotional processes (Robinson, 2005). An alternative approach suggests that musical appreciation is culturally and socially learned (Fish, 1980; Becker, 2001; Thompson, 2009; Tagg, 2012). Each of these models brings their own problems. Davies, for instance, does not address the case of listening to music in an environment where we cannot obtain visual contact with the performer. Robinson's theory does not account for a listener's preferences and the potential for disliking music of different cultures, genres or styles. The final approach is also in need of further consideration because of the complexity of the migration streams and other factors of contemporary living that create a dynamic and continuously changing cultural blend. As such, the consideration of the conditions that play significant part in the reception of music and the formation of emotional as well as aesthetic responses is a complex but essential factor in understanding our relationship with music.

Theories of psychology such as SIT, SRT and DST bring different viewpoints that may offer answers to the problems mentioned above. For instance, in Davies's approach the lack of visual contact with the music's source may be bridged through mental representation references that memory facilitates. It is likely that particular genres or pieces of music that effortlessly trigger emotional responses have been recorded by the brain as significant during the enculturation process, or within the establishment of collective remembering. If so, this music may be automatically emotionally favoured through the processes of the subconscious Self. Similarly, the modern reality about cultural influence in musical appreciation and therefore the mechanism of liking or disliking music of less cultural and societal familiarity may be seen differently under the prism of the dialogicality of the Self and the notion of cognitive polyphasia.

### **Established approaches**

One of the most prevalent and established theories on emotional arousal connects to the idea of anticipation. It suggests a mechanism through which emotions are triggered when the resolution of an expectation is postponed, inhibited or even cancelled (Meyer, 1956; Cook & Dibben, 2001; Huron, 2006). In this respect music has to have the capacity to create anticipation and regulate its resolution in order to be able to genuinely activate emotional responses. The nature of these responses is discussed by

## *NARRATIVE FUNCTION OF MUSIC*

Huron (2006) who makes a distinction between the musical and biological nature of expectation. According to Huron, “the biological goal of expectation is to form adaptively useful predictions about future events...However, the musical goals of expectation are very different. In most situations the musical goal will be to evoke a pleasing or compelling emotional dynamic” (Huron, 2006, p.98). Overall, the anticipation/resolution theory illustrates the power of music to evoke emotion, yet does not refer at all to its narrative qualities.

Expectation alone does not provide an explanation of the relationship between musical sound and the emotional dynamic. Lyons (2003) suggests that music does not have the ability to arbitrarily trigger emotions but proposes the idea that music has a remarkable capacity to link to memories of incidents, which are generally acknowledged as sources of emotional arousal. In this way, listening to a piece of music triggers the memory of emotionally charged moments and reactivates their emotional impact. From this viewpoint, music is understood not to function as an emotional generator, but as an emotional representative (Hindemith, 1952; Davies, 1978; Lang, 1979; Scherer & Zentner, 2001; Sloboda & Juslin, 2001; Dibben, 2002; Tagg, 2012). Although this theory has been widely embraced, it does not provide sufficient explanation for how emotional meaning can be securely conveyed between composer and audience. It seems highly unlikely that composer and audience would share a common memory-stored musical pattern of emotional significance. The representational value of music, however, when considered under theories such as SRT and DST can be seen in a whole new light. Halbwachs (1992) argues that the individual’s memory filters the world through viewpoints coming from various social groups, primarily through the views of their significant others. This comes in accord with Durkheim’s (1912) notion of the social mind, with the tenets of SIT (Tajfel, 1978) and with Moscovici’s (1961) belief that memory is socially engaged. Music may then be seen as an integral component of, at least part of our individual or social memories and the emotional value they withhold. Since such memories, in globalized societies, may be coming from a melting pot of groups of notable ethnic and cultural diversity (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010), music may nowadays be regarded as a communicational stream of broader cultural perception uniformity and subsequently of a more open emotional reception. In addition, if music connects to memories and if memories are descriptive, this may suggest music’s acquired capacity of narrative functionality.

The relationship between composer and audience, and the potential for emotional communication is explored by Nattiez (1990) in his study of music as discourse. The problem that emerges is that while we are fully aware of the ability of music to arouse emotional responses, it seems difficult to understand how the composer might exploit this potential without a shared memory. By taking a semiotic viewpoint, Nattiez theorizes that music is not the channel that a composer utilizes to communicate meaning to the listener. Rather, he regards music as a sign that both composer and

listener look at and interpret in their own unique way. In this way, memories do not have to relate to specific or shared emotional representatives; instead, their effectiveness depends on wider cultural and societal imprints. With his viewpoint, Nattiez opens up the possibility to think about the communication process in less specific ways. Emotional representation suggests something wider than an emotional trigger would suggest—it is “largely” in this area and according to cultural conventions, we are enculturated into this vocabulary. Still, this vocabulary should be nowadays considered under the reality of a globalized enculturation and be regarded as an even broader one.

In an attempt to explore such vocabulary further, Tagg and Clarida (2003) introduce a third approach that puts particular emphasis on the narrative qualities of music. To support this thesis, they conducted tests on hundreds of participants using the open text and the affective and associative response methods. In their experiments they asked the participants to respond freely to a piece of music by describing its impact, associating its meaning to a verbal form of documentation. Tagg and Clarida called these tests verbal-visual associations (“VVAs”) and attempted through them to use verbal metaphors as connotative responses to music in order to map the uniformity of emotional reception when this is transmitted through music. According to Tagg, the verbal metaphors elicited by music and listed by the participants served only to suggest part of the emotional meaning the listeners perceived after listening to the musical subject of the test. Tagg also argues that these verbal metaphors are almost always culturally oriented. In these experiments Tagg centralizes on the fact that “any music can communicate anything apart from itself” (Tagg, 2012, p. 79) expressing this way his belief on the obsolete status of theories that support an absolute, non-representational notion of music. Nonetheless, although Tagg refers to the narrative function of music he does not offer explanations as for the reasons and the extent that this can facilitate music as an emotional communicator. These reasons may be found in the multiplicity of social and cultural voices that influence the construction and reconstruction of individual and collective remembering in a globalized society (Moscovici, 1961; Halbwachs, 1992). Societies are no longer mono-dimensional and their boundaries have become significantly permeable in order to allow alternative ways of thinking and perception. These ways are, nonetheless, in need to be regulated through semantic communal barriers (Gillespie, 2008).

### **Conclusion**

Music is widely known to raise emotional impact to people and is acknowledged for triggering targeted emotional responses. Such ability of music may hold grounds on its quality as a narrative stream of emotional communication.

In order to acquire a better understanding of the narrative mechanism of music I considered the shaping of musical taste and appreciation as a fundamental field of study

## NARRATIVE FUNCTION OF MUSIC

and theorized that such understanding may offer significant knowledge about the emotional terrain on which composer and audience interact through music.

I followed the development of musical perception from the womb to the enculturation and adulthood under theories of psychology such as SIT and SRT. Such theories gave me a better view on the way an individual negotiates and renegotiates his or her personality and musical identity as a result to their sociocultural positioning and repositioning. Most importantly, I drew on the tenets of DST in order to investigate the automatic sociocultural interaction that takes place in the subconscious. I paid particular attention to the influential role that people and social groups of great significance play in the individual's structure of identity and of musical taste and appreciation.

It is my belief that a dialogical identity approach in the subconscious, based on theories of psychology that illustrate the way identity shapes in the conscious world would benefit the understanding of the narrative nature of music. The theoretical basis of such research should be empirically investigated and I intend to carry out a set of tests specifically designed to provide data for such purpose.

### References

- Bartlett, F. C. (1932). *Remembering: A study in experimental and social psychology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Becker, J. (2001). Anthropological perspectives on music and emotion. In P. Juslin & J. Sloboda (Eds.), *Music and emotion: Theory and research* (pp. 135-160). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press
- Bunt, L., & Pavlicevic, M. (2001). Music and emotion: Perspectives from music therapy. In P. Juslin & J. Sloboda (Eds.), *Music and emotion: Theory and research* (pp. 181–201). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Byng-Hall, J. (1995). *Rewriting family scripts: Improvisation and systems change*. New York, NY: Guildford Press.
- Byng-Hall, J. (1998). Evolving ideas about narrative: Re-editing the re-editing of family mythology. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 20, 133–141.
- Cook, N., & Dibben, N. (2001). Musicological approach to emotion. In P. Juslin & J. Sloboda (Eds.), *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research* (pp. 45-70). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). *Finding flow. The psychology of engagement with everyday life*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Davies, J. B. (1978). *The psychology of music*. London, UK: Hutchinson.

- Dibben, N. (2002). Gender, identity and music. In R. A. R. MacDonald, D. J. Hargreaves, & D. Miell (Eds.), *Musical identities* (pp. 117-133). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Dissanayake, E. (2000). Antecedents of the temporal arts in early mother-infant onteraction. In N. L. Wallin, B. Merker, & S. Brown (Eds.), *The origins of music* (pp. 201–222). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Durkheim, E. (1912). *The elementary forms of religious life*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Fish, S. (1980). *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fogel, A., De Koyer, I., Bellagamba, F., & Bell, H. (2002). The dialogical self in the first two years of life: Embarking on a journey of discovery. *Theory & Psychology*, 7(12), 191–205.
- Gillespie, A. (2008). Social representations, alternative representations and semantic barriers. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 38(4), 375–391.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On collective memory*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hermans, H. (2001). Dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning. *Culture & Psychology*, 7(3), 243–281.
- Hermans, H., & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2010). *Dialogical self theory: Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hermans, H., Kempen, H. J. G., & Van Loon, R. J. P. (1992). The dialogical self: Beyond individualism and rationalism. *American Psychologist*, 47, 23–33.
- Hindemith, P. (1952). *A composer's world, horizons and limitations*. Mainz, Germany: Schott Musik International.
- Höijer, B. (2011). Social representation theory. A new theory for media research. *Nordicom Review*, 32, 3–16.
- Huron, D. (2006). *Sweet anticipation: Music and the psychology of expectation*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Juslin, P. N. (2001). Communicating emotion in music performance: A review and a theoretical framework. In P. Juslin & J. Sloboda (Eds.), *Music and emotion: Theory and research* (pp. 309-337). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

## NARRATIVE FUNCTION OF MUSIC

- Lang, P. J. (1979). A bio-informational theory of emotional imagery. *Psychophysiology*, 16, 495–512.
- Lyons, A. D. (2003). *Time space texture: An approach to audio-visual composition* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
- Meyer, L. (1956). *Emotion and meaning in music*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Moscovici, S. (1961). *La psychanalyse, son image et son public: Étude sur la représentation sociale de la psychanalyse*. Paris, France: Presses universitaires de France, Paris.
- Moscovici, S. (1972). Theory and society in social psychology. In J. Israel & H. Tajfel (Eds.), *The context of social psychology: A critical assessment* (pp. 17-68). London, UK: Academic Press.
- Nattiez, J.-J. (1990). *Music and discourse: Toward a semiology of music*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- O'Connor, C., & Joffe, H. (2013). Media representations of early human development: Protecting, feeding and loving the developing brain. *Social Science & Medicine*, 97, 297–306.
- Renedo, A. (2010). Polyphony and polyphasia in self and knowledge. *Papers on Social Representations*, 19(1), 12.1–12.21.
- Riesman, D., Glazer, N., & Denney, R. (1950). *The lonely crowd*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Robinson, J. (2005). *Deeper than reason: Emotion and its role in literature, music, and art*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Sammut, G., & Howarth, C. (2014). Social representations. In T. Teo (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 1799–1802). New York, NY: Springer.
- Scherer, K. R., & Zentner, M. R. (2001). Emotional effects of music: Production rules. In P. Juslin & J. Sloboda (Eds.), *Music and emotion: Theory and research* (pp. 361-392). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press
- Sloboda, J. A., & Juslin, P. N. (2001). Psychological perspectives on music and emotion. In P. Juslin & J. Sloboda (Eds.), *Music and emotion: Theory and research* (pp. 71-104). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press

- Stern, D. N. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Tagg, P. (2012). *Music's meanings: A modern musicology for non-musos*. New York, NY: The Mass Media Music Scholar's Press.
- Tagg, P., & Clarida, B. (2003). *Ten little title tunes, Towards a musicology of the mass media*. New York, NY: The Mass Media Music Scholars' Press.
- Tajfel, H. (1978). The achievement of group differentiation. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Differentiation between social groups. Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 77–98). London, UK: Academic Press.
- Thompson, W. (2009). *Music, thought, and feeling: Understanding the psychology of music*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Trevarthen, C. (2002). Learning in companionship: Education in the North. *The Journal of Scottish Education* (New Series), 10, 16–25.
- Wagner, W. (2012). Social representation theory. In D. J. Christie (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of peace psychology, Vol. 3* (pp. 1041-1046). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wagoner, B. (2015). Collective remembering as a process of social representation. In G. Sammut, G. Andreouli, G. Gaskell, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of social representations* (pp. 143–162). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

## **EXPLORING ARTISTIC NARRATIVE FORMS TO EXPAND THE STUDY OF THE DIALOGICAL SELF**

Brena Carvalho  
Universidade Federal da Bahia

Ana Cecília Bastos  
Universidade Católica do Salvador/Universidade Federal da Bahia

**Abstract.** The basic notion of *narrative* is based on verbal discourse the study of which has prevailed in psychological research. Monuments, music, drawing, and painting have also been recognized as narratives. Lanaridis (2017) discusses music as narrative, reaching beyond traditional boundaries of psychology within which human experience is considered, and exploring new possibilities for the empirical research on the Self. While Lanaridis focuses on the reasons, level, and extent of the narrative capacity of music in the context of a contemporary society within the framework of Social Representation, Social Identity and Dialogical Self Theory, we discuss the particular issue of using non-verbal expressive artifacts to deal empirically with psychological phenomena.

**Keywords:** narratives, intersubjectivity, non-verbal expressive artifacts, Self

In this paper, we aimed at discussing some of Lanaridis's ideas, especially considering his notions of music as a narrative tool for promoting and connecting memories and feelings and, doing so, for the development of auto-reflection behaviors and collective memory descriptions. To achieve this objective, we initially highlight the notion of intersubjectivity brought from Silva Filho (2015), and then we rescued the characteristics of the narrative as it is conceived by Bruner (2001). Afterward, we identify some challenges in conceiving music – an artistic artifact - as a powerful methodologic instrument for dealing with the analyses of the affective field in human lives.

### **The challenge of dealing with the intersubjective triangulation**

Two centuries ago, the poet Longfellow said that music is the universal language of mankind. Despite the hopeful promises these words convey—one of which may be the suggestion that music is a metalanguage that could eventually overcome the often tense communication between individuals and societies—the way people relate to music requires a nuanced understanding. Lanaridis (2017) discusses the nature of the

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the first author at Rua do Rouxinol, 155, Edf. Porto, Apt. 401, Imbui, Salvador/BA, cep. 41720-052, Brasil. Email: brenacristiane@yahoo.com.br

experience connected to music and demonstrates how memories and the feelings related to music are culturally constructed and situated. He takes into consideration various theoretical approaches that focus on the individual-society relationship. These theories converge in the emphasis on the psychological organization of what is internal and external.

Assuming that music functions as a narrative stream, Lanaridis (2017) develops his analysis toward a threefold goal: (1) to examine the narrative qualities of music within the communicational process, (2) to examine the ongoing subconscious relationships between the individual and the society, within the external and internal societies with which the self interacts, and (3) to consider the factors that may be responsible for the ways individuals internalize music in contemporary culture.

With respect to the first point, Lanaridis (2017) underscores the importance of music in human lives, namely, its role along the socialization process, in activating emotional responses and self-reflection. Thus, the flow of the narrative is to be approached as a communicative process, so that we can focus on the emotional resonance present in what the music communicates to the individual. The music, in this context, is understood as a significant artifact opening channels that stimulate an emotional response. However, while it is possible to understand the characterization of music as an expressive artifact, its narrative qualities are explained only at the end of the chapter, where the author says that music not only works as a trigger of emotions but also as an artifact that introduces the ability to bind descriptive and collective memories of events from an emotional representation.

Regarding the relationship between the individual and society, Lanaridis (2017) emphasizes its dialectic nature and evokes social representation theory (SRT), social identity theory (SIT) and dialogical self theories (DST) to better approach it. Social representations are presented as a prior and well-established belief system that sustains, for each individual, the construction of private meanings. From SIT, the author highlights the importance of peers in the construction of identity, as well as the way diverse situations evoke different responses in the subject. DST is relevant in two dimensions: (1) the emphasis put on understanding the processes by which the voices the individual interacts with his or her social environment are, from the earliest stages of life, embedded in his or her subconscious, and (2) the emotional and relational dynamics between the different positions of Self. The author also assumes that the narrative qualities of music begin in a subconscious sphere and through the early relationship between the mother and the baby, persist and develop through all subsequent periods of human development, and always involves relationships with significant Others.

However, the ways through which Lanaridis (2017) conceives and differentiates the inner world, taken as subconscious, and the outside world, are not made explicit in

## EXPLORING ARTISTIC NARRATIVE FORMS

his article. His next challenge is to further develop his ideas, going deeper in discussing the methodological and conceptual consequences of an effective consideration of intersubjectivity. Silva Filho (2015), building upon the ideas of Bruner (1996), states that intersubjectivity can be conceived as a human condition that allows us to access, interpret, and know the minds of Others, and makes it possible to create and negotiate common signs using language. Intersubjectivity is presented, thus, as a phenomenon that can be found in the mutual sharing of statements and beliefs about the world, being formed from three primary elements: a dynamic Self, practical language and the mind of a third party with which the Self is related. The narratives, in these contexts, appear as a vessel through which emerge the possibilities of constructing the Self and the relationships of the person with Others as well as his or her relations in the world. It is worth noting, however, that the narrative is presented as a speech constructed within interactional contexts in a real (or imagined) time; Silva Filho (2015) refers to Davidson, who considers that the mental state can neither be understood as an entirely private or internal state, nor one completely external to the individual. Actually, what provides to each subject the concept of a given object is the line formed by the interaction, mediated by language, which is established between them. Therefore, the sharing of meaning makes sense only if the subjects involved are able to think things about the object in a public and intersubjective space. In other words, it is assumed that the individualization of beliefs and thoughts only makes sense if they are analyzed under the light of systematic causal interrelations and interconnections between (1) the individual, (2) the interlocutor, and (3) the object located in the world. So, it is no longer necessary to resort to such separation between the subconscious (intern) and extern spheres of psychic reality, but, instead, to conceive it bases on an intersubjective triangulation.

Music, as an “expressive artifact,” is a very special kind of object located in the world. As Lanaridis (2017) suggests when reviewing the literature on the subject, music brings to the infant, from the very early stages of human development, “a wide range of ethnic and cultural experiences beyond the sphere of the mother”; these experiences inform the person’s autobiographical and emotional memories. As an emotionally charged cultural artifact, music becomes a powerful line, as he observes, along which “an individual negotiates and renegotiates their personality and musical identity as a result of their sociocultural positioning and repositioning.” The author makes a point, no doubt, in bringing together relevant theoretical frameworks within which to design empirical research on these issues. This is a necessary and important beginning.

### **The Use of Expressive Cultural Artifacts in Psychological Research**

Expressive cultural artifacts that escape the conventional and hegemonic reign of word-based, verbal narratives, have yet to be significantly explored in psychological research.

Since the recognition that human conduct is storied (Sarbin, 1986) and that human beings use narrative to represent, share and remember their experience (Gergen & Gergen, 1997), the conception of narrative as based on verbal discourse has prevailed in psychological research. Although monuments, music, drawing, and painting have also been recognized as narratives, this recognition does not correspond to a proportional development of studies analyzing such non-verbal dimensions. Of course, this is not the rule for fields such as literary history, where it is acknowledged that it's impossible to count all the forms of narratives we have in the world (Barthes & Duisit, 1975)

Actually, important parts of human personal and collective experience can only be narrated in non-verbal or non-linear poetic forms. The Brazilian artist Francisco Brennand—known as the “Master of Dreams”—created a huge work that is metaphorically said to be an epic romance—although the author is a sculptor and painter and not a writer. His impressive sculptures and the original architectural cluster that surrounds them, “blend to create a world of abyss, at the same time Dionysian, subterranean, obscure, sexual and religious” (Borba, 2015).<sup>1</sup> Brennand’s art pieces condense deep human feelings, personally expressed and inspired by human collective and timeless experience. Borba concludes: “his novels, his short stories, who knows, short poems, are these shining beaks of toucans, hawks, and vultures, the phallic shafts, the legs of absurd women, fish gasping painfully, files of friars, toads, turtles, buttocks with heads of lizards, crosses, heraldic motifs, blind totems with breasts, eggs hatching snakes, the table laid lavishly with a phantasmagoric banquet. But why describe it? No words can do justice to the art of Brennand. Literature is useless. He writes on ceramic” (Borba, 2015).<sup>2</sup>

Experience is beyond verbal symbols, which can be misleading and reductive. Artistic expression overcomes such limits and does justice to the richness of experience, and, in turn, feeds forward and enriches it (Valsiner, 2014). Regarding music—the art of sounds—Priolli (1994) points out that it is possible, through this vehicle, to express deeply a feeling or to describe a scene from nature. It is important, therefore, to highlight this dual functionality of music in order to understand its narrative qualities, in particular, the ability to express such feelings and descriptions via other means than the linear verbal language.

