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***FLATTENING HIERARCHIES? THOUGHTS ON COLLABORATION AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL DIALOGUES THAT CLIENTS MIGHT CONSIDER
SOCIALY JUST***

Tom Strong
University of Calgary (Alberta, Canada)

ABSTRACT. For many psychologists, social justice involves consideration of social and cultural factors worth addressing beyond the immediacies of their dialogues with clients. In this paper, I examine factors relating to the psychologist's often asymmetric participation in dialogues with clients. By asymmetry, I specifically refer to the psychologist's professional authority exercised over meanings and actions to be determined in dialogues with clients. "Flattening the hierarchy" is a colloquial phrase referring to recent developments from collaborative action research and dialogic approaches to therapy. These forms of research and therapy share a social constructionist theoretical perspective, wherein meaning and action is seen as negotiated. This paper raises conceptual resources and actions aimed to promote such negotiations between psychologist and client, and the authority shared in them, in 'flattening hierarchies'.

Once practitioners notice that they actively construct the reality of their practice and become aware of the variety of frames available to them, they begin to see the need to reflect-in-action on their previously tacit frames. (Donald Schön, 1981, p. 311)

Typically, when practicing psychologists talk about social justice they talk beyond the immediacies of their dialogues with clients. Their focus tends to be on unjust social realities beyond the consulting room and what can be done about those realities. Codes of ethics point to psychologists' responsibilities for addressing social injustices, and people entering helping professions like psychology commonly share a value of contributing to more socially just lives for others. Within the profession, psychologists have taken huge strides to expand and enhance their helpfulness to people of non-dominant cultural groups, and they regulate themselves to ensure professional expectations for socially just practice are upheld. So, as judgments about the process and focus of professional-client dialogue develop in ways that are increasingly the prerogative of psychologists, I will use this paper to reflect upon potential social justice issues arising from the exercise of this prerogative. I will refer to "flattening therapeutic dialogue's hierarchies" and offer some conceptual resources I hope readers find useful.

AUTHORS' NOTE. This originally served as a background paper for a presentation given as part of the symposium *Ethical Issues For Psychologists In Addressing Social Justice* at the 11th European Congress of Psychology Conference, Oslo, July 9, 2009. Special thanks to Helen Massfeller, Jean Pettifor, Olga Sutherland and the University of Calgary. Please address correspondence regarding to Tom Strong,

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Socially just psychological dialogues in the postmodern era

There is no metalanguage. There are only genres of language, genres of discourse. (Jean-Francois Lyotard, 1985)

Given psychologists' concerted efforts in identifying and addressing social justice issues, the concerns of critical psychologists (e.g., Prilleltensky, 1994; Rose, 1990) about socially unjust psychological practice can seem heavy handed, if not unfair. Psychologists have generally turned to their science to inform developments in practice, but the starting place - in areas such as multicultural competence, learning disabilities, or organizational human resource policies - has been psychologists' sense of right and wrong. Such developments demonstrate how psychologists listen carefully to the people they help, and then turn their scientific and ethical efforts toward addressing what they have heard and understood as unjust. The concerns of critical psychologists tend to focus on other developments, especially on the language and science used (e.g., Danziger, 1997; Gergen, 1982) and what follows from this use (Rose, 1990).

Knowledge and expertise have recently become suspect terms, particularly as these terms have been used in the social sciences and their applications (Collins & Evans, 2009). A critical assault on psychological science and its applications has been under way for some time (e.g., Bayer & Shotter, 1998; Cushman, 1995; Foucault, 2008; Harré & Secord, 1972; Wittgenstein, 1953). The primary thrust of these concerns is that the presumed neutrality of language and the methods of natural science are crude, if not inappropriate, as warrants for acquiring and applying expert psychological knowledge. Such concerns are amplified as psychologists increasingly adopt a medical stance on practice (Wampold, 2008). But, the still-dominant view, articulated by David Barlow (2009) at a recent Canadian Psychological Association convention, is that psychological science has almost eliminated the need for schools of therapy, enabling therapy to converge on a few evidence-supported conversational scripts. Barlow was renewing a quintessential modern psychological promise: that concerns can be correctly diagnosed and treated in basic algorithms of practice (Rush, 2001) - a promise that can be either deeply satisfying or concerning depending on one's point of view.