Lanaridis (2017), in discussing music as narrative, goes beyond psychology’s traditional boundaries within which human experience is considered. We could say that, in doing so, he works toward expanding the theoretical and methodological framework on narrative and in doing so, explores new possibilities of empirical research on the Self. Here, it is important to take into account how the narrative properties of music can

---

<sup>1</sup>F. B. Borba at [www.brennand.com.br](http://www.brennand.com.br), retrieved August 28, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> The emphasis (underlining) is ours.

## EXPLORING ARTISTIC NARRATIVE FORMS

be conceived. Bruner is a relevant reference for discussing this issue, in the measure in which he identifies and defines such properties.

According to Bruner (1991), narratives are defined by qualities such as diachronicity, particularity, the binding of the intentional state, canonicity—and the rupture of the canonical—genus, rules, sensitivity to context and narrative competence. This stems from the realization that narratives constitute an approach to private events that break with the canonical screenplay and that occur over time. Thus, it is possible to assign an intentional state to the characters that make up the plot. Understanding narratives depends, therefore, on the ways in which they can be meant by the subject, and their acceptability does not rely on a correct reference to reality but meets the criterion of verisimilitude. No matter how much a narrative focuses on events that break with the canonical, it is built, in a given context, to make sense of the strangeness of the experiences, which are then grouped in a diachronic structure capable of giving continuity to the present and to notions of canonicity, as links are then forged between the “exceptional” and the “common.”

Vygotsky’s conception of art stresses precisely that it has the potential to link objective reality and social relations established in a particular time, but produces something that goes beyond that, and is new. Not only that: art has the ability to objectify feelings and other human potentialities, providing for a new psychic organization, and can mediate the individual experience and the human race, as a cultural product where complex mental activities are crystallized and can, therefore, be appropriated by other human beings beyond the limits of time and space. Therefore, art is “the objectification of human feelings, a technique drawn up by men that allows individuals to socialize certain feeling, but also, at the same time, make it personal, part of the psyche” (Barroso & Superti, 2014, p. 26). Or, as Vygotsky himself states (1999), art is a tool that “systematizes a field entirely specific to the psyche of the social man—precisely the field of feeling” (1999, p. 12). In this sense, artistic artifacts are presented as iconic signs that function as a basis for sharing social representations.

So, one can assume that music, as an artistic artifact, presents intercommunicational and narrative qualities which, while not conforming directly to those described by Bruner, fit most linear, verbal narratives, and do justice to the expression and recognition of the human affective field.

Exploring non-verbal expressive artifacts has been one of our concerns when dealing empirically with psychological phenomena. Narratives and semi-structured interviews are strategies that fit the basic assumptions of DST, which sees the Self as a semiotic system, as an instance polyphonic and dialogical, moving through tensions that regulate the uniqueness of the experience in the irreversible time (Tateo & Marsico, 2013). Going deeper, Valsiner (2007) rescues the importance of feelings in the subjective world, claiming that human affective processes, due to their complexity, go

beyond any linear efforts to describe and explain. He also considers a problem the inability of traditional psychological methods to study the dynamic and complex processes of human life. He defends the “development of scientific promoter signs that enable us to better study psychological realities” (pp. 56-57).

Valsiner reminds us that an important part of human experience occurs above and beyond the use of verbal language. It can be difficult to use language to notice something that is felt, but that is not immediately linguistically encoded; affective processes, for instance, exhibit a complexity that is hard to describe and explain linearly and can be, therefore, verbally inaccessible.

The use of narratives based on body maps, as proposed by Gastaldo, Magellan, Hangman & Davy (2012), appears, in this sense, as a possible methodological strategy, consistent with studies based on DST and on semiotic constructivism. Body maps are configured as artistic artifacts that can serve as semiotic tools to orient and amplify research participants’ talking, mediating relations present at the borders between them and the researcher. According to Gastado et al. (2012), body maps can be defined as body images in actual size, created by artistic techniques like drawing and painting, carrying the potential to represent aspects of the lives of people, their bodies and the world in which they live. It is a form of storytelling—in which the drawings of bodies work as totems that contain symbols with different meanings—that can only be understood in relation to the creator of the story, who lives the experience. As a creative method, the construction of body maps can provide, for participants, alternative means to communicate ideas, experiences, meanings, and feelings, reflexively and without drastically fragmenting their unity.

The availability of creative, theoretically relevant methodological strategies including music as an expressive artifact, is a very welcome promise and is, certainly, on the horizon of Lanaridis’ quite interesting discussion.

#### References

- Barroso, S. M. S, & Superti, T (2014). Vygotsky and the psychological study of art: Contributions for de human development. *Psicologia & Sociedade*, 26(1), 22-31.
- Barthes, R., & Duisit, L. (1975). An introduction to the structural analysis of narrative. In R. Barthes & L. Duisit (Eds.), *New literary history, Vol. 6, No. 2. On narrative and narratives (Winter, 1975)* (pp. 237–272). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press
- Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, 18(1), 1–21.

## EXPLORING ARTISTIC NARRATIVE FORMS

- Gastaldo, D., Magalhães, L., Carrasco, C., & Davy, C. (2012). *Body-map storytelling as research: Methodological considerations for telling the stories of undocumented workers through body mapping*. Retrieved from <http://www.migrationhealth.ca/undocumented-workers-ontario/body-mapping>
- Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (1997). Narratives of the self. In L. P. Hinchman & S. K. Hinchman (Eds.), *Memory, identity, community: The idea of narrative in the human sciences* (pp. 161–184). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Lanaridis, A. (2017). The narrative function of music in a contemporary society: Designing an empirical approach through dialogical and representational practices of the social self. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 10(2), 139-152.
- Priolli, M. L. M. (1994). *Basic principles for the music for youth*. Rio de Janeiro, Brasil: Casa Oliveira de Músicas Ltda.
- Sarbin, T. (1986). *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Silva Filho, W. (2015). Intersubjectivity: Psychology's next chapter. In G. Marsico (Ed.) *Jerome S. Bruner Beyond 100: Celebrating Possibilities*. Heidelberg, Germany: Springer.
- Tateo, L., & Marsico, G. (2013). The self as tension of wholeness and emptiness. *Interações*, 24, 1–19.
- Valsiner, J. (2014). *An invitation to cultural psychology*. London, UK: Sage Publishers.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1999). *Psychology of art*. São Paulo, Brasil: Martins Fontes.

(This page deliberately left blank)

## **UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION BY THE ACTIVITY OF HISTORICAL THINKING: DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY AND SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY**

Daniel Moreau  
University of Quebec in Abitibi-Temiscamingue, Canada

**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to articulate the dialogical self theory (DST) and the social representation theory (SRT) so that the conceptual tools required for the analysis of the temporalization process are implemented. This theoretical endeavour are done in terms of a transformative approach to SRT, which examines temporality according to a dialectical approach to social practices. A dialectical approach apprehends the objects of social representation by the processes of anchoring and objectivation, explaining the cognitive activity behind specific group practices (Abric, 1994; Jodelet, 1989). Analysing the objectivation process of time leads to an understanding of the production of different historical narratives in the context of social practices. As such, SRT complies with Moscovici's (1961) perspective, aiming to understand the cognitive activity underlying collective action in the transformation of social reality. This approach stands out of the slipstream of Durkheim (1898), mapping out the cultural, social and political landmarks accounting for the process of reproducing social and institutional structures. According to this view, individual action is pursued under a limited range of possibilities given by structural and historical regularities (Berthelot, 1990). For Moscovici (1961), SRT rather considers the wide array of possibilities allowing the identification of representational structures. In this respect, I refer to the theory of the central core and its peripheral system proposed by Abric (1994) to describe both the foundations and variations of the social representation of historical time. First, I tackle the DST and its conceptual implications regarding teaching and learning history. Second, I address the objectivation of time involved in the process of subjectification with reference to SRT. Finally, these two theories enable me to delineate the nature of the activity involved in historical thinking, behind the process of the production of history

**Keywords:** historical thinking, teaching, learning, social representation theory, dialogical self theory

### **DST and Teaching History**

Dialogical Self Theory (DST) is very much linked to the issue of history education. To my knowledge, only Valsiner (2012) establishes a link with this field, from a perspective of putting history into a narrative form. It is actually surprising that it has not imbued the field of research earlier since the processes that it sheds light on examine the goals and learning process. As posited by this theory, the human condition is marked by dialogue with otherness, which is part of the Self (Hermans, 2012, 2013; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). This presence of otherness is linked to one of

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Comments concerning this paper can be directed to author at [daniel.moreau@uqat.ca](mailto:daniel.moreau@uqat.ca)

the fundamental goals of history education that seeks to develop an open mind toward what is different in order to establish a dialogue (Ségal, 1990). According to Wineburg (2001), otherness defines the core of developing historical thinking in pupils, varying between what is strange and what is familiar. Developing this ability to consider viewpoints from different historical actors is generally defined in scientific literature by the concept of historical empathy (Lee, 2005; Lee & Ashby, 2001; Wineburg, 2001). It refers to the ability to take into consideration people's frame of reference (or belief systems) when trying to understand their actions, social practices, and institutions. This concept of historical empathy, from its very conception, is based on the Collingwood principle, which stipulates that "all history is history of mind" (Shemilt, 1984, p. 40). It appeared during the second half of the 1970s in Great Britain to define the ethical foundation of historical thinking.

It satisfies reasonably well the four criteria of the *utushi* concept proposed by Morioka (2008)<sup>1</sup>. First, it supposes that the subject opens up emotionally to the historical experience of others, which is to say, "the transfer of the affect beyond the boundary between self and the other, between the inside and the outside" (p. 156). Second, it involves being open to mimesis, which reminds us of Ricoeur's (1986) "*historical poetic*" in describing the historical thought movement when trying to understand historical actions. While this movement is both interpersonal and intrapsychological, it is set in motion by dialogue between the pupils and the teacher as well as by the reflexive activity of historical thinking. This activity is marked by cognitive reversibility and, in the end, is the cause of cognitive restructuring (VanSledright & Limon, 2006).

As a first approximation, the concept of historical empathy may lead to a curious contradiction: while the DST highlights the presence of otherness at the heart of dialogism and cultural practices, researchers in history education tend to promote it as if it had not existed before we started teaching history. Researchers stress that pupils are generally not disposed to considering the difference, and would tend toward presentism, that is, to apply their own belief system when trying to understand historical figures (Seixas, 1998; Wineburg, 2001). This is in fact not a contradiction, if only on the surface. On the one hand, it is true, as mentioned by teaching specialist and historian Chervel (1998), that school always teaches some of what pupils already know. This is a fundamental characteristic of school culture, at least in France.

On the other hand, some concepts from the DST shed light on this presentism that tends to be immediately associated with a single narrative. This is a narrative that does not make space for otherness and is usually attributed to an absence of historical

---

<sup>1</sup> This concept refers to the very co-experience of otherness in a therapeutic situation. Even if the aim of the therapist is not the same of the history teacher or of the historian, this co-experience is a *sine qua non* of the understanding of past's phenomenon.

## UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION

thought (Duquette, 2011). The concepts of *I*-position and counter-position show that historical narratives are built on a polyphonic base and activate the “repertoire of the Self” (Hermans, 2013; Raggatt, 2012). Work on historical memory in Quebec<sup>2</sup> confirms this phenomenon. For example, Trépanier (2001) identifies Marxist and nationalist foundations in the historical discourse about Quebec’s sovereignty during the 1995 referendum. These are discordant, generate contradictions, but nevertheless live together inside the same historical narrative. The subject’s position—as a repertoire—can be revealed by analysing the narrative, as Létourneau (2014) did recently regarding history education in Quebec. These studies shed light on the link between identity and historical experience and its objectivation in the form of interpretative narratives. Although these studies do not tackle it, DST can nevertheless clarify the morphology of historical narratives.

The concepts of third position (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010), dialogical triad (Raggatt, 2012), and reflexive positioning (Raggatt, 2007) emphasize the process of teaching and learning history. The third position refers to the cognitive mediation of learning knowledge in a school context (Lenoir, 1991). This third term is there to overcome a contradiction relative to the knowledge already mastered by the pupils and—paradoxically to produce new ones—that will act as vectors for new learning. Why does the Treaty of Utrecht, ratified by France in 1713, indicate the decline of the French colony in North America? Because the colony’s economic structure depended largely on the exploitation of the territory’s natural resources (*furs*). The concept of colonial economy enabled pupils to understand the incomprehensible happening at that time in New France. However, it also raised new contradictions: Why did France give up so easily its colonial territories, if it knew that this would have disastrous economic repercussions? The concept of mercantilism comes into play to account for colonial policy: sacrifice a colony that is not very profitable in order to keep the more lucrative French West Indies. Then how does one explain France’s participation in the United States War of Independence, which cost much more than all of New France’s defence? Again, a concept—liberalism—was necessary to overcome this contradiction and generate a new one, and so on. This is the role of the third position in learning history, that is, to start both a movement of centralization (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) and decentralization (Raggatt, 2010).

This double movement is activated through dialogical triads powered by the teacher’s and pupils’ participation in analysing the relationship between the concepts, their properties, and their historical events. Thanks to this dialogue, pupils broaden their “repertoire of the Self” and can begin a reflexive process to take a position. While during their childhood these pupils integrated, mainly through socialization within the family, two external (social) positions, school required them thereafter to enter an

---

<sup>2</sup> Quebec is one of the ten provinces of Canada. This province is different from the rest of Canada due to its 80% French speaking population. This percentage is 22% across Canada.

individuation process. This process is based on the more or less conscious internal construction of a position repertoire that, through the dialogism between the positions, puts into perspective the cultural and institutional norms and contributes to an emerging singular identity (Raggatt, 2007, 2012). This process puts tension on some positions with respect to themes that have an ethical impact and pushes pupils to take a position on current issues. It is in order to develop an identity, regulated more or less consciously by historical thinking, that the program *Histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté*<sup>3</sup> (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007) requires pupils to take a stand on specific issues, “by taking into consideration the suggestions made by groups” and “showing respect for the diversity of viewpoints” (p. 23; loose translation). This dialogism involved in the pupils’ individuation has been recognized in education, particularly since Cooley (1922), who observed the inseparability of the individual and social levels when trying to understand intellectual activity: “‘society’ and ‘individuals’ do not denote separable phenomena” (p. 37). Although Vygotsky (1978) also recognizes the sociogenetic basis of consciousness, he separates it from the individuation process (Vygotsky, 1929). Regarding history education, the dialogue relative to issues is fundamental to historical agency and historical empathy (Lee, 1984, 2005; Lee & Ashby, 2001; Seixas & Morton, 2012).

These concepts connected to DST delimit the subjectivation enacted by teaching and learning history. However, they do not make it possible to describe the accompanying objectivation process. For this, I address SRT in the next pages.

### **SRT and the Objectivation of History**

As mentioned above and it has been acknowledged since Thucydides (Koselleck, 1997), history is objectivized in the form of narratives. The issue remains the *modus operandi* of these narratives in daily practices, which I address from the perspective of SRT. This theory makes it possible to describe the nature of the activity involved in objectivizing time and that distinguishes well the object from its representation. This distinction is fundamental: historians and teaching specialists admit that history and its symbolic representation do not correspond. As noted by Valsiner (2012): “What happens in history is real—but what is written about it is not” (p. 327). It is therefore necessary to delineate the form and modalities of this objectivation of time within the context of the anthropological experience of culture, and which must be separated from their content. As Geertz (1995) explains: “Anthropology gets the tableau, History gets the drama; Anthropology the forms, History the causes” (p. 253).

Historical narratives are both cognitive and social instruments granted by a community’s collective memory, which is crystallized around a common identity (Jovchelovitch, 2012). These narratives make up a shared and institutionalized

---

<sup>3</sup> History and Citizenship Education.

## UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION

knowledge that contributes to the reproduction of traditions, practices, and mythologies (Bartlett, 1923) Ginzburg (2003) recognizes the primacy of this shared knowledge relative to the history of historiography, beginning in ancient Greece, from the perspective that belonging to a specific community is a priority:

The simplest of communication presupposes knowledge that is shared, obvious, and raw: this observation [that of Aristotle in which he realizes that “Dorieus won the Olympics,” and that there is no need to specify that he won the crown because everybody knows], apparently made in passing, has a hidden meaning in its implicit allusion to a parallel text by Herodotus. The tacit knowledge to which Aristotle is referring concerns a sense of belonging to a city-state: “everybody” means “all of the Greeks” since Persians are excluded from this knowledge [...]. But Aristotle says more: that discourses analyzed by rhetoric (those that are heard in public places and before tribunals) refer to a specific community and not to men as animals gifted with reason (p. 31; loose translation).

Primacy of culture is a characteristic of SRT, acknowledging the existence of objects of representation, underpinning all opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and theories shared by individuals evolving in the same social environment (Jodelet, 1989; Moscovici, 1984). From the perspective of narrative theory, Jovchelovitch (2012) adds that narratives “are an ever-present human activity and the first form of complex cultural discourse that young children learn and enjoy” (p. 442). Narratives would be the medium for social representations, expressing the process of social thought involved in the double process of producing reality and knowledge of the latter: “From this perspective, narratives constitute the very architecture of human thinking as a modality of thought, a mode of operation of mind and a constructive collective tool for remembering and defining reality” (Jovchelovitch, 2012, p. 443). Furthermore, historical narratives would objectivize both time and polyphasia. Jovchelovitch (2012) notes that this hypothesis is considered by Moscovici (1961) to account for cognitive polyphasia across social representations. In the seventh chapter of his most important book, Moscovici shows that social representations are anchored according to a “constellation” of norms and values:

These norms include or are based on representations; their final organization shows their weight and their constellation in a specific environment. The specificity of values and norms in relation to the image of a particular theory—those which affect psychoanalysis do not concern physics and Marxism simultaneously—and the conversion of this theory’s elements according to their values are a means of anchoring representation in social reality (Moscovici, 1961, pp. 230-231; loose translation).

SRT would therefore make it possible to grasp polyphasia that is sought after by DST by looking at where daily cultural thought and experience meet. To do this, SRT suggests analysing both poles structuring how social representation works: its central core and its peripheral system (Abric, 1994). Both must be distinct because they go together in everyday life, thus hiding the variables involved in personality (Flament & Rouquette, 2003), among which are the interindividual modulations of polyphasia. These modulations rest on opinions, attitudes, and beliefs shaping individual dispositions. These two poles describe the two movements of anchoring and objectivation involved in how social representation works: while anchoring indicates prior movement, to guarantee the normative and operational function of the object, objectivation designates later movement toward materialization of the object in the context of social practices. The central core features stability, whereas the peripheral system lends itself to adaptation. With respect to this scale, social representation comes into play at the level of individual psychology as a cognitive operator. The latter makes it possible to interpret reality, to act, and to adapt to familiar and strange situations through attitudes and behaviours peculiar to the social group one belongs to (Guimelli, 1994).

Jovchelovitch (2012) turns to the collective memory construct to describe this central core of time, and questions the idea of a stable central core described by Abric (1994): “A historical approach debunks history as a source of immobility” (Jovchelovitch, 2012, p. 446). However, Jovchelovitch retains the *thêmata* concept proposed by Moscovici and Vignaux (2001) to identify stable properties (or fundamental structures) in historical narratives: *narratives, plots and stories, dialogical, cognitive polyphasia, thèmes, and metasystem*. I do not believe that this is sufficient regarding the *thêmata* concept, which translates specific ways of thinking across social practices in the *long run* (Moscovici & Vignaux, 2001). While history indeed designates a specific way of thinking, its structuring properties must assume the attributes of stability and homogeneity that are peculiar to the central core of a social representation. Thus I have chosen to keep Abric’s (1994) theory of a central core and peripheral system.

Furthermore, works on historical thinking and how it is taught require me to distinguish two poles, similar to the central core and peripheral system in how historical understanding works: mythological and analogical structures. These structures, which I tackle in the next two sections, have similarities with the distinction proposed by Wertsch (2004) between schematic narrative templates and specific narratives. In the representation of immediate experience, the first defines the organizational models (underlying pattern) ensuring a theoretic function (implicit theories), and the latter points out a set of events in chronological order. Along the same lines, Hartog and Lenclud (1993) also note a “‘virtual’ structure, in potentia” and a “‘real’ structure, in presentia” (p. 35; loose translation). These poles are similar to the levels—manifest and

## UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION

latent—identified by Hermans and van Gilst (1991), which create discord between the dialectical movements of abstraction and reification of temporalization. The latent level is defined by the “basic motives” of mythological nature, which underpin the comprehension of social realities. Being sociogenetic, these motives define polyphasia’s radical form, structured around opposed pairs. These come into play both in individual and collective temporalization activities at the manifest level, consisting of putting time into a narrative, expressing in a single more or less coherent structure the present, past, and future.

### **Analogical Pole or *Exempla***

SRT takes into consideration the individual relationship with an object by placing it at the level of the peripheral system, where “*individualized social representations*” (Abric, 1994, p. 28; loose translation) are generated (Elejabarrieta, 1996). Representations constitute for everybody “the symbolic link between the outside environment and our mental world” (Larose, Grenon, Bédard, & Bourque, 2009, p. 71; loose translation). In the field of history education research, I owe Peel (1967a, 1967b)—and more recently Cariou (2004), Lautier (1997), and Pontecorvo and Girardet (1993)—for placing on the analogical level the foundations of symbolic representation of historical phenomena found in the activity of individual consciousness. Analogy is defined as a “model which is familiar to the learner, whose properties are related causally” (Peel, 1967b, p. 178). It enables me to render immediately intelligible a historical event, while it simultaneously describes and explains the event: “[t]he analogy would seem to be a link between the two” (Peel, 1967b, p. 180). However, Koselleck (1990) resorts to the *exempla* construct to explain the analogical or comparative trait of a ““succession” of events according to “one before and one after in their various contexts” (p. 121; loose translation). In accordance with the Ciceronian expression *historia magistra vitae est*, which ““teaches life” with “a treasure of acquired experiences” that “instruct,” *exempla* are “specific histories [...] focussed on what is practical” that achieve “exemplary and empirical thought in a new unit” (Koselleck, 1990, p. 40; loose translation). From this perspective, *exempla* can translate how social representation works into its functional dimension of flexible adaptation. *Exempla* renders immediately intelligible an unexpected event by adding it to a succession of “singular histories” expressing an “intrinsic” causality.

Thanks to its structure of flexible adaptation, analogy or *exempla* mediatizes the “present” state of historical understanding since “we only experience the past in the present” (Hartog, 2003, p. 44; loose translation) and etymologically “*praesens*” is ““what is in front of me,” which is to say, ‘eminent, urgent,’ ‘without delay’” (Hartog, 2003, p. 121; loose translation), as it is in fact with any object, which “always remains an *objectum*, that is, which stays ‘in front’” (Lenoir, 1996, p. 239; loose translation). It ensures this symbolic mediation by attributing the present event to a structure of

“history that repeats itself,” and by protecting the underlying causal structure of this attribution, which is of mythological nature (this will be discussed later). In the heat of the moment, analogy makes it possible to quickly understand a present event and enables you to act more or less consciously. The problem is that some analogies often emit a more or less irresistible attraction, which makes conscious regulation vary widely.

To illustrate the role of analogies in social practices, I draw on Neustadt and May (1988). These researchers identify four types of historical analogies: irresistible, captivating, seductive, and familiar. To demonstrate the attraction of an irresistible analogy, they use the example of the Korean War, 1950-1953. In this war, South Korea, supported by the main western allies (United States, Great Britain, France, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Turkey, etc.), opposed North Korea, supported by the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union. Officially, however, this war has not ended yet: only a ceasefire agreement was signed, establishing a demilitarized zone along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.

The Korean War is an interesting example because of Washington’s dramatic change of mind based on an “irresistible” analogical structure, from the 1930s, which was very effective for the American president and his advisors as well as for the population of the United States. It is important to remember that before the announcement of this major offensive, President Harry Truman and the National Security Council had already concluded in a 1949 top-secret document that Korea “is of little strategic value to the United States and that commitment to United States use of military force in Korea would be ill-advised” (Neustadt & May, 1988, p. 35). Moreover, agreements had been signed with the Soviets during the 1945 Potsdam Conference, and it was already decided that Japanese soldiers north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel would surrender to the Soviets. The problem, somewhat similarly as the case of Germany, was reunification. A problem Kim Il Sung (North Korea) and Syngman Rhee (South Korea) were aware of; they did not want the partition and wished to reunify Korea, but each according to their own ideology! Nevertheless, when the President of the United States was informed that North Korea had advanced to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the event suddenly took on great importance. The day after, when he arrived in Washington, the objective of his action was irrevocably set: “By God, I am going to hit them hard” (Neustadt & May, 1988, p. 34). Asked to justify his radical decision, Truman called on his historical experience, that is, “lessons of the 1930s” when democratic societies were said to have been weak and lenient with budding totalitarian regimes. This experience holds three analogies—Manchuria, Ethiopia, and Austria—that, for an entire generation, lead to a world war that ended in the use of an atomic bomb.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Thus Truman, “who persists and signs,” describes in his *Memoires* this analogy that he presented to the Congress to justify the offensive in Korea: “I recalled some earlier instances: Manchuria, Ethiopia,

## UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION

When explaining to Congress why he had decided to send in American troops, Truman spoke of the “fateful events of the nineteen-thirties, when aggression unopposed bred more aggression and eventually war.” And this was—then—not such ritual phraseology as by the time of Kennedy’s speech on the missile crisis. Truman was stating an analogy with irresistible force for almost all Americans of that time (Neustadt & May, 1988, p. 36).

Because of its irresistible appeal, this analogy worked very well in the political arena, to the extent that Republicans and Democrats alike approved a series of decisions to mobilize troupes and allocate the necessary resources to create the H-bomb, since the Soviets already had the A-bomb (Neustadt & May, 1988). This example illustrates how the analogical pole of the social representation of history mediatizes the symbolic representation of present events and how it comes into play in regulating actions.

Analogies define the “context” of an event the moment it is perceived, by making it part of a comprehension structure that is immediately mastered by all. Strictly speaking a context is a “model” that makes it possible to establish “links”: “Context, from the Latin *contexere*, means to weave together, to engage in an active process of connecting things in a pattern” (Wineburg, 2001, p. 21). Regarding polyphasia, this process consists of organizing a situation, by giving the possibility of transposing it into a coherent historical narrative, thus inciting social adhesion: “[narratives] are divided, contested processes, whose representational counterpart is *per force* polyphasic and oppositional” (Jovchelovitch, 2012, p. 447). The possibility of structuring one’s understanding of current events therefore opens the door to “a form of manipulation that establishes analogies that have been led astray and places on the shoulders of the present the depth and complexity of the past” (Gellerano, 1994, p. 90; loose translation). Moreover, this manipulation seeks to establish the legitimacy of political and social institutions, and to consolidate a sense of belonging relative to beliefs, values, norms, and attitudes: “The human *psyche* needs narration about history—and the social institutions that need the collaboration and loyalties of the human beings have developed a sophisticated production system for such cultural products” (Valsiner, 2012, p. 328). In this case, the “lessons of the 1930s” set an analogical structure that is not only intelligible to the average person, but chiefly operational: by opposing allied democratic regimes and totalitarian regimes, it marks a “path to follow” for the future. In this sense analogies are the touchstone of historical thinking, expressing the basic

---

Austria. I remembered how each time that the democracies failed to act it had encouraged the aggressors to keep going ahead. Communism was acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen, and twenty years earlier. I felt certain that if South Korea was allowed to fall, Communist leaders would be emboldened to override nations closer to our own shores. If the Communists were permitted to force their way into the Republic of Korea without opposition from the free world, no small nation would have the courage to resist threats and aggression by stronger Communist neighbours. If this was allowed to go unchallenged, it would mean a third world war, just as similar incidents had brought on the Second World War” (Truman cited in Neustadt & May, 1988, p. 36).

condition of history as knowledge and action: “But how, *a priori*, is a history possible?—Answer: When an augur *creates* and organizes himself the events he announces in advance” (Kant, 2015, pp. 79-80; loose translation).

We know what comes next. Initially assured, the analogy will gradually crumble under the contradictions that it generates in action: it was first a question of protecting an allied state, then of liberating the Communists, and finally of driving back communism (Neustadt & May, 1988). The first military successes quickly led to the “liberation” of Korea for 66% of Americans, similarly as Europe’s liberation, and gradually even a reunification of Korea: “Appetites grew with eating!” (Neustadt & May, 1988, p. 46).<sup>5</sup> It became increasingly difficult to distinguish the analogy from the future that was unfolding, seemingly going vaguely more in the direction of driving back communism than of protecting an allied state. When the situation revealed itself as not conforming to expectations, the analogy, carrying no contradictions up to now, was no longer adapted to understand what was going on and what should be done: neither the increased importance of the number of troupes to counterbalance the Soviet power and China joining the war were realistic, nor resorting to massive and systematic nuclear strikes, similar to the offensive against Japan five years earlier, were morally justified. This is how the government of the United States, literally “overwhelmed by events,” had to accept an unpopular negotiation in favour of a ceasefire along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, that is, *status quo ante bellum* (Neustadt & May, 1988). This example also demonstrates the limits of the analogical operation of a social representation of history, generating contradictions. These contradictions give way to a “fundamental hiatus” constituent of the reflexive tension of history that “rewrites” by using concepts (Koselleck, 1997), that I discuss later. According to Sahlins (1985), the contradictions produced by the objectivation of time through human activities (mytho-praxis) are inherent in the latter:

*Praxis* is, then, a risk to the sense of signs in the culture-as-constituted, precisely as the sense is arbitrary in its capacity as reference. Having its own properties, the world may then prove intractable. It can well defy the concepts that are indexed to it. Man’s symbolic hubris becomes a great gamble played with the empirical realities. The gamble is that referential action, by placing *a priori*

---

<sup>5</sup> Thus, confusion settled, at first when military successes allowed people to dream of a complete liberation of Korea, and then when expectations were not lived up to and contradicted what should have happened: “Truman and Acheson did not, however, fix that goal in the minds of the public or even in their own. When Warren Austin, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, made a speech implying that the war aim was reunification of Korea, neither Truman nor Acheson corrected him. Nor did they object publicly when Congressmen, Democrats as well as Republicans, proclaimed that communism would be rolled back. Then, in September, after MacArthur had started to pursue the North Koreans into their homeland, Truman and Acheson, like almost everyone else, let themselves slip into a supposition that, since reunification seemed feasible, it was as good a goal as restoring the *status quo ante*, maybe better” (Neustadt & May, 1988, p. 45).

## UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION

concepts in correspondence with external objects, will imply some *unforeseen* effects that cannot be ignored. Besides, as action involves a thinking subject (or subjects), related to the sign in the capacity of agent, the cultural scheme is put in double jeopardy, subjectively as well as objectively: subjectively, by the people's interested uses of signs in their own projects; objectively, as meaning is risked in a cosmos fully capable of contradicting the symbolic systems that are presumed to describe it (p. 149).

However, to be operational analogies must be anchored in the central core of a social representation, which is the myth.

### **Mythological Pole**

The central core accounts for the invariants of the social representation and group practices which are associated to them (Elejabarrieta, 1996; Moscovici & Vignaux, 2001). They establish specific identities (Deschamps, 1996) and “make it possible for people to communicate in the groups they belong to, giving them a common language with which to understand events, people, and other groups” (Elejabarrieta, 1996, p. 144; loose translation). This central core shapes the operational and normative dimensions of social representations, which enable people to immediately grasp reality and regulate their behaviour (Abric, 1994). Thus, this central core's operational dimension ensures a guidance function in situations that have an operational purpose (Moliner, 1995). With the normative dimension, it corresponds to the four functions of social representations identified by Abric (1994): justification, knowledge, identity, and guidance.

According to Moscovici (1961), but also to Jovchelovitch (2012), the sociogenetic basis of social representations is of mythological nature. Myth is also acknowledged as the foundation of historiographical understanding in the field of research in history education (Duquette, 2011) and historiography (Dhoquois, 1991; Egan, 2007). For Kojève (1947, in Freitag, 1973) “myth is a theory, that is, a discursive revelation of reality” (p. 95; loose translation), designating “a matrix of beliefs and illusions without which we cannot think” (Beillerot, 2000, p. 47; loose translation). In the case of history, myth represents “a way that is conventional, but not free: a) to make, to imagine, and structure history; b) to work out, in thought and action, the relationship to time and determine the status of the event; c) to identify and build what, here or there, is either causal or predetermined; d) to represent and produce a social order” (Lenclud, 1991, p. 59; loose translation). This description reflects the point of view of anthropologists, which have commonly referred to myth since Malinowski (1926) to account for social practices. Lévi-Strauss (1958) understands myth as an “absolute object” that introduces into language a temporal system by registering events into a permanent structure. The latter is designed as a “scheme endowed with a permanent efficiency that makes it possible to interpret the current social structure in

France, the antagonisms that are expressed, and to foresee the outlines of future evolution” (Lévi-Strauss, 1958, p. 231; loose translation). According to this anthropologist, myth tells a story that makes sense, a very resilient sense—a kind of “hard core” efficiently resistant to the different ways of telling or interpreting. This sense rests on a bundle of antinomical relationships that enables everybody to explain something according to their viewpoint (Lévi-Strauss, 1958).

To my knowledge, there is no historiographical analysis of these bundles of relationships. Koselleck (1997), who seems to recognize the principle, identifies five bundles based on Heidegger, defining the “temporal structure of any possible history” (p. 185; loose translation). First, relative to the notion of “hastening death,” the pair “can kill” and “should die” raise the issue of “survival” and “implies that organized men can kill one another and that they even believe it is sometimes necessary in order to survive” (Koselleck, 1997, p. 185; loose translation). Second, the pair “friend” and “enemy,” from the previous category, presents “a formal opposition that remains open to all possible contents” (Koselleck, 1997, p. 186; loose translation). Third, the categories of “inside” and “outside” that refer to historical space (e.g., secret and public opinion, democratic and non-democratic regimes). Fourth, generativity is the relationship between youth and elderly, each having its own mythological references, generally defined in terms of breaks. This criterion “implies ever new exclusions, diachronic determinations of inside and outside, and types of generation-specific experiences” (Koselleck, 1997, p. 190; loose translation). Fifth, the pair “master” and “servant” characterizes power relations “between the top and the bottom” inside human societies (Koselleck, 1997, p. 190; loose translation).

Regarding the social representation of history, these bundles of antinomical relationships would define the outlines of the historical understanding of social phenomena. They are compatible with the *thêmata* construct, defining fundamental opposed pairs (Markova, 2003; Moscovici & Vignaux, 2001). In everyday life, these mythical relationships would ensure a function homologous to Bourdieu’s *habitus* (Sahlins, 1985), to erase chance and preserve *a posteriori* the global coherence of a temporal structure: “the final form of cosmic myth is current event” (Sahlins, 1985, p. 58). This temporal structure is cyclical, as opposed to the linear structure of historiography, and its polyphasia is radical in that it defines the foundations of all “repertoire of the Self.” This structuring property of the myth is noted by Egan (2007) who cites Namier (1942):

One would expect people to remember the past and to imagine the future. In fact when discoursing about history they imagine in terms of their own experience, and when trying to gauge the future they cite supposed analogies from the past: still by a double process of repetition, they imagine the past and remember the future (Egan, 2007, p. 65).

## UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION

Sahlins (1985) demonstrates the role of the myth with the arrival of the British in Hawaii in 1778. The events that followed their arrival reflect the operational and normative character of the hard core of a social representation of time among indigenous populations. It is known that Hawaiian women gave an especially warm welcome to British sailors, who were taken aback by the women's insistence. These women were, in fact, looking for a Lord and, this being the case, they were reproducing a social order that stripped this event of its exceptional character that "trivialized" it, and *a posteriori* that rendered its temporalization pointless. This event therefore found its analogy in the collective memory: it appears that the memory of foreign travellers was present (Marco Polo?), and it heralded their next arrival. Captain James Cook, integrated (despite himself) into this cosmic order, was attributed divine properties (*Lono*) that would work against him. After the departure of the British and their forced return due to technical problems, Cook is killed and eaten according to local rites: the season of the divinity *Lono* was over, giving place to season of the god of war, *Ku*...

### **Dialogical Triad and Reflexive Positioning: Foundations of Historical Thinking**

This description of the foundations of SR that are historical in nature makes it possible to define the functions of the third position, of the dialogical triad, and of the reflexive positioning in relation to the DST in how the functions operate. Still from the perspective of teaching and learning history, the third position is associated to concept and the dialogical triad of conceptualization. I saw it with the case of the Korean War, comprehension of social realities can always be improved, whereas the analogies mobilized to this effect are not necessarily the most appropriate to describe and explain them. The events that came after the Allies joined the war in Korea have in fact revealed contradictions with respect to the "lessons of the 1930s." How do we overcome or prevent such contradictions? By using concepts, ensuring a cognitive mediation between the subject and his or her immediate experience of reality, it is possible to objectivize time differently: "in Kant's words, as cited by Grimm: There must be judgement because, before perception becomes experience, intuition must be subsumed under a concept" (Koselleck, 1997, p. 203; loose translation). Peel (1965, 1967*b*, 1966, 1971, 1972) underlines the essential role played by learning scientific concepts during adolescence. Regarding historical thinking, this researcher highlights the link between the structure of a concept and the events to explain—that is, the actions (acts) and discourses (utterances) produced by men throughout history—in terms of causes and consequences. This is the "substance of history" expressing its temporal dimension (Peel, 1967*a*).

The concept comes into play in the cognitive process by submitting the social representation of an object to its significative and indicative-denominative functions. According to Vygotsky (1997), these functions establish the comprehension of reality according to a causal structure (significative function) articulated to a group of

descriptive properties. It is where these functions meet that the concept makes it possible to express latent contradictions in the more or less controlled application of historical analogies. Transcending the mythological structure is possible with the significative function of concept because it introduces another causal structure into an activity that makes it possible to explain a group of historical events. This function comes into play during the ontogenetic development of consciousness since “the word is the philosophy of fact; it can be either its mythology or scientific theory” (Vygotsky, 1999, p. 198; loose translation). The scientific concept is ontogenetically of the same nature as the mythical structure—since it is always a causal structure, but it is different because of the control—or mediation—to which it lends itself because of its indicative-denominative function. With respect to everyday life, this function helps overcome stressful events (Egan, 2007) when they go beyond the normative framework of expectations (Lee, 2005). The significative function authorizes the creation of new structures for generalizing (Vygotsky, 1997), which according to Koselleck (1997) is a means to obtaining new historical interpretations:

Whether it is gods or a *fatum* acting above them (Herodotus, Polybius), men’s innate ambition for power (Thucydides, Machiavelli, Lord Acton), fortune (Polybius, Tacitus, Otto of Freising, Machiavelli, Voltaire), or the Christian God to whom are attributed all of these justifications in order to return man’s unchanging finiteness to the divine eternity (Saint Augustine, Saint Bede, Otto of Freising); whether it is forces, ideas, or principles operating over a long time (Herder, Humbolt, Ranke), sustainable powers (J. Burckhardt); whether it is production conditions, permanent features in law, economic or institutional determinations, or even economic movements that escape men’s mastery (Ferguson, Smith, Marx); whether it is modern combinations of the theoretical treatment of data from experiences accumulated over time: from a methodological perspective, the point each time is to interpret primary experiences (provoked by surprising facts and unique innovations) based on long-term causes that made them possible (Koselleck, 1997, p. 219; loose translation).