Translated to the dialogues psychologists have with clients this concern or satisfying promise cues up very different ways of conversing with clients (Anderson, 1997). From a modern expert stance, the psychologist typically manages therapeutic dialogue while the client's role translates to one of information provider, recipient of expert psychological knowledge, and enactor of psychologist directives. Client resistance, by this account, is tantamount to a failure to live up to this presumed cultural or institutional contract. To psychologists who practice dialogically, from a critical or

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social constructionist approach, ‘resistance’ amounts to a failure by psychologists to work within clients’ preferences, life contexts, and abilities (de Shazer, 1984). The key difference comes down to how psychologists flexibly or inflexibly respond to clients in therapeutic dialogues (Strong, 2008). Some of that flexibility or inflexibility relates to how one views using psychological knowledge in therapeutic dialogues. While the dominant thrust has been toward standardizing psychologists’ use of evidence-based, manualized conversational protocols, a sizable minority of psychologists (e.g., psychodynamic, narrative, feminist, family) shares judgments about therapy’s conversational processes and meanings *with* clients. I characterize sharing such judgments in therapy as ‘flattening the conversational hierarchy’.

Constructing therapeutic roles, problems and client-psychologist dialogues

For the constructionist words are themselves a form of social practice and it is imperative that these practices not remain closeted in the house of privilege (Gergen, 1999, p. 142).

To this point I have been arguing that it is largely how psychology has constructed its terms - like therapy, therapist, client, client problems, solutions – that positions clients and psychologists in hierarchical relations, or not. A particular mechanistic “root metaphor” (Pepper, 1977) has guided psychology’s development, furnishing a corresponding scientific vocabulary (Danziger, 1997) and applications. For most psychologists, this root metaphor and its vocabulary have succeeded in framing not only most of psychology’s knowledge and interventions, but the dialogues in which such knowledge and interventions are seen to be “transmitted and received” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). When combined with institutional, legal and administrative expectations, such a view actualizes a standardizable and rationally accountable approach to psychological practice (Reid & Silver, 2002). For critical psychologists, for whom reality is understandable in more than such standardizable ways, such an approach can actualize a particular neo-liberal, ideological view and practice of life (Prilleltensky, 1994).

Understandably, psychologists bristle at the notion that they might be practicing in ways that others could construe as ideological. This is despite a couple of generations’ of criticism from feminists and non-Euro-Americans about feeling excluded from mainstream psychology’s understandings of and treatments for “mankind”. Missing has been a sense of what is unaccounted when psychologists engage with peoples’ otherness that they cannot predict or address with their definitions and prescriptions. Taking up this criticism, and dialogic or social constructionist linguistic insights (from thinkers such as Bakhtin, 1984; Foucault, 2008; Gadamer, 1988; and Wittgenstein, 1953), has been an expanding group of therapists (e.g., Anderson, 1997; Seikkula & Arnkil, 2006; White & Epston, 1990) and researchers (e.g.,

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Reason & Bradbury, 2001) who see human language use as inescapably diverse – and *negotiable*.

A stance, where the language of psychological interaction might be negotiable – in words and ways of talking agreeable to both client and psychologist – can be a departure from a stance where such language use is determined according to the psychologist's prerogatives. At first glance, this may seem a call for linguistic anarchy or an abdication of professional responsibility. But, a different conception of what it means to be a client, of what talking and listening accomplishes, and of what passes for authority or expertise is found in an increasing number of therapeutic approaches (e.g., Anderson, 1997; Duncan and Miller, 2000; Gergen, 2006; Seikkula & Arnkil, 2006). By this stance, clients and therapists engage in dialogic activities (White & Epston, 1990) wherein clients are invited to critically reflect upon and revise meanings and practices en route to resuming authority (in Sennett's, 1981, sense), over their lives.