To illustrate, Saint Augustine’s historical thinking is presented by Hartog (2003) and Koselleck (1990) “as another example of the immense strength of transformation in theological experiences for historical knowledge [...] which enabled the Saint to relativize all earthly events” (Koselleck, 1990, p. 126; loose translation). It is in theological terms (significative function) that Saint Augustine chose to translate his situation of “dispersion” at a time when the Western Roman Empire was going through a change in experience because of the passage of Alaric. His historical narrative was marked by an order of time “embedded in the eternity of God, creator of all time [...] that of a personal God who called people to walk toward him” (Hartog, 2003, pp. 71-72; loose translation).

## UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION

However, Koselleck (1990) specifies that, in order to be from a perspective of a “modern historical process,” this causal structure can be neither “implausible” nor uniquely the fruit of “chance” or “luck” because it must be empirically “falsifiable.” This falsification process corresponds to reflexive positioning in which the concept comes into play as the third position to control the relationship between a social reality that is problematic and the facts that determine it empirically. Peel (1967*a*, 1967*b*) outlines the historical thinking accomplished by pupils while they are interacting, mobilizing concepts to understand a specific social reality. This thought process is defined according to the “dynamic balance” operating in the construction of historical explanations: “[t]his sensitivity to systems of dynamic balance, involving the potentiality of action, its cancellation and possible compensation by other action is fundamental in scientific thinking and may be more widespread” (Peel, 1967*a*, p. 162). Acknowledging the thought process as a compensatory dynamic, explanation would act on the theoretical “systems” to resolve a “discrepancy” linked to a subject’s daily social practices: “The most obvious and general action of this kind in adolescence is the need for and the process of explanation. When a person explains a phenomena [sic] he effects an equilibrium” (Peel, 1965, p. 178). Cognitive balance is established through the control of the relationship between description and explanation: “[w]hen a person is capable not only of describing a phenomenon or event but also of explaining it in terms of independent and preexisting concepts, we may say that he understands it” (Peel, 1967*b*, p. 183). Description refers to the empirical determination of events, whereas explanation points out how these events and the causal structure of the concept fit together, transferable in the analysis of reality, that is, “[t]heir invocation as possibilities to account for new experiences” (Peel, 1967*b*, p. 182).

This cognitive balance achieved by historical thinking can be illustrated with the case of the US involvement in Korea. This balance would have consisted of showing historical empathy to foresee other viewpoints in relation to the causes of the conflict and to the possible consequences for the United States. Neustadt and May (1988) emphasize that if Truman and his entourage had carried out an analysis of events with other concepts, they would probably have not used the same analogies and they might even have avoided taking military manoeuvres on such a scale. First, North and South Korea are not distinct nations, contrary to what happened in Manchuria, Ethiopia, and Austria, respectively invaded by Japan, Italy, and Germany. Second, interesting parallels could have been drawn with the concept of civil war, in relation to the Spanish civil war of 1936-1939, and the Rhine crises in 1936 and Czechoslovakia in 1938. The concepts of “civil war” and “coup” would have been more appropriate than “world war” to represent what was taking place in Korea. The points of view of the Korean leaders—who were not contemplating partitioning Korea, despite their diverging ideologies (Syngman Rhee was not in fact a proponent of western democracy)—would have had to be taken into consideration. Finally, security was a sufficiently major issue in 1950 so

that the international community did not consider this an isolated event comparable to Greece in 1946-1947.

Regarding polyphasia, this example demonstrates that the concept enables not only the restructuring of representations through conscious control of the explicative and descriptive functions of analogies, but mainly that it transforms the dispositions to act. The concept makes it possible to detach one's Self from immediate experience and to take into consideration the viewpoint of Others through dialogue with other forms of historical experiences. This experience of otherness is what is needed to "transcend" (*aufheben*) contradictions: "Immediate experience of consciousness (*I am me*) is that of "Self" that becomes "Other" (*I am another*) because "I" does not exist in relation to the "other," thus in the social and historical becoming of man" (Pudelko, 2006, p. 193; loose translation). It is by thinking with concepts that the essence of Self appears—according to Hegel, identity differentiates itself by revealing itself to itself—by acknowledging another point of view and criticism of its "internal premises" so that "this point of view raises itself to a higher level" (Hegel, 1971, in Pudelko, 2006, p. 194; loose translation). In other words, objectivation of history is inseparable from the experience of otherness, considering that "difference, not identity, gives birth to meaning" (Freitag, 1973, p. 35; loose translation).

### Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to shed light on the temporalization process with concepts related to DST and SRT. These theories enabled the description of links between dialogism of the human conscience and objectivation of time in the form of social representations. DST made it possible to locate understanding of social and historical realities relative to the *I*-position, defined by a specific configuration of the "repertoire of the Self." This configuration accounts for social identity, for its characteristics, and for what distinguishes it from other identity possibilities (counter-position). This configuration also gives meaning to historical empathy (making it possible to restructure) and to the objectivation of historical time in the form of narratives, whose foundations were grasped from the perspective of SRT and the theory of a central core and a peripheral system. The latter allowed me to find these foundations in the myth, structured around five opposing pairs, which could be objectivized differently according to the context in the form of analogies. The relationship between the mythological and the analogical poles describes the nature of historical thinking across social practices. In accordance to a transformative approach of SRT, we specified that this relationship can be restructured by using concepts. Coming into play as the third position, concepts can modify how historical thinking works by setting in motion reflexive positioning surrounding the contradictions generated by the application of historical analogies. Moreover these theoretical issues have been illustrated with the Korean War as documented by Neustadt and May (1988).

## UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION

While this analysis has brought me a few answers on the objectivation of time in the framework of social practices, it nevertheless raises a number of questions. The first concerns the central core of any possible history, consisting of opposing mythological pairs. Not only have these failed to lead to studies, but I must also seriously consider the hypothesis that historical narratives rest on a fundamental *a*-temporal structure. Is there not here a fundamental aporia? The second question stems from the first: how does the activity between the two poles happen? More specifically, considering that “what exists simultaneously in thought develops successively in language” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 492; loose translation), how does language mediation work in the double process of historical objectivation and anchoring? Mediation ensured by the concept, as third position, in this double process, should also be analysed. Is mythical structure subsumable? According to Egan (2007), there would be a limit to historical thinking, in that it would not be possible to “exit” the framework of the myth structure: “it seems in some sense inescapable” (p. 66). Finally, from the perspective of learning history, in what way does this double process contribute to developing pupils’ historical thinking and position repertoire? A development that is dependent on language mediation and, as Koselleck (1997) notes, in relation to historiographical innovations, is only possible through “the development of the semantic aspect of language, here as elsewhere, is a fundamental and conclusive process in the development of children’s thought and language” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 413; loose translation).

### References

- Abric, J.-C. (1994). Les représentations sociales: aspects théoriques [Social representations: Theoretical aspects]. In J. C. Abric (Ed.), *Pratiques sociales et représentations* (pp. 11–37). Paris, France: Presses universitaires de France.
- Bartlett, F. C. (1923). *Psychology and primitive culture*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Beillerot, J. (2000). Le rapport au savoir [Relationship with knowledge]. In N. Mosconi, J. Beillerot, & C. Blanchard-Laville (Eds.), *Formes et formations du rapport au savoir* (pp. 39–57). Paris, France: L’Harmattan.
- Berthelot, J.-M. (1990). *L’intelligence du social: le pluralisme explicatif en sociologie* [Social intelligence: explanatory Pluralism in sociology]. Paris, France: Presses universitaires de France.
- Cariou, D. (2004). La conceptualisation en histoire au lycée : une approche par la mobilisation et le contrôle de la pensée sociale des élèves [Conceptualization in history in highschool: Mobilization and control of social thought]. *Revue française de pédagogie*, 147, 57–67.

- Chervel, A. (1998). *La culture scolaire : une approche historique* [School culture: Historical approach]. Paris, France: Belin.
- Cooley, C. H. (1922). *Human nature and the social order*. New York, NY: Scribner's.
- Deschamps, J.-C. (1996a). Les théories de l'attribution [Attribution theories]. In J.-C. Deschamps & J.-L. Beauvois (Eds.), *Des attitudes aux attributions. Sur la construction de la réalité sociale* (pp. 209–236). Grenoble, France: Presses universitaires de Grenoble.
- Dhoquois, G. (1991). *Histoire de la pensée historique* [History of historical thinking]. Paris, France: Armand Colin.
- Duquette, C. (2011). *Le rapport entre la pensée historique et la conscience historique* [Link between historical thinking and historical conscience]. *Élaboration d'un modèle d'interaction lors de l'apprentissage de l'histoire chez les élèves de cinquième secondaire des écoles francophones du Québec* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Université Laval, Québec, Canada.
- Durkheim, E. (1898). Représentations individuelles et représentations collectives [Individual and collective representations]. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 6. Retrieved from [http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/Durkheim\\_emile/Socio\\_et\\_philo/ch\\_1\\_representations/representations.pdf](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/Durkheim_emile/Socio_et_philo/ch_1_representations/representations.pdf)
- Egan, K. (2007). From myth to history and back again. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 2, 62–67.
- Elejabarrieta, F. (1996). Le concept de représentation sociale [The concept of social representation]. In J.-C. Deschamps & J.-L. Beauvois (Eds.), *Des attitudes aux attributions. Sur la construction de la réalité sociale* (pp. 137–150). Grenoble, France: Presses universitaire de Grenoble.
- Flament, C., & Rouquette, M.-L. (2003). *Anatomie des idées ordinaires : comment étudier les représentations sociales* [Anatomy of ordinary ideas: How to study social representations]. Paris, France: Armand Colin.
- Freitag, M. (1973). *Dialectique et société. Étude épistémologique sur l'objectivité historique* [Dialectic and society. An epistemological study on historical objectivity] (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). École pratique des Hautes études, 6<sup>th</sup> section, Paris, France.
- Gallerano, N. (1994). Histoire et usage public de l'histoire [History and public use of history]. *Diogène*, 168, 87–106.

## UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION

- Geertz, C. (1995). History and anthropology. In R. Cohen & M. S. Roth (Eds.), *History and... Histories within the human sciences* (pp. 248–267). Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.
- Ginzburg, C. (2003). *Rapports de force, histoire, rhétorique, preuve* [Power relations, history, rhetoric, proof] (J.-P. Bardos, Trans.). Paris, France: Éditions du Seuil.
- Gouvernement du Québec. (2007). *Programme de formation de l'école québécoise. Enseignement secondaire, deuxième cycle* [Quebec school program. Secondary education, second cycle]. Quebec, Canada: Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport.
- Guimelli, C. (1994). Transformations des représentations sociales, pratiques nouvelles et schèmes cognitifs de base [Transformations in social representations, new practices and basic cognitive schemes]. In C. Guimelli (Ed.), *Structures et transformations des représentations sociales* (pp. 171–198). Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Delachaux et Niestlé.
- Hartog, F. (2003). *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps* [Regimes of historicity. Being present and experiences through time]. Paris, France: Éditions du Seuil.
- Hartog, F., & Lenclud, G. (1993). Régimes d'historicité [Regimes of historicity]. In A. Dutoit & N. Dodille (Eds.), *L'état des lieux en sciences sociales* (pp. 18–38). Paris, France: L'Harmattan.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1971). *Science de la logique subjective* [The science of subjective logic], vol. IV (S. Jankélévitch, Trans.). Paris, France: Aubier.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2012). Dialogical self theory and the increasing multiplicity of I-positions in a globalizing society: An introduction. In H. J. M. Hermans (Ed.), *Applications of dialogical self theory. New directions for child and adolescent development* (pp. 1–21). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2013). The dialogical self in education: Introduction. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 26(2), 81–89.
- Hermans, H. J. M., & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2010). *Dialogical self theory: Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hermans, H. J. M., & van Gilst, W. (1991). Self-narrative and collective myth: An analysis of the Narcissus story. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 23(4), 423–440.

- Jodelet, D. (1989). *Les représentations sociales* [Social representations]. Paris, France: Presses universitaires de France.
- Jovchelovitch, S. (2012). Narrative, memory and social representations: A conversation between history and social psychology. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioural Science*, 46(4), 440–456.
- Kant, E. (2015). *Le conflit des facultés et autres textes sur la révolution* [The conflict between faculties and other texts on revolution] (C. Ferrié, Trans.). Paris, France: Payot.
- Kojève, A. (1947). *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel : leçons sur la phénoménologie de l'esprit, professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'École des hautes études* [Introduction to the reading of Hegel: Lectures on the phenomenology of spirit]. Paris, France: Gallimard.
- Koselleck, R. (1990). *Le futur passé. Contribution à la sémantique des temps historiques* [The future past. Contribution to the semantics of historical times]. Paris, France: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales.
- Koselleck, R. (1997). *L'expérience de l'histoire* [Experience of history]. Paris, France: Gallimard-Seuil.
- Larose, F., Grenon, V., Bédard, J., & Bourque, J. (2009). Analyse des pratiques enseignantes et la construction d'un référentiel de compétences : perspectives et contraintes méthodologiques [Analysis of teaching practices and building an inventory of skills: Methodological perspectives and concerns]. *Nouveaux cahiers de la recherche en éducation*, 12(1), 65–82.
- Lautier, F. (1997). *À la rencontre de l'histoire* [Meeting history]. Lille, France: Presses universitaires du Septentrion.
- Lee, P. J. (1984). Historical imagination. In A. K. Dickinson, P. J. Lee, & P. J. Rogers (Eds.), *Learning history* (pp. 85–116). London, UK: Heinemann.
- Lee, P. J. (2005). Putting principles into practice: Understanding history. In S. Donovan & J. Bransford (Eds.), *How students learn. History, mathematics, and science in the classroom* (pp. 31–78). Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Lee, P. J., & Ashby, R. (2001). Empathy, perspective taking and rational understanding. In O. Davis, Jr., S. Foster, & E. Yeager (Eds.), *Historical empathy and perspective taking in the social studies*. Boulder, CO: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Lenclud, G. (1991). Le monde selon Sahlins [The world according to Sahlins]. *Gradhiva*, 9, 49–62.

## UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION

- Lenoir, Y. (1991). *Relations entre interdisciplinarité et intégration des apprentissages dans l'enseignement des programmes d'études du primaire au Québec* [Links between the interdisciplinarity and integration of how what is learned in primary school programs are taught in Quebec] (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Université de Paris VII, Paris, France.
- Lenoir, Y. (1996a). Médiation cognitive et médiation didactique [Cognitive and didactic mediation]. In C. Raisky & M. Caillot (Eds.), *Le didactique au-delà des didactiques. Débats autour de concepts fédérateurs* (pp. 223–251). Brussels, Belgium: De Boeck Université.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1958). *Anthropologie structural* [Structural anthropology]. Paris, France: Plon.
- Malinowski, B. (1926). *Myth in primitive psychology*. London, UK: Norton.
- Morioka, M. (2008). Conversation recovers the temporal sense. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 3(1), 155–164.
- Markova, I. (2003). *Dialogicality and social representations. The dynamics of mind*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Moliner, P. (1995). A two-dimensional model of social representation. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 25(1), 27–40.
- Moscovici, S. (1961). *La psychanalyse, son image et son public* [Psychoanalysis, its image and its public]. Paris, France: Presses universitaires de France.
- Moscovici, S. (1984). *Psychologie sociale* [Social psychology]. Paris, France: Presses universitaires de France.
- Moscovici, S., & Vignaux, G. (2001). The concept of themata. In S. Moscovici (Ed.), *Social representations: Explorations in social psychology* (pp. 156–183). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Namier, L. B. (1942). "Symmetry and repetition," in *his conflicts*. London, UK: Macmillan.
- Neustadt, R. E., & May, E. R. (1988). *Thinking in time. The uses of history for decision makers*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Peel, E. A. (1965). Intellectual growth during adolescence. *Educational Review*, 17(3), 169–180.
- Peel, E. A. (1967a). Some problems in the psychology of history teaching: Historical ideas and concepts. In W. H. Burston & D. Thompson (Eds.), *Studies in the*

- nature and teaching of history* (pp. 159–172). London, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Peel, E. A. (1967*b*). Some problems in the psychology of history teaching: The pupil's thinking and inference. In W. Burston & D. Thompson (Eds.), *Studies in the nature and teaching of history* (pp. 173–190). London, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Peel, E. A. (1966). A study of differences in the judgments of adolescent pupils. *The British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 36(1), 77–86.
- Peel, E. A. (1971). *The nature of adolescent judgment*. London, UK: Staples Press.
- Peel, E. A. (1972). Understanding school material. *Educational Review*, 24, 163–173.
- Pontecorvo, C., & Girardet, H. (1993). Arguing and reasoning in understanding historical topics. *Cognition and Instruction*, 11(3, 4), 365–395.
- Pudelko, B. (2006). *Étude microgénétique des médiations épistémiques d'un outil informatisé de représentation graphique des connaissances au cours d'une activité de compréhension de texte : Propositions pour une approche instrumentale étendue des médiations des outils cognitifs dans l'apprentissage* [Microgenetic study of epistemological mediations of a computerized tool...] (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Université de Paris VIII, Paris, France.
- Raggatt, P. T. F. (2007). Forms of positioning in the dialogical self: A system of classification and the strange case of Dame Edna Everage. *Theory and Psychology*, 17, 355–383.
- Raggatt, P. T. F. (2010). The dialogical self and thirdness: A semiotic approach to positioning using dialogical triads. *Theory and Psychology*, 20, 400–419.
- Raggatt, P. T. F. (2012). Positioning in the dialogical self: Recent advances in theory construction. In H. J. M Hermans & T. Gieser (Eds.), *Handbook of dialogical self theory* (pp. 29–45). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1986). *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique, II* [From text to action. Hermeneutic essays, II]. Paris, France: Éditions du Seuil.
- Sahlins, M. (1985). *Islands of history*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Ségal, A. (1990). L'éducation par l'histoire [Education by using history]. In F. Dumont & Y. Martin (Eds.), *L'éducation 25 ans plus tard! Et après?* (pp. 241–256). Quebec, QC: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture.

## UNDERSTANDING TEMPORALIZATION

- Seixas, P. (1998a). Conceptualizing the growth of historical understanding. In D. R. Olson & N. Torrance (Eds.), *Handbook of education and human development: New models of learning, teaching and schooling* (pp. 765–783). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Seixas, P., & Morton, T. (2012). *The big six historical thinking concepts*. Toronto, ON: Nelson Education.
- Shemilt, D. J. (1984). Beauty and the philosopher: Empathy in history and classroom. In A. K. Dickinson, P. J. Lee, & P. J. Rogers (Eds.), *Learning history* (pp. 39–84). London, UK: Heinemann.
- Valsiner, J. (1993). Making of the future: Temporality and the constructive nature of human development. In G. Turkewitz & D. A. Devenny (Eds.), *Developmental time and timing* (pp. 13–40). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Valsiner, J. (2012). Monuments in our minds. Historical symbols as cultural tools. In M. Carretero, M. Asensio, & M. Rodriguez-Moneo (Eds.), *History education and the construction of national identities* (pp. 327–345). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- VanSledright, B., & Limon, M. (2006). Learning and teaching social studies: A review of cognitive research in history and geography. In P. Alexander & P. Winne (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology* (pp. 545–570). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1929). The problem of the cultural development of the child. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 36, 415–434.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1997). *Pensée et langage* [Thought and language] (F. Sève, Trans.). Paris, France: La dispute.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1999). *La signification historique de la crise en psychologie* [The historical meaning of the crisis in psychology] (C. Barras & J. Barberis, Trans.). Lausanne, Switzerland: Delachaux et Niestlé.
- Wertsch, J. (2004). Specific narratives and schematic narrative templates. In P. Seixas (Ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness* (pp. 49–62). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto press.

MOREAU

Wineburg, S. S. (2001). *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts: Charting the future of teaching the past*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Zabinski, B. (2008). Anthropology and dialogical theory: Converting the conversation on the processual self. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 3(1), 191–204.

## **DOING HISTORY BY TELLING STORIES: A DIALOGICAL PROPOSAL**

João Salgado

ISMAI – University Institute of Maia and  
CPUP – Center of Psychology at University of Porto, Portugal

**Abstract.** The combination of social representation theory and the dialogical perspective has been pursued as a desirable goal by different scholars. Drawing upon Moreau's (2017) text "Understanding temporalization by the activity of historical thinking," a dialogical perspective is proposed, which assumes the notion of position as the basic unit of analysis. From this standpoint, a position has a triadic structure, in which it is possible to distinguish an agent, audiences and socially represented objects. This creates a double directedness to every deed: a position is always addressed to objects, but also to present or absent audiences. This demands the distinction of two interrelated dimensions: the narrated event and the interactional storytelling event. Besides, a position is always an evaluative stance, which also calls for the consideration of affective and motivational aspects. The complexity of the dialogical relations within a specific position is illustrated with the example of Truman's speech justifying the American military intervention that led to the Korean War

**Keywords:** dialogical self theory, social representation theory, narratives

In recent scholarly discourses, it is the combination of the social representation theory (SRT) and the dialogical perspective that has been highlighted not only as possible, but as a specially promising trend for future advancement of both perspectives. Probably, Marková's (2003) work remains as the most outstanding example of such an attempt. In her original proposal, the human mind is always dependent on a triadic relation between an ego, an *alter*, and an object. Social representations constitute this object, since there is no possibility of relationship between an ego and an *alter* without a socially negotiated and articulated object. In other words, any object appears to our minds as socially embedded, and therefore, is in itself constituted by social representations. Therefore, besides their material properties, all kinds of objects have a social "texture" that mediates our relationship with them and with Others. For example, if I am looking to a red rose, as an Ego I am in relationship with present or absent social Others (*alter*), and this relationship is regulated by social representations (e.g., about red roses, about nature, about love, etc.) constituting the object.

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** I would like to thank Nuno P. Monteiro (Yale University) his precious advices and tips regarding the historical analysis of the Korean War. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to João Salgado, University Institute of Maia—ISMAI, Av. Carlos Oliveira Campos, 4470-690 Avioso S. Pedro, Maia, Portugal. Email: jsalgado@ismai.pt

Moreau's (2017) "[u]nderstanding temporalization by the activity of historical thinking" (p. 161) is another contribution which attempts to pursue a possible combination between these two theoretical trends. This is a challenging piece of work, trying not only to combine these two traditions, but also aiming to contribute to our knowledge about the production of historical thinking. Such complex text is open to a variety of possible lines of enquiry. Leaving behind a great variety of other possibilities, I use it as a way of recalling a specific aspect of the dialogical perspective, namely, the distinction (and interconnectedness) between two functions of narrative building: representation and interaction. Specifically, I use Moreau's (2017) text and historical examples in order to illustrate how we can go further in our dialogical analysis if we pay better attention to the distinction between "narrated event" and the "interactional event" (see, for example, Wortham, 2001).

I will retain from Moreau's (2017) text, the following ideas:

We are dialogical beings, involved in a constant activity of communication and articulation with others.

Social representations are a vital part of that human communication and meaning-making activities.

The dialogical perspective and SRT can be combined in order to sustain a more integrated view about the creation of human knowledge—in this case, on historical thinking.

Some of the cognitive dimensions of meaning-making are well described by dialectical and tensional dynamics involved in the construction of narratives which create specific social representations.

Using these notions as a starting point, my goal is to make it clear that from a dialogical point of view, social representations serve the goal of positioning the agent towards a social background and that this positioning is not necessarily completely revealed by the social representations in themselves. In other words, social representations are used as ways of positioning, but the description of the positioning dynamics involves other elements beyond the cognitive aspect of representations. From a dialogical perspective, the most pressing question is "what is done with these representations."

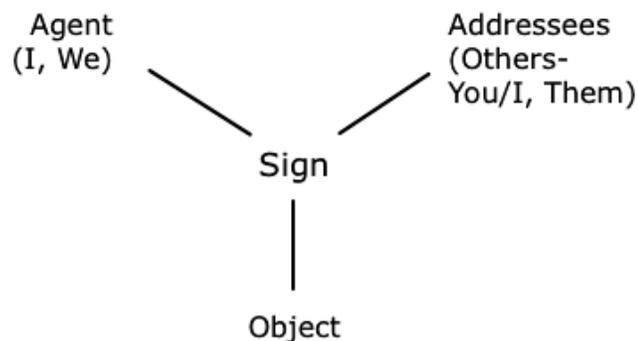
### **Social Representations, Narratives, Semiosis and Positioning**

Within a dialogical perspective, the basic unit of analysis is the position that an agent is assuming towards an object (Hermans, 2001; Leiman, 2011, 2012; Salgado, Cunha, & Bento, 2013; Salgado & Valsiner, 2010). Hermans' work coined the term *I*-position to refer to this basic element when we are talking about a subjective personal position, but the notion of position can be used in a broader sense in order to refer to the

## DOING HISTORY BY TELLING STORIES

specific perspective and action assumed by groups, and communities. By saying that position is the basic unit of analysis, I am not implying that this unit cannot be divided in different elements. Actually, this notion involves a complex set of inter-related elements that are brought together: a position involves necessarily an agent, an object, and audiences, which may be physically present or absent. Thus, a position can be seen as the active perspective towards something which takes place within a social background. By using the term “active perspective,” I am willing to combine two elements that come together: on the one hand, we have the specific cognitive arrangement or “the view” about a particular object or situation; on the other hand we have the evaluative, affective, and active operation upon that object. This particular evaluation is also a response to other specific views brought by explicit or implicit social Others, who constitute the social background of the situation. In other words, by assuming a perspective about something we are acting upon something (and this makes the dialogical self theory (DST) amenable to constructivism, at least in the Piagetian sense).

Therefore, I may say that the notion of position is better depicted by the following diagram (Fig. 1), largely borrowed from Karl Bühler (1990, also see Salgado & Valsiner, 2010), which shows its triadic nature.



**Figure 1.** The Triadic Structure of a Dialogical Position (inspired by Bühler, 1990).

The relation between signs, social representations, and narratives is somehow complex, since these terms refer to overlapping features of the process. Nevertheless, in order to maintain some clarity, and taking the risk of some oversimplification, I assume that social representations are specific semiotic combinations, which may take the form of a narrative (for a more thorough analysis of these concepts and their relation, see, for example, Zittoun, Valsiner, Vedeler, Salgado, Gonçalves, & Ferring, 2013). Therefore, whenever some social agent is assuming a position, I witness what may be called, in a Bakhtinian perspective (Bakhtin, 1984), “double directedness”: the position is directed to the object, but it is also directed to particular audiences.

Moreover, this process is not only “rational” or purely cognitive. It demands, of course, some cognitive operations, since it implies particular understandings of the situation at stake. However, it also involves an affective evaluative stance towards something, which in itself is already a sort of action upon the object. Therefore, there is an affective and motivational stance assumed. However, this stance is not necessarily the same as the explicit verbal productions of the agent. For example, I may be attracted to something and may be saying quite the opposite. This evaluative and active side of a position is probably the most central aspect for a dialogical analysis: as it was previously argued, the most striking question for a dialogical perspective is not specifically “how is this object represented,” but what are the agents doing or intending to do with their social and semiotic representations.

### **Narratives, History and Positioning**

From this standpoint, I would say that Moreau’s (2017) work is, somehow, more devoted to the complex dialectical games and processes of semiotic mediation involved in the cognitive apprehension of historical events than to the full dialogical dynamics involved. I am aware, however, that this claim is not completely adequate, since the text also makes the bridge with some dialogical notions. Nevertheless, since some dialogical aspects are not fully captured in that piece of work, I would like to complement his analysis with some other elements.

I need to return to the double directedness of semiotic positions described in the last section. Using a different terminology, Stanton Wortham depicted this feature of narrative-making some years ago in his distinction (borrowed from Roman Jakobson) between the narrated event and the storytelling interactional event: while telling a story (narrated event), the agent is assuming a particular interactional position towards specific audiences (interactional event). Therefore, we have the event being described (the narrated event), but we also have the interactional event (what is the agent doing to the relevant audiences involved). Wortham (2001), for example, reminds the interactional function of the expression “collateral damages” used to report deaths of non-combatants to the media. By anticipating the future critical voices about those deaths, these are euphemistically described as “collateral damages,” with the intention of minimizing expected criticisms, and making those military actions more acceptable to the general public.

Applying the same kind of reasoning, this kind of analysis may also be useful to the purposes pursued by Moreau’s (2017) article in terms of teaching and learning of history. Coming back to his example about the change of the American policy regarding Korea that ended up with the American involvement in the Korean War, his analysis reveals that the analogy between the situation in Korea and the “lessons of the 1930s” (Manchuria, Ethiopia and Austria) was a main source of justification for the American

## DOING HISTORY BY TELLING STORIES

intervention. Later, he assumes that these analogies were, like most of analogies, probably only partially adequate to the Korean context at that time.

What I want to add to this analysis is the following: departing from the dialogical point of view previously described, the most important issue about social representations is what the agent is intending to do with those social representations. Thus, I may ask: what for is this story being told? It is clear in Moreau's (2017) article that Truman was using a very compelling argument to the Americans at that time, as the Neustadt and May's (1988) quotation makes it clear:

When explaining to Congress why he had decided to send in American troops, Truman spoke of the "fateful events of the nineteen-thirties, when aggression unopposed bred more aggression and eventually war." And this was—then—not such ritual phraseology as by the time of Kennedy's speech on the missile crisis. Truman was stating an analogy with irresistible force for almost all Americans of that time (p. 36).

Therefore, Truman was very successful in his endeavour of justifying the necessity of military action—he was making use of an "irresistible force," persuading the Americans, but also the Western allies, that this intervention was highly needed.

According to some historical analysis, this was actually a major driving force for the American intervention. Truman was in the need of sending such a message if he wanted to maintain his domestic reputation, as well as the western allies on his side (Craig & Logevall, 2009). It is quite common in the historical analysis of the Korean War to assume that the most important motive behind the intervention was the fear of the "communist threat" to the American position in the world. To understand these claims, it is important to recall the significant events that took place in 1949 (see Halberstam, 2007). Actually, in terms of foreign policy the invasion of the South by the North Korea was the third major and highly negative event to the American administration in 1949: Soviet Union did its first nuclear test and the Maoist forces won the civil war in China. Thus, the American administration was under high pressure, and its domestic and external prestige was at stake (Craig & Logevall, 2009). Thus, there was another and maybe even higher motivation behind the change in the American position: to demonstrate to the Americans and to the Western allies that USA would pursue their defence at a worldwide scale. Thus, the fear of the "communist threat" also played a key role in this historical decision.

Therefore, I am assuming here that this military action was also decided out of fear of losing power. Even if possibly playing an important role for the Truman administration reading of Korean events, the analogy was a compelling rhetorical device in order to mobilize political and public support to the subsequent military action, one that would be more sympathetic to the audience than merely assuming that US wanted to maintain a dominant position in the world.

In sum, these events strongly remind me that the most important thing about words and representations is what we do and what we intend to do with them, which involve motivations and audiences. In a sense, this comes closer to Moreau's (2017) use of social representations as semiotic tools in order to operate in the world. However, what I want to add that we need to distinguish between the narrated event and the interactional event. Truman was not only addressing the situation in Korea with an analogy; he was also addressing different social audiences with different goals: addressing the "friendly" audiences, with the purpose of obtaining social support for the subsequent action, as well as addressing the "communist countries" that were felt as threatening Others, sending them a message of power and strength. Therefore, the specific construction of the historical narrative in his speech was heavily constrained by those important sources of motivation. At the same, he was doing history, while telling a story (making the analogy). While telling the story and doing history remain bound together, they are also distinct.

### Conclusion

There is a famous passage in a John Lennon's song in which he sings "Life is what happens to you while you are busy are making other plans" (apparently derived from a saying originally from Allen Saunders and published *in 1957 in Reader's Digest magazine*), and it can be used to illustrate the distinction between the narrated event and the interactional event that happens whenever we tell a story. In this article, I used it as a way of distinguishing these two levels of events during the production of historical narratives. Truman's historical analogy between Korea and other historical events is, in itself, a narrative production that brings together different historical moments, anticipates and dramatizes the immediate future, and therefore legitimizes the American intervention. At the same time, a very complex set of other forces also operate that can only be discovered by exploring the different audiences that lie in the other end of this story.

I believe that this just an example of what happens in our everyday lives: doing history by telling stories, based on strong affective roots. Therefore, this may and should be extended to other kinds of analysis—and not only the narrative telling within the making of history. Actually, only by paying attention to these two complementary levels of analysis—the content of our semiotic productions, and the interactional positioning they produce—we may understand these events in a full dialogical perspective. The dynamism of the triadic structure of agent-audiences-represented object will be key aspects in such kind of analysis.

## DOING HISTORY BY TELLING STORIES

### References

- Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics* (C. Emerson, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1929)
- Bühler, K., (1990). *Theory of language: The representational function of language* (D. Fraser Goodwin, Trans.). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins. (Original work published 1934)
- Craig, C., & Logevall, F. (2009). *America's cold war: The politics of insecurity*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Halberstam, D. (2007). *The coldest winter: America and the Korean War*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2001). The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning. *Culture & Psychology, 7*, 243–281.
- Leiman, M. (2011). Mikhail Bakhtin's contribution to psychotherapy research. *Culture & Psychology, 17*, 441–461.
- Leiman, M. (2012). Dialogical sequence analysis in studying psychotherapeutic discourse. *International Journal for Dialogical Science, 6*, 123–147.
- Marková, I. (2003). *Dialogicality and social representations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Moreau, D. (2017). Understanding temporalization by the activity of historical thinking: Dialogical self theory and social representation theory. *International Journal for Dialogical Science, 10*(2), 161-184.
- Neustadt, R. E, & May, E. R. (1988). *Thinking in time. The uses of history for decision makers*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Salgado, J., & Valsiner, J. (2010). Dialogism and the eternal movement within communication. In C. B. Grant (Ed.), *Beyond universal pragmatics: Studies in the philosophy of communication* (pp. 101–121). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Salgado, J., Cunha, C., & Bento, T. (2013). Positioning microanalysis: Studying the self through the exploration of dialogical processes. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Sciences, 47*, 325–353.
- Wortham, S. (2001). *The narratives in action: A strategy for research and analysis*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

## SALGADO

Zittoun, T., Valsiner, J., Vedeler, D., Salgado, J., Gonçalves, M., & Ferring, D. (2013). *Melodies of living: Developmental science of the human life course*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

## CONCLUSION OF SPECIAL ISSUE: LINKING TWO THEORIES

### **SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY: A DIALOGUE THROUGH IMPLICIT META-FRAMES**

Dany Boulanger

Aalborg University, Denmark & Catholic University of Salvador, Brazil

**Abstract.** The relationship between person and environment is repeatedly presented as an important epistemological issue underlying many theories in human and social sciences, including the social representation theory (SRT) and the dialogical self theory (DST). The participants in this Special Issue relate DST and SRT by referring to the relationship between the Self and the environment. They do this around meta-frames that seem to organize their texts or discourses in an implicit way. Taking an ecological approach, I name three implicit meta-frames underlying the contents of the different papers in this Special Issue. I do this by examining how space and time are implicitly depicted in the relationship between the Self and the environment. I also suggest an elaborated third model by referring to distance and time irreversibility.

**Keywords** ecology, space, time, social representation theory, dialogical self theory, distance, time irreversibility

The relationship between person and environment is repeatedly presented as an important epistemological issue underlying many theories in human and social sciences (Overton, 2006), including the social representation theory (SRT) and the dialogical self theory (DST). This is a contextual issue, since the conception of the relationship between a person and the environment is arbitrary as well as the way it is inserted in space (Heidmets, 1984) and time (Lyra & Valsiner, 2011). Space and time are viewed and constructed through this relationship whose analysis allows me to identify some of the participants' underlying and sometimes implicit "logics"—as discursive spaces—in the texts in this Special Issue.

How do the participants relate DST and SRT? They do this by reflecting on the relationship between a person (the Self) and the environment (often conceptualized as a society) in different ways, around implicit models. I refer to meta-frames that seem to organize the participants' texts or discourses in an implicit and, to a large extent, unconscious way. The opposite is also true (probably more); the discourses organize the meta-frames.

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Comments concerning this paper can be directed to the author at [danyculturalpsychology@gmail.com](mailto:danyculturalpsychology@gmail.com)

Yet, my own thinking and discursive activity plays a big part in the construction of these models. I do not *identify* already known meta-theories (see Overton, 1998); rather, I delve into the unknown by *constructing* new ones. For this reason, I venture into this constructive and uncertain task that is largely based on my intuition and my way of “experiencing” the texts in this special issue. I conclude this special issue by giving voice to the content of the texts (discourses) around such implicit meta-frames and by suggesting new directions to explore.

Taking an ecological approach, and fully aware of the risks of decontextualization and objectivation that accompany communication, I name three implicit meta-frames underlying the content of the different papers. The first two are more salient, and the third is more marginal. I do this by examining how space and time are implicitly depicted in the relationship between the Self and the environment. After presenting the two meta-frames (models) that I consider the most predominant as surfacing in the Special Issue, I synthesize them to show what they have in common and to identify their missing aspects,<sup>1</sup> which I in turn depict in the third meta-frame or model. I present the general and specific features of each meta-frame or model and then show how these characteristics take place—implicitly—in the participants’ discourses (texts). Next I articulate the two first models (meta-frames) in the third (henceforth: meta-model or meta-meta-frame). I conclude by referring to the epistemological and theoretical implications of the dialogue between SRT and DST.

### **First Meta-Frame: Past-Oriented Inclusive Separation of Hard Structure**

#### **Presentation of the First Meta-Frame**

In the first meta-frame, the emphasis is on the structural aspect of *a* social representation and *a* dialogical self (DS) (not specific structures, but generic ones), both *structures* being relatively well demarcated or at least detectable by researchers. Core structural properties—contents (SRT), anchors (SRT), voices (DST) or I-positions (DST)—are clearly identifiable when structures are not.

From an analytical point of view, the Self and the environment are first inclusively separated<sup>2</sup> (we will return to this point later) while researchers consider their interdependence and the contextual aspect of the phenomenon under investigation. The environment—**representational field** and “*society of the Self*”<sup>3</sup>—is generally placed in the forefront. The Self is located *in* the environment with respect to the structural components of the latter. This meta-frame is grounded in a reversible conception of

---

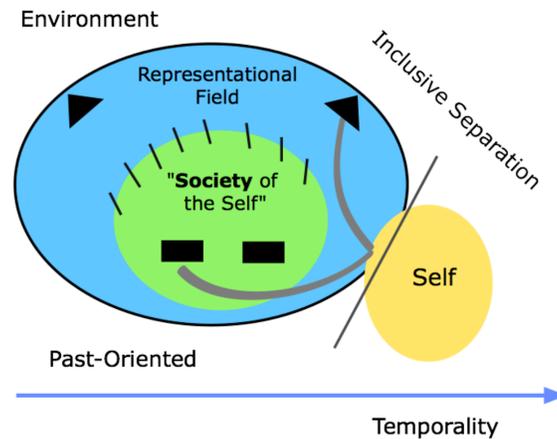
<sup>1</sup> I refer to some of the texts’ subtle references to a static approach, but I can also find some direct indications of the latter (sometimes related to an associationist logic).

<sup>2</sup> Authors often refer to Valsiner’s concept of inclusive separation.

<sup>3</sup> Focusing on the Self, the second meta-frame (model) emphasizes the *Self as* a society while the first meta-frame focuses on the *society of* the Self, which implies that society (the environment) is external to the Self.

## SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

time; the process is to a large extent obscured by the entification of reality (making it a solid entity, thus evacuating the aspects related to dynamics and processes) and reduced to the structural (“hard” structures) components at play. This tendency is reinforced by the focus on the past. Below, I schematize (the humoristic and visual reader will perceive a funny face) the way that DST is related to SRT through the above-mentioned aspects, that is, the relationship (put in reversible time) between the Self and the environment, which is composed of structural aspects.



**Figure 1.** Inclusive Separation of the Self and the Structured Environment, then Integration of the Former into the Latter

In this meta-frame, the environment is generally defined by two embedded layers: the **representational field** and the “**society of the Self.**” The later (micro level)—thanks to its extensive nature (horizontal line in the Figure 1)—is located in the former (macro level). Both ecological levels are composed of core structural aspects. Indeed, the micro level of the “society of the Self” (DST) is composed of I-positions and voices (black squares) and the representational field (SRT) is composed of anchors (black triangles). It seems that the relationship between the anchors and the I-positions needs to be specified.

From a conceptual point of view, the Self, which is firstly kept separate from the environment, is secondly located (green arrows) in the environment in relation to its constituents. Participants refer to the relationship between the Self and the anchors or I-positions in a way that suggests a preliminary separation between the Self and the environment then their articulation. The latter is not “free”; it is oriented by an emphasis on the environment. In effect, the Self relates to what is *already there* in the environment, picking and choosing specific resources (I-positions, voices, anchors), hence the idea that the Self is *relatively* free. To use a metaphor, the Self takes a position like someone takes a chair that is already part of the environment. Thus,

importance is placed on the past: arriving in an *already* structured environment, the Self chooses a chair (anchors, I-positions) to sit on.