Contestable meanings and practices?

...who is to fix the 'rights of knowledge' and the limits of the pursuit of knowledge? And can these rights and limits indeed be fixed? (Antonio Gramsci, 2000, p. 341)

In Paulo Freire's pedagogy (e.g., 1996), a sure way to stay colonized is to passively live according to the colonizer's language. To psychology's credit it has long been sensitive and responsive to this kind of critique despite spokespeople like David Barlow celebrating the seeming imminence of a standardized language of and approach to practice. Some might want to dismiss the point I am raising as trifling over semantics. As narrative therapists (e.g., White & Epston, 1990) point out the words used to name problems evoke very different stories and performances of life. Many psychologists, for locating problems *inside* people, can be dismissive of clients' experiences of social injustice, but they can also prescribe their words in ways that can estrange clients from their 'local' words and ways of knowing (Hermans, 2004; Weingarten, 1992). This is not to suggest that narrative therapists wouldn't invite critical reflection on those local words and ways of knowing, as a step toward understandings and actions clients deem as viable and preferred. For the philosopher, Wittgenstein (1953) what matters are "perspicuous representations", the best language people decide that they can put to experience. Thus, deciding what words or ways of talking are "best" is not something psychologists can decide *for* clients.

For Russian literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin (e.g., 1984), dialogue is where people creatively understand each other by reconciling their use of words, together, and in accord with the prior uses of such words by others. In this manner, speakers bring their interpretive histories in using words to any dialogic exchange, and it is their differences over such words that bring dialogues to life (Hermans & Kempen, 1993).

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Social constructionist or narrative therapy practitioners often raise concerns about the dangers of meanings that have gone stale, lost their aptness, or that lose their negotiability (e.g., Riikonen & Madan Smith, 1997). Consistent, for these practitioners, are concerns about people living by language that has closed down adaptive possibilities. Accordingly, what matters for them are dialogues that keep words alive without foreclosures on meaning (Butler, 1997). Psychologists, by this account, cannot solely be accountable for such words. Indeed, what keeps Bakhtin's notions of dialogue creative and alive are speakers negotiating how they go forward together in a *shared* language (Honneth, 1995).

In stark contrast to the alive and negotiated dialogues I have been describing, David Rennie (1994) found that clients, even in client-centered therapy, often simply deferred to their therapists, to be 'good clients'. Clients clearly have a thought or two about what they want from therapeutic dialogue (see Duncan and Miller's, 2000, "heroic client") yet such thoughts, if expressed, could be heard as "resistance" (deShazer, 1984; Proctor, 2002) by many therapists. What does it mean then for psychologists to negotiate their dialogues with clients, when they have been used to thinking they manage such dialogues themselves? For starters, it means that they responsively open themselves to client resistance, as legitimate input on the choice of words or ways of talking in the therapeutic dialogue. Such resistance is seen as a cornerstone of discourse ethics by thinkers like Judith Butler (1997) or Axel Honneth (1995). Bottom line, such an approach to negotiating the dialogic process and content with clients involves avoiding impositions of meaning, a willingness to engage with clients' meanings, and an openness to arrive at and converse by mutually acceptable meanings (Strong & Sutherland, 2007; Weingarten, 1992). Conversational hierarchies are antithetical to such dialogic negotiations.