- To summarize and systematize the characteristics of the first meta-frame, DST and SRT are articulated through the following aspects:
- The “society of the Self” (micro) and the representational field (macro) correspond to two embedded layers of a structured environment, which is an important background to link DST and SRT.
- In a first analytical operation, the Self is separated (in an inclusive way) from the environment, then, in a second analytical operation, the Self is (*re*)located in the environment (here the *representational* activity of the researchers).
- This relocation means that the Self takes place in a well-demarcated and structured environment; the Self uses and chooses the “furniture” that is already there as a resource.
- While, from a metaphorical point of view, the Self can paint the chair to spread its own colour in the environment it inhabits (personalizing the environment or the chair through internalization). The Self uses external resources as raw material instead of creating something new in an empty room with its internal resources.
- Transversally, the entification of reality is a central characteristic of the reversible conception of time that is at the core of the first meta-frame.

### **Anchoring of the first meta-frame (model) in the texts**

In this section, I present how the first meta-frame is anchored in the texts. I do this relatively to each of the two following points: the Self’s relationship with a structured environment (principally) composed of two embedded layers and time reversibility through entification of reality and past-oriented perspective.

#### ***Self’s relationship with a structured environment composed of two embedded layers***

The inclusive separation of the Self and the environment is present in the authors’ discourse. For instance, Raudsepp (2017) refers to the bidirectional relationship between the Self and the environment. In a similar logic, Rosa and Tavares (2017) emphasize the “dynamic relationship between the individual cognition and the knowledge shared by social groups of belonging” (p. 90). While bidirectionality is recognized as a *principle*, the movement between the two entities (Self and environment) is for a large extent unidirectional and vertical, where the Self *goes into* the environment. For Raudsepp (2017), “[i]ndividuals and groups may position themselves differently *in relation to* these dimensions” (p. 49). More implicitly, this tendency appears in Rosa and Tavares’s (2017) text with their emphasis on “the context and the relationships that the person is *part of*” (p. 86) as well as in Moreau’s (2017)

## SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

text when he refers to “theories shared by individuals evolving *in* the same social environment” (p. 165). As for Boulanger (2017b), he analyses the way that professionals position parents in school, as a representational (SRT) and transitional (DST) zone, thus emphasizing a unidirectional and vertical positioning dynamic.

This **unidirectionality** of the Self moving into the environment implies an emphasis on the latter as expressed by the following aspects:

- A. The characteristics of the environment determine the way the Self relates with it.
- B. The environment, as a core structure, has well-demarcated levels that are specific zones in which the Self inserts itself.
- C. As a sign of the entification of reality, the environment possesses structural properties and supplies resources taken and used by the Self.
- D. The environment provides guidance to the Self by limiting its freedom.

Using these four letters as signs, I demonstrate how these characteristics are anchored in the texts. In relation to the second point (B), Boulanger (2017a) distinguishes the societal (macro) from the micro-context (contextual and personal) by considering, in a dichotomous way, only the former as being static, albeit he quickly mentions that the society is a polemical (dynamic) space. As for Moreau, he puts the hierarchy at a horizontal level by emphasizing the core and periphery of social representations. Raudsepp (2017) defines the polyphasic nature of the *relationship* between the Self and the environment with respect to the three (she also refers to two) following layers [B] of the *environment* [A]:

- “Processes in the *societal field*: the configuration [C] of social relations and relative *location* [C] in [A] the sociocultural landscape; and the *coordination* of [C] objective external and internalized structures (habitus).
- Processes in [A] the shared representational field (collective culture): changing *regulative principles* [C; D] and ordering representations according to importance, “confronting” ideas and repositioning within representational fields.
- Process in the [A] *subjective meaning fields* of agents, both on the unreflective level (inertia of the habitus) and on the reflective level [B] (*taking positions in* [A] the landscape of mind): acknowledging semiotic potency” (p. 46).

In Raudsepp’s (2017) text, the relation of the Self with the environment seems to be a reflection of the latter’s properties as implicitly grasped by the Self, which is spatially *located* with respect to the *location* (coordinate) of the environment’s different *areas* (hierarchical zones). This reflects the author’s implicit shift from *positioning* to *positions*; the *movement* of the Self entering the environment (and internalizing or appropriating it) is partly defined by, and reduced to, the environment’s *components*.

Raudsepp emphasizes the environmental canalization of I-positions and the Self's (relative) freedom when it chooses and takes what is (already) there.

This tendency is present in Moreau's (2017) reference to "pupils' positioning [that] is *regulated* more or less consciously *by* historical narratives [D] that the program *Histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté* [...] [C] requires pupils *to appropriate* [...] by taking into consideration the *suggestions made by* [D] groups" (p. 164). As constraints, these suggestions come at play through the regulative and mediational function of the third position and the concept. More specifically, for Moreau (2017), at the peripheral level of the social representation, the Self *uses* some external resources as internal operators or as a constraints (concepts, third positions) that mediate its relationship with the environment. The external shaping of the internal world is evident by the fact that "Collective voices [...] *shape* the words and the discourses produced by *coloring the subjectivity*" [D] (Moreau, 2017) and that "these personal meanings are not only *influenced*, as may even be *invalidated and suppressed* by the collective voices" [D] (Rosa & Tavares, 2017, p. 90).

The core conception of space and its entification are salient in Rosa and Tavares's (2017) presentation of social representations. These authors view social representations as "a) relational and dynamic *organizations of* [C] knowledge and language shared by a group of individuals [D]; [and] b) dynamic *sets* [...] that [A] aim to guide [D] behaviors and social interactions" (p. 91). These shared systems are forms of *something* (knowledge, content, etc.) that provide guidance and regulation. As for Moreau, he mentions that "SRT acknowledges the *existence* [C] of objects of representation, *present in* [C] all opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and theories shared by individuals" (p. 165). The tendency to entify reality—here with respect to what exists and is present there—is related to a reversible conception of time.

***Reversibility: Entification and past orientation.***

The entification of reality<sup>4</sup> implies reducing the process (time as it unfolds) aspect to spatial dimensions, that is, to what exists "there" or could be well identifiable as such. Overall, it is not that the participants voluntarily take a static approach—in fact, it is generally the opposite since participants generally critique such approach<sup>5</sup>—, but the language they use is largely static. This mirrors a general tendency of the human and social sciences to be grounded in common sense (Valsiner, 2012).

Let's consider for instance the way cognitive polyphasia is defined as the *co-existence* (Lanaridis, 2017; Raudsepp, 2017) of *something* with respect to identifiable objects (ideas, content, positions, systems, voices) that are *there* (in X zone) or *there* (in Y zone). It is also defined as a resource (Raudsepp, 2017; Rosa & Tavares, 2017) and a

---

<sup>4</sup> I covered this aspect in the third point (C) above. I develop the reversible conception of time a bit more later.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance Boulanger's (2017a) and Rosa and Tavares's (2017) introduction texts.

reservoir (Raudsepp, 2017) related to organizing principles (Rosa & Tavares, 2017; Raudsepp, 2017). For his part, Moreau (2017) emphasizes the polyphasic modulation of the social representations, particularly along its periphery. He specifies that “[t]hese modulations *rest on* opinions, attitudes, and beliefs *shaping* individual *dispositions*” (p. 166). Thus he entifies this dynamic aspect while also referring to the unidirectional canalization of individual’s *dispositions*, that is, entities.

The existing entities are endowed with **human characteristics**; in this way, the environment acts (it does something) by canalizing the Self’s relationship with the environment and the Self’s location in it by furnishing resources. Generally, the social representations, constraints or collective voices—as components of the environment—are implicitly considered to be doing something in a way that “the individual is guided by culturally *available* meanings (e.g., transmitted by collective voices)” (Rosa & Tavares, 2017, p. 90). This function is also attributed to positions in the environment: “[e]ach position in the objective sociocultural space or subjective landscape of mind *provides* a specific view of that space [...]; each position *affords* a unique perspective, *providing* the person with different sets of cultural resources” (Raudsepp, 2017, p. 54). In this canalizing approach, the components of the Self’s environment can be likened to mini-actors, who paradoxically obscure the Self’s agency. I wonder where the Self is and when it comes into play if its parts are the agents.

The entification—as it relates to a reversible conception of time—of reality is also expressed by the tendency to **spatialize time**, which is an explicit dimension of the DST and is conceived through stages that are analysed according to a spatial logic. The entification of the representation process is expressed in Rosa and Tavares’s (2017) “steps” and sequential model. Raudsepp (2017) refers to how “old” and “new” regimes are separated or gathered, and thus manipulated as if they were solid entities. Referring, in the same logic, to the coexistence of positions (polyphasia) *in a* single narrative *frame*, Moreau (2017), who also depicts the representation process through a phase sequence (i.e., presenting the action of the central core of the representation first and *then* of the representation’s periphery), shows how some discourses “are discordant—in contradiction with one another—but nevertheless live together *inside* the *same* historical narrative” (p. 163). This narrative, based on a well-identifiable entity, is depicted as morphology.

In this **entity perspective**, Raudsepp (2017) refers to the concept of “generation”—which implies temporality—with respect to specific traits (typology) that characterize its members. Boulanger’s (2017*b*) efforts to emphasize hidden possibilities that could be actualized are undermined by drawing attention to their *spatial* hiddenness in a *localized* fuzzy zone. The movement towards the unknown that he refers to remains a spatial movement and not a temporal one. He focuses on making an object present or absent instead of highlighting its evolution in time. As for Lanaridis (2017), he refers to a “*set* of regularly practiced routines [...] or frames [that] can be seen as narrative

themes and plots that are communicated” (p. 142). Although he accentuates what is regular, here I want to highlight the fact that time is seen through sets that are communicable like entities.

It is in this logic that **processes** are **spatialized**. Raudsepp (2017) studies generations in a changing society,<sup>6</sup> while in a sense “reducing” this context to the new rules (entity concept) that sociopolitical regimes *establish* for the Self. Quoting Jodelet, Rosa and Tavares (2017) mention that a social representation is “the construction of a common reality, a form of knowledge [...] that contributes *to* a social group” (pp. 90-91). The constructive process is thus related to an entity (a form of knowledge, a group).

The reversibility of time also expresses itself through the authors’ emphasis on the **past**, in particular on the *reproduction (representation) of something*. For instance, Raudsepp (2017) refers to “[d]iachronic polyphasia [that] introduces the time dimension—applying historically, biographically or developmentally *preceding forms* of knowledge” (p. 54). The past-oriented approach is also present in Lanaridis’s (2017) text when he underlines a pre-existent and solid representation structure:

What we already know and accept assumes judgmental role towards anything that is new and therefore under critical evaluation [...] illustrating the importance of a pre-existing and already established belief-system that every societal group utilizes as to communicate responses towards facts of novelty (p. 141).

The novelty is thus filtered through what *is* already there. The possible (not yet constructed) is shaped by actual resources anchored in the past: “At *every* moment, the *set of possible* identity positions (i.e., the polyphony) *depends on* the linguistic resources *available in* the sociocultural world *in which* the individual is located” (Rosa & Tavares, 2017, p. 90). In this excerpt, the effort to shed light on *each and every* present *moment*—pointing to them and separating them implies a reversible conception of time—is in a sense undermined by the implicit focus on the shaping of the Self by environmental conventions and traditions (past).

In Moreau’s (2017) account of analogy (a flexible structure located in the peripheral region of the social representation), understanding the present means looking to the past because “[i]t ensures [...] symbolic mediation by attributing the present event to a structure of ‘history that repeats itself,’ and by protecting the underlying causal structure of this attribution, which is of mythological nature” (pp. 167-168). Moreau (2017) refers to the mediation function of concepts to prevent the risk of the manipulation and static reproduction of the past that this view entails. However, the concepts he refers to are resources that form parts of the environment (implicitly its

---

<sup>6</sup> Using this approach, Raudsepp (2017) brings a dynamic perspective.

## SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

traditions) the Self uses. In this sense, the Self does not create new concepts; it uses what is (was) there.

The entity conception of the process or the implicit shift from the representation process to *a* social representation is established through a **circular** (tautological) way of reasoning. Let's refer to Rosa and Tavares (2017): "*This* representation, *in turn*, becomes part of the integrational system of the individual in the social world, because what is common to a group allows its members to share communication and influence the action" (p. 91). In a circular way, *a* social representation (as a product) canalizes its own conditions of (re)production (i.e., creating another product), thus this is potentially what happens between two phases (production versus *re*production; products 1 and 2). Yet, through its "agency," the Self uses the structure to (re)construct itself:

[S]ocial representations [...] [make up] "a system of values, ideas and practices" that individuals use in order to understand the social and material world they live in and in order to establish a shared code of communication (Lanaridis, 2017, p. 141).

In fact, what the Self creates is already part of the very material it uses (the effect is in its cause). This tendency is present in Moreau's (2017) text:

Historical narratives are both cognitive and social instruments granted by a community's collective memory, which is crystallized around a common identity [...] These narratives make up a shared and institutionalized knowledge that contributes to the *re*production of traditions, practices, and mythologies (pp. 164-165).

In the form of shared knowledge and instruments to be used by the Self, collective memory provides the conditions of its own *re*production. According to this logic, Rosa and Tavares (2017) implicitly emphasize the fact that some constraints canalize their own conditions of (re)production and, therefore, canalize how the Self acts and thinks. With maintenance of what already exists in mind, a representation, as a homeostatic system, canalizes its own process to quickly reach an equilibrium again. This dimension of equilibrium is salient in Moreau's (2017) text. The analysis of the process as a state also reflects this circular reasoning. Along the same lines, Raudsepp (2017) shows that a representation's trajectory implies its change from a static to a liquid state then to another static state (here the *re*constructive aspect).

## Second Meta-Frame: (Extended) Present-Oriented Inclusion in Flexible Environmental Structures

### Presentation of the second meta-frame

In a general way, the second meta-frame (model) “shares” with the first the tendency to entify reality, particularly with respect to a reversible conception of time. However, environmental structures are more flexible than in the first model, while remaining entified. Instead of referring to core concepts, participants generally emphasize the *properties* of the structures.

Through a strong emphasis on DST, the Self is put at the forefront and, in a paradoxical way, it is part of its own environment. The focus is on the Self *as* an *extended society* rather than on the “society *of* the Self.” The Self as a society comprises an audience (social representation, collective voices, audience). Here the integration of the social representation in the Self as a society that contains an audience (a social representation).

Still, the Self is (or seems to be) a bit freer in the second model than in the first, in which it is constrained by the audience that “influences” the Self *from the inside*; not from the outside like in the first meta-frame. In the second meta-frame, participants generally highlight the audience, social representation and collective voices as providing guidance (canalization function) from the inside and only secondarily as a *canal*. Participants refer to the latter when they focus on the fact that personal voices speak *through* collective voices, in the same way that a specific boat (“*My* personal boat” or “*Me* as a boat”) moves *through* a *canal* (*the* general canal used by many individual). The latter is a path *used by* the Self from the inside.<sup>7</sup>

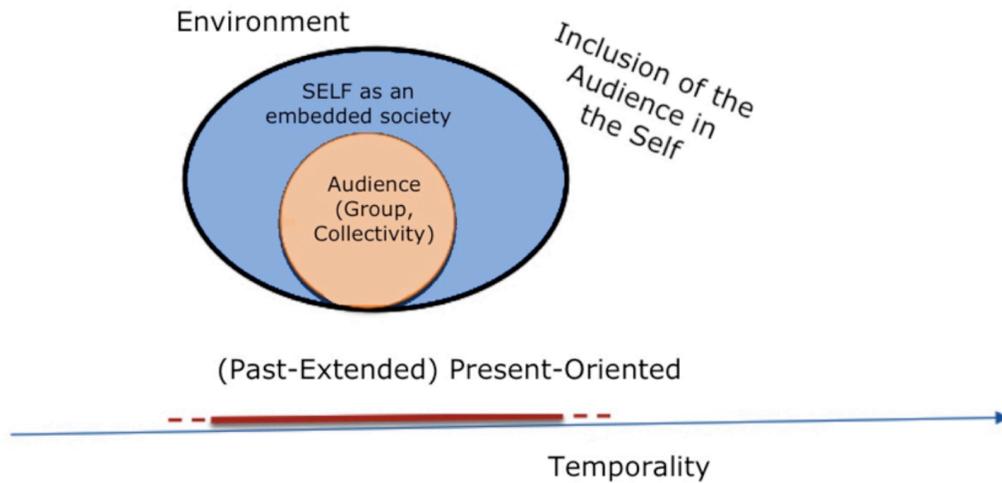
Priority is generally placed on the present moment that is an extended (extended behind) temporal window; the Self keeps a foot in the present like a person looking from a window stays inside (see Fig. 2). This extension supposes the following aspects:

- The past “is included in” the present principally in the form of memory that is retrieved (retroactive loop) and is in a sense “fixed” in the present (which is not necessarily flowing toward the future in an irreversible logic).
- The Self anticipates reality in its (present) extensive window, largely relying on the past.

---

<sup>7</sup> More specifically, the Self’s internal audience, collective voices and social representation make the Self use this canal. This is a circular reasoning in which the social representation determines its own orientations. The fact that the Self speaks through the audience shows the centrality of this “part” (audience) of the environment.

## SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY



**Figure 2.** Inclusion of the Environment in the Self

### **Anchoring the second meta-frame (model) in the “texts.”**

Authors generally anchor the second model by viewing the Self as a society that is defined by certain spatial characteristics and properties. This view is based on DST—to a large extent through the concept of the “repertory of the Self”—allowing the social representation (an audience in the DST) to integrate. For example, this is expressed in the following excerpt: “In such light we may have to consider SRs as a process that functions in both conscious and subconscious level and lay this way a significant overlap between DST and SRT” (Lanaridis, 2017, p. 144). While SRT is **DST’s theoretical anchor** in the first meta-frame, in the second, **DST** is the main **theoretical anchor** for **SRT’s voices**: the social representation *is included in* the Self in the form of an audience (Boulanger, 2017*a, b*; Lanaridis, 2017; Rosa & Tavares, 2017).

To be more specific, I now focus on the following aspects:

- A. Self-focused (Self as a society).
- B. Properties (and functions) of a flexible structured society.
- C. Audience (environment) as a constraint from the inside.
- D. Extended present.
- E. Entification as a sign of time’s reversibility.

These characteristics are often associated with a **systemic and structural** conception of the Self (Boulanger, 2017*a*) as a hierarchical society endowed with the capacity to organize itself. This is salient in Rosa and Tavares’s (2017) text:

The *self-organization* of the self-system [A] is based on a *hierarchical* operating system. In *every* experiential moment [D], a position (or a *set* of positions) *occupies* [E] the “stage of the self-system” and *brings* [C] arguments of relevance *to the* operational center [B], which are gradually organized in arguments of higher abstraction order. These macro-level arguments, promoter signs [...] have *properties* [B] [E] of self-evaluation and self-regulation [C] (p. 92).

For these authors, the arguments provide guidance (canalization) through their **properties** and functions. This view is also expressed by Boulanger’s (2017a) depiction of the constraining function of collective voices and, in particular by Lanaridis’s analysis of promoter positions: “Significant others [C] in their broad sense can begin to *function* [B] in the world of the DS [A] as promoter positions—a self-position [C] higher in *hierarchy* and *able to regulate* the *organisation* [B; C] of the self [A] in moments [E] of emergency” (p. 145). For Rosa and Tavares (2017), the audience and collective voices are also *canal* operating from the inside: “the internal positions acquire their meaning through their relationship with one or more external position [C]” (p. 88).

The **temporal dimension** of the second meta-frame is salient in Rosa and Tavares’s (2017) text:

These macro-level arguments, promoter signs [...], have *properties* [B] [E] of self-evaluation and self-regulation [C] that ensure the *stability* [B] [D] of the current *self-system structure* [A] [B] until a new one is required. This organization is not the result of a commanding voice from a static and permanent higher order structure; it is a *property* [B] that *emerges from* [D] the combined dialogue between different I-positions. The *functional* [B] character of this self-organizing capacity is tested in *moments that* [D] [E] require a *restructuring* [D] [E] of the identity system and it is influenced by personal and contextual *variables* [E] (p. 92)

The emerging **present** is thus *fixed* in “a present window”—visually, we would obtain a topology that fixes evolving properties in the same way someone stops a movie and freezes a *flowing* image—that is *extended toward the past*. Nevertheless, in the context of suicide, this dimension is very implicit in Rosa and Tavares’s (2017) analysis of collective voices that are “taken from” (and recreated) the interior (interiorized) external world.

Even if Rosa and Tavares (2017) focus on emerging moments, what is considered as emerging from the dialogue are properties (**entified** notion). An entified moment is a moment that has X or Y characteristic and acts in X or Y way. Rosa and Tavares (2017) stress a *restructuring* of the Self that reaches stability, which implies resisting and diminishing uncertainty, through some variables (entified notion) and by

referring to *canalization*. Moreau particularly insists on the tendency to reach equilibrium, which suggests reaching for stable states.

All of the participants in this Special Issue underline *reconstructing* and **representing** *something* in a new way—here, the very meaning of the concept of social representation. This *backward* movement suggests the expression of a (re)productive process that is oriented toward the past, despite the fact that it is established in a constructive way. The reconstructive process is in a sense static and past-oriented because it is conceived through a reversible conception of time entailing the entification of reality. Moreover, positions, organized in sets, are defined through their properties. The Self as a society is thus entified. The dynamic aspect that Boulanger (2017a) wants to introduce is undermined by his tendency to entify reality:

Relating to the constructivist orientation [...], we focus here [...] on the idea that the repertory of the self *contains* all that the self presents to itself in his own way—the reference to the syllable “re” in representation—, that is *what* he represents (p. 23).

In effect, from the perspective of irreversibility, a constructive logic does not fit with such a spatialization of time. Moreover, the *movement* Boulanger (2017a) refers to cannot be put in time, at least in an irreversible perspective.

In Rosa and Tavares’s discourse, albeit defined by voices, the “collective” aspect (macro-argument) *is there*, as a state, as *an* argument instead of argumentation. The fact that “objects are not mere copies of the self [...] [but that] they are endowed with a *voice*” (Boulanger, 2017a, p. 24) is not sufficient for adopting a dynamic approach when these voices are **entified**.

Lanaridis (2017) clearly explains how the process dimension is analysed in relation to an entity perspective (reversibility):

Further to this, since DST tenets take effect [...], it is likely that significant others also *exist* on a subconscious level and are equally responsible for such influence and continuous *re*-evaluation of our self-position [...] It may therefore be that significant others *affect* the way we shape and re-evaluate music we like, operating on both our conscious and subconscious world (p. 142).

Like in Rosa and Tavares’s text, the *representation* process implies a reference to what exists, to what is there, that is, in particular, some constraints. While constraints can orient (guide) the Self toward the future (Rosa & Tavares, 2017), they are conceived of as (already) there.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Moreover, as the constraints are humanized, they are agents (in the previous excerpt, they “affect”). Thus, in a circular way the audience’s part of the Self (entified) acts on the Self, canalizing it from the inside.

### Synthesis of the Two Meta-Frames: Enclosing of the Self into the Self's Society

In the first meta-frame (model), SRT hosts DST and the social representation's environment (the society of a generic Self) is the bedrock of the Self. In the second meta-frame, DST hosts SRT and the Self as a society is the bedrock of the audience (social representation). In the first meta-frame, the focus is on the Self entering (predetermined) the environment, whereas, in the second meta-frame, it is on the audience that has already arrived or is already in the Self. In both cases, the movement and process dimensions are absent. In effect, despite being opposites, both models are based on a same reversible conception of time. The Self looking at itself in the mirror will see itself in the opposite direction, but the Self's very essence remains the same. A prisoner looking in a mirror outside his cage still sees the bars. Whether the Self is (or goes into) in a society (first model) or society is contained in the Self (second model) does not change the fact that society constrains (cage) the Self, be it from the outside or the inside. Even if the second model allows—through internalization—external reality to be personalized and actively (re)constructed from the inside, the point here is that static epistemology (reversible conception of time) implicitly “present in” the texts undermines this constructive dynamic.

What the two meta-frames have in common is a reversible conception of time translated by reality's entification and blocking the Self's innovation. The Self is constantly dependent on society's constraints, be they external or internal. In the first model, thanks to its emphasis on SRT, society is the structured space *of* an abstracted and aggregate Self. Even if the participants using DST's terminology refer to the “society *of* the Self,” society is neither the Self's possession (what is *mine*) nor its extension, in the way that a human's arm is extended into the external world. In fact, it seems to be quite the opposite. Society is there—*already* constituted—and the Self comes into it and sits on a chair. Yet, here the attention is not on the movement (sitting), but on the chair. The participants as photographers take a picture —entifying reality— of chairs in a room and then of a Self sitting on one of them. In the second meta-frame, the Self *is* a society because there is an audience (internal society) within the Self upon which the Self is dependent. In this paradoxical view, the Self is located *in* the audience; after all, the Self uses a societal and shared canal (canalisation).<sup>9</sup>

In both models, the Self's movement is lost because of the emphasis that is placed on a fixed situation. In the first model, researchers focus on either the separation of the Self from the environment or the presence of the former in the latter. By doing this, researchers neglect the dynamic and interdependent movement of the Self going into the environment in a co-constructive manner. In the second model, researchers

---

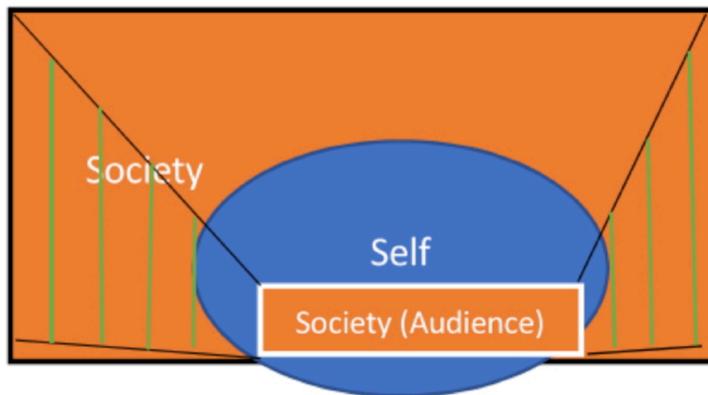
<sup>9</sup> Yet, an external (detached from the Self) reality is missing. For this reason, the Self's movement is even more constrained because it is not likely to have enough distance between itself and an omnipresent Other (audience).

## SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

sometimes refer to the internalization of the audience (the environment entering the Self), but they conceptualize internalization as a state or they stress its product—the topological (the metaphor of the picture) environment identified in Figure 2.

In the first model, the blue Self takes a red chair in a red environment. In the second model, the Self is a blue room (Self as a society) largely constrained (limited) and defined by the red chairs it has already received from a red (external) environment voicing red colour from the inside.<sup>10</sup>

In both cases, resources (chairs) come from the external world, which speaks directly (first model) or indirectly (second model, through the internal) to the Self. The environment colours the Self. The interplay of the two meta-frames leads to a situation where the Self is enclosed on both sides of society, that is, its external and internal sides.



**Figure 3.** Self’s “Enslavement”

In Figure 3, we see that the society (audience) inside the Self is a *reflection* of the society outside that includes the Self. The reversible conception of time prevents me from seeing how the Self can be active during the switch—the movement (externalization/ internalization) from the first to the second model.

The Self “possesses” an audience because the latter is an extension of the environment the Self belongs to. This is the case, whether through the Self’s localization in the environment (first model) or the Self’s internalization—conceived of as a state or product—of the latter (second model). Schematically, we can visualize an epistemic and theoretical **switch from the extended Self to the extended society** (the green lines symbolize this extension). It is possible to see that the Self is enclosed in this extension (like a prison or a cage; the green lines symbolize the bars of the prison’s

---

<sup>10</sup> It shows well how the Self is still *in* the environment (its internal audience); the Self has to rely on constraints and traditions, and it has to sit (take a position, anchor itself) somewhere.

frozen window). We can also imagine the little triangle and its green extension as a muzzle that prevents the Self's free expression "in" society. To push the idea further, we can imagine Hannibal Lector (character from a series of suspense novels: forensic psychiatrist and cannibalistic serial killer) moving within the confines of a prison wearing a muzzle, but still trying to escape!<sup>11</sup> Society constrains the Self from the outside as well as from the inside. The internalization and interiorization of society are guided (canalized), in a circular and tautological way, by society itself.

The society possesses the Self from the inside and because it does not contribute so much to society (how does the Self, specifically, contribute to the social representations, the positions, anchors and traditions?).<sup>12</sup> Conversely, the Self is closed to itself because it has to use the society's resources to build something, either directly or indirectly. The Self does not construct something out of itself—freely, autonomously and in an innovative way—, apart from what its already internalized society provides. Is the socialized Self also a personal Self?

We can see in the following message that this double-blind dynamic is well-established in publicity: be yourself like everyone does in the society you are in (first meta-frame) and let us show you how to do this by listening (incorporating) to the present message (second meta-frame). How can I internalize a message that guides this very internalizing "dynamic" and while, moreover, I am not focusing on this dynamic, but rather on its state or product (partly like the participants of this Special Issue)?

To be as clear as possible in this fuzzy theoretical horizon, let's insist on the fact that the spatiotemporal movements of positioning, representing and internalizing happen *by* (canalization), *in* (fixed spatial localization) and *through* (canal) the conditions determined by society, be it from the outside (society as a frame; big square in Figure 3) or the inside (society inside, as an extension of the external society; little frame in Figure 3). The Self thus moves *into* a restricted zone, regarding traditions of society, which is a screen that prevents the Self from accessing its own internal resources.

The first model has the advantage of placing the Self outside society, thus introducing distance. However, it does this by positioning the Self in an independent and autonomous environment (as a SR that lies outside the Self) while not focusing on the Self's autonomy (freedom). The second model has the advantage of paying attention to the Self, but it emphasizes the audience that is (already) incorporated or internalized. To be constructive, internalization, positioning and representation need distance.

---

<sup>11</sup> This will be possible in the third model presented below.

<sup>12</sup> Moreover, It is hard to see, in the participants' discourse (texts), how the Self brings something to Society; in this sense, while being influenced by society in a unidirectional movement, the Self as "society-contained" is closed to the external environment because the Self functions as a society (with no external horizon).

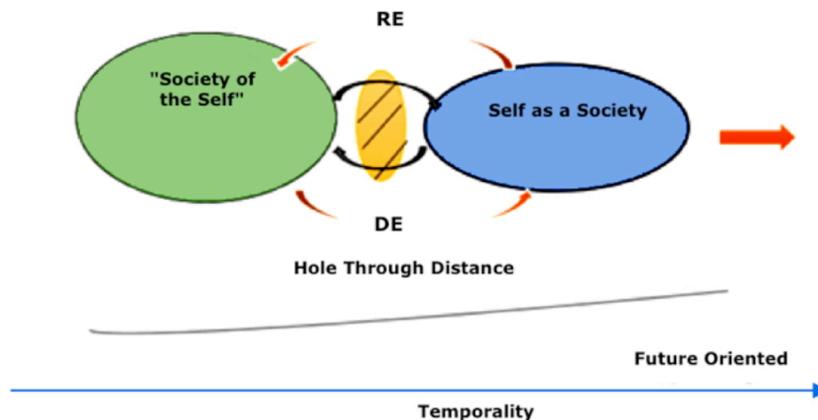
## SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

Keeping the advantages of both models, a third model focuses on both the *Self* as a society and the “society of the *Self*” by adding distance between them. This model is quite secondary in the texts and needs some theoretical extensions that I will partially provide. Distance, which is partially present in the texts, prevents the circularity of the *Self* incorporating a society it is part of. As for spatial distance, it is a condition of time’s irreversibility.

### Future Oriented: Hole Creation Through Distance

#### General presentation of the meta-frame.

The third meta-frame implies a dialogue between the *Self* as a society and the society of the *Self*. The *Self* does not *take a* position—like it would a chair—within society; rather, the *Self* positions itself through its (own) orientation toward the environment. Sitting on a chair indicates a certain fixedness of the *Self*’s movement. Instead, here we emphasize the *Self*’s positioning process by means of constant *movement* through its dialogue with the environment. This requires distance between the *Self* and the environment, and more precisely a distancing process (creating distance). It is important to highlight that the *Self* not only responds to the environment’s objects and adapts itself to them, it also creates something *out of these objects* (in this sense, the *Self* is a personal society). Thus, the *Self* is a society of its own with internal resources. The *Self*’s creation of and reliance on these internal resources call for spatial distance (creating a hole between two horizons), which is also a condition of time’s irreversibility (going beyond the immediate spatiotemporal horizon).



**Figure 4.** Distance and Bidirectional Movement between Self and Environment

Figure 4 illustrates the third meta-frame (model). The grey arrows represent the bidirectional movements between the *Self* as a society and the “society of the *Self*”

(environment). In this model, there is a mutual /two-way/reciprocal relationship between the Self and the environment. The orange arrows symbolize the movement of the Self *going into* society and society going into the Self. In both cases a liminal zone (orange circle) is crossed through distance. This zone is a *hole* characterized by vagueness and invisibility. For this reason, the parts of the orange arrows that cross the middle are invisible or empty. The vagueness of the liminal zone stems from distance and is an important condition of time's irreversibility. What makes it important is that vagueness brings uncertainty and implies going beyond (toward the future) the immediate "here and now"; going beyond "here" is a condition of going beyond the "now." The grey curved line shows that the Self is never completely removed from personal and societal fields. Thus, while being at a distance from a specific object in this field, the Self remains in this field; it is "in-between," in an uncertain space.

### **Anchoring of the third meta-frame (model) in the texts**

I now anchor the third meta-frame in the texts with respect to the following aspects:

- Distance used as a means of dialogue between the "society of the Self" and the Self as a society through distance.
- Process of time's irreversibility.

### ***Dialogue between the society of the Self and the Self as a society through distance***

Separating two systems in an inclusive way generally involves keeping them close to each other (Figure 1), but the third model goes beyond the inclusive separation principle by introducing distance. One of the fundamental requirements for *inclusive distanciation* is that each system must retain its autonomy while nevertheless being interdependent because it is in the same field. Children need to become autonomous (autonomisation) in order to differentiate themselves from their parents. However, it is precisely because children progressively leave their parents mentally and physically that they feel closer to them; as they are "there" (present) when they are "not-there" (absent). For example, when children go to summer camp (making parents absent) and yet keep a picture of their parents in their luggage (making parents present). This metaphor wrongly focuses on the past, on reproducing and representing something, whereas I want to emphasize the ongoing movement that unfolds toward the future. But let's stay with this example for the moment since it allows me to illustrate the distance dimension.

Separation, through *distanciation*, is a necessary condition of being *with* others, so distance does not meet isolation. With this in mind, the bidirectional movements (orange arrows in Figure 4) of the Self *entering* and *exiting* the environment are complementary, and exiting is central.

## SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

The autonomy of each system implies that “there is *lack of isomorphism* between collective and personal cultures” (Raudsepp, 2017, p. 50). The Self can therefore position itself *at the border* (i.e., in the liminal zone; both inside and outside) of society. Although, from Moreau’s (2017) point of view, “inside” and “outside” are mythical bundles of antinomical relationships, I wish to underscore their contextual rather than their universal aspect—while also considering the *decontextualization* that occurs through distance—and personal nature. The personal nature of “in” and “out” dynamic positioning—which implies a movement process—is clearly expressed by Raudsepp (2017):

An individual can modify his position in relation to the sociocultural context along various dimensions, the most general being *distance* and *direction*, e.g. between being “in” or “out” of the situation, playing different roles, utilizing different **tonalities** (playful, ironic, provocative...) (p. 52)

We can identify the following ways to relate with the environment which grasp the idea of boundary:

1. Choosing positions in the environment at a distance, from the Self’s point of view (internal positioning).
2. Entering the environment from the outside.
3. Moving within the environment by personalizing positions and managing directionality.
4. Distancing from the environment and from ourselves.
5. Depositioning then repositioning by crossing the boundary.
6. Moving within the open boundary zone.

In the first case (1), the Self relates *to* the environment, as expressed in the Raudsepp’s emphasis on the “**Heterogeneity of semiosphere** and **multiplicity of subject’s relations to the environment** [that] are the prerequisites to the phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia” (p. 52). The Self can choose *from the outside* among “the **diversity of possible positions in** social and cultural fields” (Raudsepp, 2017, p. 53). This implies that the Self is *already at a distance* from the environment that *contains some positions*. Even if the environment is conceived of in a static way (first model), it does not define all the conditions of the Self’s relationship with the environment. In effect, the Self can be “engaging *with a*[n environmental] phenomenon *from* a particular point of view” (Raudsepp, 2017, p. 49), that is, its own point of view.

This implies that the Self *moves into* the environment (2). To effectively engage *with* a phenomenon is to be part of something, to be in *near* the object the Self engages with (Boulanger, 2017a). For example, parents sitting at home—at a distance from the school—and choosing from a sheet describing school events and activities that they will

be involved *in*. This *movement from the outside to the inside* does not simply require that the parents pick a chair to sit on, that they adopt a position that is already there in the environment. The parents' very movement (their choice of activity and movement toward the school) is an activity or event in itself that modifies the environment (Boulanger, 2017a, b). This reflects the bidirectional nature of the Self-environment relationship. To keep it very simple, we can imagine that a teacher adds three chairs at the centre of the school's meeting room to welcome three new parents who arrive late and whose presence was not expected. The room and its chairs (positions) are not pre-organized; the parents' movement creates the reorganization and *restructuring* of the space and generates positions. We can also refer to the *deconstruction* of space, in the case of a teacher removing chairs because only two of the ten parents who were expected actually showed up.

From this perspective, the Self (here the parent) is moving *in* the environment (3). Thanks to the Self's consciousness of its position within the global space, it can move inside the space and personalize it. I note that this phenomenon is understood by Raudsepp (2017) when she refers to positional polyphasia, which leads to social reflexivity through the construction of an image of the "whole" the Self is part of:

Image of the whole is necessary for orientation **in** the field: it enables to locate oneself in relation to others and to grasp the universe of options that are simultaneously offered for meaning making. [...] Representational field acts as an integrated whole and each of its individual participant has some access to this holism. [...] Each position entails specific point of view and hence has specific bias in meta-representations. Imagined representational whole functions as a context of potentialities to any actualized representation: it provides both imagined opposites (polemic representation) and imagined allies (positionally **close but different** representations). Positional polyphasia reflects the ability to *navigate* on various representational field and use collective symbolic resources for solving particular problems in certain relationships to the environment (p. 55).

In addition, *this* holism Rausepp (2017) refers to is not a fixed entity; rather, it is deeply related to the interplay of its parts. To grasp the system's underlying conception, imagine ailerons moving up and down as the plane swiftly flies. You will have the impression that there is a tick mark and a well-structured circle. However, this system (circle) consists of the constant movement of its parts. For this reason, and because the Self is itself a whole (Self as a society), the Self can create its own resources and innovate by moving within a flexible space—changing direction (Raudsepp, 2017)—

inside its periphery (Moreau, 2017; Rosa & Tavares, 2017<sup>13</sup>). This is what Raudsepp (2017) expresses with the concept of semiotic potency (related to intra-positional polyphasia): “A person may guide and constrain himself through a self-selected semiotic system, borrowed *from* the semiosphere. The capacity of semiotic potency creates the flexibility for social agents in relation to social influence” (p. 52).

To borrow an object *from* the environment implies distancing (4), otherwise the Self would remain too attached to the field from which this object was picked. The Self brings the object into itself. For Raudsepp (2017), “[d]istancing is the central operation of semiotic transformation, it is the basis for reflexivity and semiotic potency” (p. 57). This is related to the personal nature of positioning since, Lanaridis explains, “[i]t seems highly unlikely that composer and audience would *share* a common memory-stored musical pattern of emotional significance. [...] Rather, he [Nattiez] regards music as a sign that both composer and listener look at and interpret *in their own unique way*” (pp. 147-148). Not only can the Self distance itself from the environment but also from itself, particularly through a mediational process with the help of a meta-position (Lanaridis, 2017; Moreau, 2017; Raudsepp, 2017; Rosa & Tavares, 2017). This process allows both distance from oneself and from society.