Negotiating Helpful and Psychologically Just Dialogues with Clients

If we privilege either side of a dialogue, we miss the point. (E. E. Sampson, 1993, p. 187)

Suggesting that dialogues with clients be seen and undertaken as negotiable can seem antithetical to psychologists given their considerable training and ethical obligations. When proposed as an ethic of practice (e.g., Anderson, 1997; Seikkula & Arnkil, 2006) concerns about expertise arise; specifically, whose should count. This is where some old metaphors of practice and communication for psychology can come up short (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980): people need to not be seen as computational transmission/reception devices (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986); client resistance is neither unhealthy or a failure to comply with a static contract (Bohart, 2000); and therapy itself need not be nailed down in tight scripts or monologues of practice (Anderson, 1997; Strong, 2008). Fortunately, established traditions within psychology and psychotherapy

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regarding collaborative accomplishments and dialogic relations (Billig, 1996; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Pollard, 2008; Sampson, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991) offer more relationally grounded metaphors of self, knowledge, and dialogic processes consistent with the views advanced in this paper. By these accounts, humans are anything but encapsulated and self-directing individuals who selfishly act but somehow still coexist. Proposed instead is a social ontology where the languages and processes by which people live are socially and culturally permeated and negotiated in macro- and micro-social ways (Billig, 1996; Hermans & Kempen, 1993). What is to be negotiated and optimized are languages and social processes people, such as clients and psychologists, will use, paraphrasing Wittgenstein (1953), in going on together.

Micro-analyses show ample evidence of these negotiations occurring between client and therapist, along with what gets accomplished in those negotiations (Perakyla, Antaki, Vehvilanen, & Leudar, 2008; Roy-Chowdhury, 2006; Strong, Busch, & Couture, 2008). Phrases like “negotiated accomplishments in dialogue” suggest that the words used by clients and therapists in the conversational turns of therapy be taken seriously. I am not suggesting that eureka or ‘aha’ moments hinge on such turn-taking irrespective of factors beyond the immediacies of therapeutic dialogues. However, if therapeutic dialogue is to be taken seriously (an increasing challenge in an era where psychopharmacology is seen to be on the rise, see Lakoff, 2007), then attention to what transpires that makes a therapeutic difference is needed. How linguistic differences are welcomed, critically reflected upon, negotiated, and collaboratively transformed seems important (Lyotard, 1988; Pollard, 2008). Good dialogue, as writers like Bakhtin (1984) and Gadamer (1988) have suggested, is transformative for both speakers: in the present case, client *and* therapist. Simply mapping clients’ words on to the therapist’s discourse, to be translated into therapist-prescribed understandings and actions, can, from the dialogic perspective just mentioned, be seen as a form of “conversational hijacking” (Strong, 2008). The challenge for dialogic therapists is to become engaged in an influential “interweave” (Ferrara, 1994) of discourse shaped by clients’ words and their own.

I have been suggesting a very different mode of participation in dialogue than has been the norm for psychologists. It involves seeing therapeutic dialogues, and the words used within them, performed (cf, Austin, 1962; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Strong, 2006) in ways that can be consequential for how clients and psychologists talk their ways forward. Seen as exchanges of computational information relayed by an objective expert, such words are meant to flip cognitive switches not elicit or evoke whole body resonances or visceral disagreements. Thus, it is easy for one to put any problematic effects of such transmissions of information down to ‘receiver issues’ while insisting on the informational value of what was transmitted. But, inside the conversational realities of people’s relationships (therapy being one) an embodied and responsive kind of “facework” (Goffman, 1967) typically is at stake. People don’t just say anything to each

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other, regardless of the professional platform they might see themselves as speaking from.

Working alliances and non-hierarchical dialogues?

In response to an earlier draft of this paper I was reminded that there has been a considerable literature on the quality of client-therapist relationships; most notably, dating back to Carl Rogers' (1961) pioneering work. The dialogic writings of Hermans offer a contemporary perspective on the different discursive positions that client and therapist can engage from as they converse, with particular focus on therapist positioning. The most cited research on therapeutic relationships pertains to the 'working alliance' and its measurement (e.g., Horvath & Symonds, 1991; Horvath & Bedi, 2001). The emphases across these writings tend to be on what therapists bring to their relationship with clients; how they manage the therapeutic dialogue *for* clients.