Because the distant Self (e.g., composer and audience) is *still part of society* (Lanaridis, 2017) and because “distancing from the power of a particular system is self-positioning under the influence of some other system” (Raudsepp, 2017, p. 58) in the same global field, distance does not mean that the Self must isolate itself from others. In fact, it is quite the opposite: “The concept makes it possible to detach one’s self from immediate experience and to take into consideration the viewpoint of others through dialogue with other forms of historical experiences” (Moreau, 2017, p. 176). The Self distances itself from both the external environment and the Self’s personal context (its internalized audience and potentially its own personal world) in a way that enables the Self to go beyond what is immediately provided (outside and inside) and to *widen* its field.

The Self enters into dialogue with others through communication streams (Lanaridis, 2017); distance widens the field, leading the Self to meet more people. Imagine a person moving to another country; he or she will meet new people there but also along the way (e.g., at the gas station) between their first and second home, in the liminal zone in-between. The Self can leave a specific representational and positional zone (Raudsepp, 2017) to choose another one (going to another country on the same planet). To this end, the Self selects and creates resources. It does so from the outside or the external environment (distancing from one environment to choose another) as

---

<sup>13</sup> Rosa and Tavares (2017) refer to periphery in this way: “Therefore, a previously central and functional I-position loses its main arguments and other arguments that emerge can *push her out of the central zone* and lead her to a secondary role or a state of ‘hibernation’.”

well as from the inside or its intrapositional field (distanciation from the environment to act more freely and to personalize its relationship with the world).

The bidirectional movements illustrated in Figure 4 represent this dialogical interplay of the Self entering and leaving itself as well as the environment. These bidirectional movements allow the Self to position itself through a constant distancing process. Overall, the participants of this Special Issue don't underscore distance since they refer to a "reprocess" (*repositioning* and *representing*).

*Repositioning* implies changing position. Without distance, in particular distanciation (creating distance), in this process people risk being closed to what lies beyond the immediate local sphere (Boulanger, 2017a). We have to leave the (local) frame in order to *reframe* our position in it. Leaving the frame entails distancing, thus a "de-process." The same logic applies to representing reality. I suggest a "de-process"—*depositioning* and *depresenting* (a concept that I propose)—to highlighting distance (5).

In Figure 4, I show the movement of the Self *leaving* the environment (symbol DE), implying distance, and the Self *returning* to the environment (symbol RE). The former is an essential condition for the latter. To present a reality in our own way (*representing*) makes sense through distance, when the Self goes beyond the local sphere (Boulanger, 2017a). Thus, *depresenting* is a condition of *representing* reality.

Let's push my reflection further by highlighting the bidirectional nature of the Self's relationship with the environment. In Figure 4, the movement associated with the DE is not only the movement of the subject moving out of the environment, but also of *the environment reaching (by being attracted to) for, and possibly entering, the Self by means of internalization* (here, an extension of the second model). While the Self *resists* the environment, the social environment is attracted to the Self and tries to move into the Self (internalization). On the other side, as Selves, the Others also *distance* themselves from the Self, while being attracted to it.<sup>14</sup> The bidirectional movements in Figure 4 entail a hide-and-seek game in which the Self and the (social) environment are *attracted* to each other *through* their mutual *distancing*. Distancing is the counter-force to and condition for social rapprochement. In this way, the Self is never completely alone when it moves!

---

<sup>14</sup> I have to consider here that the Self is the environment of the Others and that the Others is the environment of the Self. The Others can meet the Self (as their social environment) when distancing themselves from their own immediate (external and internal) "local" zone in the same way that the Self can meet the Others when distancing from its own space. Hence, boundary crossing in distanciation dynamic as a condition of social rapprochement. In it in this sense that depositioning and depresenting implies both the Self distancing itself from the "local" environment and the environment of Others reaching for the Self (as far as Others are also part of a depositioning and depresenting dynamic).

## SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

It is here that the Self's "experience of otherness is what is needed to [...] reveal [...] itself to itself" (Moreau, 2017, p. 176). For Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010), depositioning means broadening our horizons. While the participants in this Special Issue generally recognize the importance of distance, depositioning is needed to fully grasp it. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) explain the depositioning process:

First, the specific physical position of the objects and their location in space becomes less dominant (e.g., "I ... was not at all concerned with their positions in space"). [...] Third, this experience cannot be well described in terms of "appropriation" or "ownership." Rather, the experience "comes in" and is received by an open mind ("impressed itself upon my mind"). The experience cannot satisfactorily be described as "mine" (my perception, or my creativity) because this would not give enough weight to the observation that there is a mind participating in a wider field of awareness. In fact, there is a widening and opening of the self with highly permeable boundaries that are not strictly demarcated from the environment (pp. 163-164).

Spatial location becomes relative and the Self is not only internalizing and appropriating reality but is also *receptive*, that is, open and present in the hole (open space) it creates through this openness during distancing dynamic (Figure 4). The Self thus makes *itself present* –as I indicated, distance does not equate *absence*— and not only the object of its own mental "*representation*," while representing an object implies to making it present. This opens the door for praxis and communication. The central aspect here is the suspension of space clarity (Boulanger, 2017*b*), which is to say, the environment's vagueness and open nature (6). An open space is a vague space lying "in-between" (the yellow circle in Figure 4). The Self is not only situated *at* the boundary, it also *moves within an open space*. Think about parents meeting teachers in the community (between school and home), more particularly in the parking lot of the kindergarten where they planned to meet or by accident at the grocery store. The latter is an unexpected zone that contains a surprise effect (Boulanger, 2018*a*). It is here that distanciation, as well as the vague and open nature of space (as created by the Self), makes sense as a condition for the irreversibility of time.

At the beginning of this section, I used the metaphor of children bringing a picture of their parents to summer camp to highlight distance and autonomy of the Self and the environment. A better metaphor could be the following: at the summer camp, children, being between two states (asleep and not yet asleep, thus in a zone of suspension) endow their parents with unexpected characteristics that entail a new ordering (synthesis) of their "elements" and adding new ones in their imagination. This is a kind of "*propresentation*" (I propose this concept) where the Self presents reality to itself by looking at the horizon—through depositioning and derepresenting— beyond its immediate reality like a person in the desert seeing a mirage when looking at the horizon. Here fantasy –sustained in a virtual and possible world in a space of

suspension—meets reality! It opens door to theoretical applications. For instance, endowing people not with fixed traits (classification through fixed and stationary images) but with CHARACTERistics –CHARACTERizing them by giving voices and through concrete gesture like with performing CHARACTERS in the virtual world of theater (Boulanger & Christensen, 2018)— could be part of this process. In this form of presentation (like with theatrical presentation), experience is a central aspect. In this way, the Self’s experience flows in irreversible time.

***Process in irreversible time: The door is still open and the horizon still far.***

Participants in this Special Issue propose many interesting avenues to explore regarding an irreversible conception of time. I summarize with the following elements:

- The analysis of the Self’s positional and representational dynamics in a context of social change (Raudsepp, 2017).
- The continuity and discontinuity of using analogies to create and recreate reality because of its contradictory nature (Moreau, 2017).
- The delay of an anticipated response to music (Lanaridis, 2017).
- The guidance of present-future path (Rosa & Tavares, 2017) through mediation (Rosa & Tavares, 2017; Raudsepp, 2017; Lanaridis, 2017; Moreau, 2017)
- The hidden possibilities (Rosa & Tavares, 2017; Raudsepp, 2017; Boulanger, 2017b).
- The tendency to go beyond the immediate reality through concepts (Moreau, 2017) and directionality (Raudsepp, 2017) in a depositional logic (identified in this conclusion).
- The synthesis of the old and the new (Raudsepp, 2017; Rosa & Tavares, 2017).

And yet, the participant’s efforts are often undermined by emphasizing a reversible conception of time, particularly the entification of reality and the spatialization of time. It is the case, for example, when Boulanger (2017b) refers to possibilities that are hidden *in space*; they are invisible but there, right under the surface, ready to be used instead of being in the process of emerging.

Figure 5 (next page) shows how Bergson (1888) presents the way lay people and scientists generally construct time, in particular a path or trajectory. Imagine a Self *moving from* “M **position**” to “O position,” and then choosing between X *or* Y directions (which became positions when crossed) in a supposedly free manner. Bergson’s point is that such representation or symbolization of a path is static because it involves the spatialization of time, the removal of duration and movement, as well as the depersonalization<sup>15</sup> of the Self in relation to external reality (spatial). The Self

---

<sup>15</sup> The author does not use this specific concept in his explanation.

## SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

constructs such a spatial path when it moves *outside* of itself. So, the researcher blends position and movement. Saying that the Self has a choice between X and Y entails a false conception of freedom because it objectifies that emerging act of choice creation by fixing choices in X or Y. The hesitation—a dynamic that is overlooked by over-



**Figure 5.** Path Construction

emphasizing points or positions X and Y—of the moving Self creates many emerging options (of which X and Y are only two). Moreover, this means that we cannot say that X and Y lie there as possibilities, waiting to be chosen, because this would suppose that the path is constructed (illustrated in Figure 5 by a well-demarked line) either before or after the real trajectory, which is in the process of emerging.

Let's designate these tendencies with X and Y: Will our new notation offer a more accurate idea of “concrete” reality? Note that, as mentioned above, the “I” grows, expands and changes when it moves through the two contrary states; otherwise, how would it ever decide? Therefore there must not be two states as such, but rather a multitude of successive and different states within which I untangle two opposite directions through an imaginative effort (Bergson, 1888, p. 92; loose translation).

The Self constructs X instead of choosing it like a person would choose a chair (position) that is already there (in a precise spatial location). In addition, X does not remain there but flies away like a shooting star that *disappears* and only lives in the Self's active memory. After having constructed X, there is no Y and no possible return to the initial O-X intersection.

The arguments I provide above undermine the very notions of position (as static points abstracted from the flow of irreversible time) and direction. The Self exists and, above all, evolves and endures (*duration*) in irreversible time if it leaves deep down in itself, out of space, in pure duration.

If conscious point A does not yet possess the idea of space [...] the succession of states it goes through could not take on the shape of a line; but these sensations will accumulate dynamically and organize themselves, like the stringed notes of a melody that lulls us. In short, the duration itself could be only a succession of qualitative changes that merge and intertwine, without any specific outline or any inclination toward exteriorizing themselves in relation to one another [...] Duration and movement are mental syntheses rather than things; if the mobile occupies the points along a line, one after the other, movement has nothing in common with this line, then we have removed from this feeling its vibrancy and colour (Bergson, 1888, p. 58; loose translation).

This excerpt shows that sensations overlap in the Self like a rainbow whose colours are not clearly outlined. Here I note the overlapping and vagueness dimensions found in the third model (Figure 4). However, I have presented the overlap as one of the qualitative states of the dynamic movement between the Self and the (social) environment<sup>16</sup>, whereas Bergson only insists upon the former (for a critic of Bergson, see Boulanger, 2017c and Boulanger, 2018b). In Bergson's theory, overlap means that there is no interval that we depict as a hole (Figure 4). As far as present is concerned, intervals are part of the static spatialization of time conceived through a homogeneous *external* reality. For Bergson, people generally abstract time by means of countable moments (moment 1 and moment 2) separated by *empty* intervals. Instead, the author promotes overlapping *internal* duration when tackling the present moment (he recognizes interval elsewhere when delving into distance and future). The third model can therefore complete Bergson's idea.<sup>17</sup> I could find in the hole a rainbow with different colours spreading and possibly overlapping *amidst the internal and the external*.<sup>18</sup>

Bergson (1888) refers to the graceful movement of the dancer to illustrate time's irreversibility. This example allows him to insist on the different qualitative states of the dancer who is living and embodying the idea of duration.

The perception that it is easy to move fuses itself with the pleasure of stopping time, so to speak, and keeping the future in the present. A third element intervenes when graceful movements are accompanied by music and follow a rhythm. Rhythm and tempo improve our ability to anticipate an artist's movements and enable us to imagine ourselves in the artist's shoes (p. 15; loose translation).

---

<sup>16</sup> There is a constant movement between overlapping and breaking the systems' overlapping through distance and Self's and Others' resisting one another).

<sup>17</sup> For him, the external environment (space) is certain and static. However, Boulanger (2017b) shows that it is characterized by holes as signs of uncertainty, which is a secondary but still important dimension in Bergson's theory. I would thus have to reconsider his conception of space.

<sup>18</sup> I would have to refer to open texture and boundary case (Boulanger, 2017b).

## SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

Here, the very tendency to stop time—and to fix it in X and Y positions or directions—is depicted in a dynamic way as it is part of the emerging feeling comprising overlapping sensations. This overlap means precisely that the present flows into the future through emotional and physical sensations. The reference to rhythm is part of Bergson's general tendency to rely on time organization. Here, this spatial concept is used in the logic of time. This is certainly a key element for translating the third model (Figure 4) into irreversible time.

In reference to dance, Bergson also refers to the observer's attraction and sympathy.

Even though it may stop for an instant, our impatient hand cannot keep itself from moving; as if pushing itself, returning itself to the centre of this movement in which the rhythm has taken over our thoughts and willpower. A physical sympathy of sorts enters the feelings of the graceful dancer. Analyzing the appeal of this sympathy, you will see that its similarity to the idea of moral sympathy (which is inconspicuously suggested) pleases you. Moral sympathy, which induces other elements into a sense of comfort, explains the existence of an irresistible attraction to gracefulness. If we could reduce it to an economy of effort, the delight that it kindles would not make sense, as suggested by Spencer. But the truth is that we think we understand gracefulness, including nimbleness (an indication of one's freedom of movement), a sign that a movement toward us is possible, and a virtual or burgeoning sympathy. This physical sympathy, which is always on the verge of being given, is the very essence of superior grace (p. 16; loose translation).

Here, as far as I expand Bergson's ideas, in a way to socialize the Self and consider its embodied nature, I have some very interesting key elements for a theory of intersubjective movement (Figure 4). This would imply putting the third model in dialogue with Bergson.

However, for Bergson (1911), sign, representation, concept and symbols require leaving the Self and imposing on the Self abstract and impersonal categories pertaining to the external *social* world. This implies constantly running around the Self and never catching it, which is analogous to the hide-and-seek game that I suggested earlier (Figure 4). Instead, Bergson (1911) promotes going directly to the original Self, which undermines the very sense of representing reality that entails constructing a version of an object out of the original. For this reason (and because the tendency of the DST to be largely based on a spatialized conception of time), using Bergson's ideas would provide an interesting mediation of the dialogue between the DST and the SRT. Nevertheless, it could also lead us to transcend Bergson (see Boulanger, 2017c, 2018a, b), for example by integrating the symbolic dimension (Valsiner, 2017) or by revisiting some of his concepts (e.g., space). For my purposes, using open texture (Boulanger, 2017b)—which

supposes hesitation—, would make sense of the Bergson-Hermans-Moscovici articulation and bring forth a developmental logic. A good complement would be the concept of depositioning (and derepresentation), which implies a suspension of space referents (central to attaining duration). In these conditions, I could conceive of a “me that lives and evolves along with its hesitations, until the freedom of expression emerges like an over-ripe fruit falls to the ground” (Bergson, 1888, p. 92; loose translation). With respect to these endeavours, some phenomena, like dancing and music (Lanaridis, 2017), seem promising for such an enquiry. So, we could add the time dimension to the spatial model in this paper.

The attentive reader may have noticed that the first and the second models are included in the third.<sup>19</sup> In this respect, the latter is a meta-model entailing the separated Self (inclusive separation, first model) moving into the environment (first model) and the environment moving into the Self (second model) through separation/inclusion. The avenues that should be explored (presented above) could help me to apply this model to irreversible time. But, since any abstraction, use of language and reference to society lead to the depersonalization of the Self (Bergson, 1888, 1907), would I run after the Self in vain or would I reach it? For Bergson, any scientific or common sense act of separation entails a static conception of Self and time. This means removing the Self’s original features (its colours). As far as I conceive inclusive separation in two “steps” for the purpose of my reflection, I can ask what researchers remove when they create an (inclusive) separation and what they add to the individual-environment relationship when they include the individual and the environment. How do researchers *reinsert* an uncertain liminal zone to mediate this relationship? Do they deplete or enhance the Self? Note that saying, like Bergson, that science and common sense implies removing the Self’s colours supposes a spatial conception of Self and time. In effect, it assumes that colours (personal traits) are included in the Self in the form of matter. So, researchers cannot remove the colours, but they can shed *light*—colours being constructed through light—on the Self or leave it in the dark. I hope that this special issue contributes to the former. Considering Bergson’s critique of abstraction and how he prioritizes experience and intuition, maybe the key to getting beyond the participants’ reflection rests on the personal and intuitive experience that is gained from research relative to the object! From a scientific point of view, by letting the authors’ texts resonate in me alongside the dialogical exchange with them and the second editor of this special issue, that I intuitively identified in this conclusion *possible* models that overlap (to the extent that I view the third model as being a meta-model in which the three models overlap). Are these models reflected in the general literature or are they only local cases? Do my own experience and choice make me deviate from sustaining a dialogue between the SRT and the DST? Effectively, by choosing an ecological approach as an asset and a guide for this enquiry, I miss the dialogical dimension that

---

<sup>19</sup> Below, some quick explanations for the non-*attentive* reader to read *attentively*!

## SRT AND DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

the participants themselves should have put a bit further (see for instance Salgado's comment) despite their evident efforts and great contributions.

In all cases, experience and intuition is part of the collective (theoretical) dialogue. I invite readers to see this Special Issue as a contextual and dialogical exercise and to ask themselves where their reality lies between SR and dialogue. Is the Self a dialogue or a representer? Is the Self sustaining dialogue and/or representing reality? Are both reconcilable? Are both suitable to an irreversible conception of time?

### References

- Bergson, H. (1970). *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* [An essay on the immediate data of consciousness] (144<sup>th</sup> ed.). Paris, France: Les Presses universitaires de France. (Original work published 1888)
- Bergson, H. (1959). *L'évolution créatrice* [Creative evolution] (86<sup>th</sup> ed.). Paris, France: Les Presses universitaires de France. (Original work published 1907)
- Bergson (1969). *La pensée et le mouvant. Essais et conférences. Introduction à la métaphysique* [Thought and change. Essays and conferences. Introduction to metaphysics] (79<sup>th</sup> ed.). Paris, France: Les Presses universitaires de France. (Original work published 1911)
- Boulanger, D. (2017a). Extending social representation theory through dialogical self theory: Subjects' and *alter's* relating with space. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 10(2), 9-33).
- Boulanger, D. (2017b). Representing the vagueness within dialogical self: presence and absence of the Object in between self and community. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 10(2), 117-130.
- Boulanger, D. (2017c). Shadow trajectories as undetermined windows: University professors constructing possibilities out of impossibilities "during" general strike. *IV Seminar Culture Psychology* (Workshop). Salvador, Brazil, March 6-9, 2017.
- Boulanger, D. (2018a). *Social representations between home and school*. Kentucky, USA: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Boulanger, D. (2018b) Shadow trajectories during transitions in undetermined conditions. *Culture and Psychology*.
- Boulanger, D. & Christensen, B. (2018 [in press]). Social representations as social forms and aesthetic phenomena: Dialogue between Moscovici and Simmel. In L.

## BOULANGER

- Tateo (Ed.), *An old melody in a new song: Aesthetics and psychology*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Heidmets, M. (1984). Environment as the mediators of human relationships: Historical and ontological aspects. In T. Gärling & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Children within environments: Towards a psychology of accident prevention* (pp. 217–227). New York, NY: Plenum.
- Lanaridis, A. (2017). The narrative function of music in a contemporary society: Designing an empirical approach through dialogical and representational practices of the social self. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 10(2), 139-152
- Lyra, M. C. D. P., & Valsiner, J. (2011). Historicity in development. *Infancia y Aprendizaje*, 34(2), 195–203.
- Moreau, D. (2017). Understanding temporalization by the activity of historical Thinking: Dialogical self theory and social representation theory. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 10(2), 161-184.
- Overton, W. F. (1998). Developmental psychology: Philosophy, concepts, and methodology. In W. Damon (series Ed.) & R. M. Lerner (vol. Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology, Vol. 1, Theoretical models of human development* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; pp. 107–187). New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.
- Raudsepp, M. (2017). Cognitive polyphasia in the context of systemic power and semiotic potency. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 10(2), 45-76.
- Rosa, C., & Tavares, S. (2017). A semiotic-dialogical and sociocultural account on suicide. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 10(2), 85-105
- Salgado, J. (2017). Doing history by telling stories: A dialogical proposal. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 10(2), 185-192.