In the case of Rogers' work, his focus – partly informed by his interactions with Martin Buber – was on what therapists bring as qualities to the therapeutic dialogue (congruence, genuineness, empathy), or what he referred to as 'facilitative conditions' (1961). While there is an openness and non-directedness to Rogers' conversational practice, his focus was on 'client-centered' conversations, through therapist qualities that elicit and privilege what had gone problematically unspoken for clients. Operationalized, these qualities have been translated to a discrete focus on performing micro-skills (Ivey, Gluckstern, & Ivey, 1997). At worst this micro-skills focus emphasizes an instrumental side to therapy that could come at the expense of responsiveness to clients. To converse non-hierarchically, therapist and client need to be jointly influential on how their dialogue proceeds, and not just according to a particular therapist conception of that dialogue.

In the writing of Hermans and his colleagues (Hermans, 2001; Hermans & DiMaggio, 2004; Hermans & Kempens, 1993; Lysaker & Lysaker, 2001) one is brought to a more postmodern and complex notion of dialogue. Gone is the humanist sense one finds in Rogers of there being a single, true client voice seeking authentic expression in good therapeutic dialogue. Instead one finds in this writing reference to a Bakhtinian polyphony of voices or discursive positions within individuals and arising between them. Dialogue, viewed this way, involves articulating and coordinating relevant dialogic selves and voicings of therapists and clients, a dialogic management challenge of collaboratively moving forward for therapists. Flexible therapist meta-positioning is advocated (Hermans, 2004), to remain cognizant of and responsive to client voiced positions as they are evoked and/or invited. Of central interest is a responsive dialogue that welcomes and extends a dialogic interplay of differently voiced positions: those of therapist and client, and those found within the inner dialogues of the client (e.g., Lysaker & Lysaker, 2006). Thus, staying constructively in therapeutic dialogue, through the therapist's discursive flexibility in dialogically engaging the client's voiced

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positions, is key to such an approach. Where narrative therapists, such as Winslade (2005) refer somewhat monolithically to a therapist's discursive positioning, Hermans and Hermans-Jansen (2004) refer more expansively and relationally, to 'coalitions of positions and shifting loyalties in the self'. The importance of Hermans' dialogic view to what I have been calling "flattening hierarchies" rests with the dynamic positioning of the therapist in engaging with clients' changing positions in responses that go well beyond a Rogerian privileging of particular client monologues.

The research on therapeutic relationships seems to be still catching up with these kinds of dialogic developments, with most therapists (e.g., Cormier and Nurius, 2003) taking the view that the client is the articulator of therapy's goals while therapists are the managers of the therapeutic dialogue. In the case of the working alliance, the focus on the relationship tends to be global, on the overall quality of the relationship with respect to client evaluations of the therapist with respect to working on shared goals, agreed to tasks, and an emotional bond between client and therapist (Horvath & Symonds, 1991). These general areas of practical focus are consistent with the non-hierarchical dialogues promoted here, though a further element of therapeutic dialogue can be obscured by such global measures: therapist responsiveness to clients in the immediacies of conversational turn-taking. Such responsiveness equates to a therapist's discursive flexibility to improvise beyond the professional platforms and familiar discourses afforded by their role and therapeutic model, in ethical ways.

Beyond differends, monologues and divergent narratives?

Discourse analyst, Deborah Tannen (1998), decried our expanding "argument culture". Relational therapists frequently find themselves addressing client concerns over whose position should matter most for the couple or family in going forward. The same can happen when therapists present an understanding or prescription that clients don't want to take up. At issue here are the kinds of differences in position that become non-negotiable, that break down into Lyotard's (1988) differends, or into diverging narrative streams that find no confluence. In institutional settings, like those where therapy is typically performed, dialogue tends to have an institutional or professional skew (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). At the same time, clients now come with increased expectations for their roles in therapy, and for taking away from therapy what they alone find useful (e.g., Duncan & Miller, 2000). At worst, therapists and clients can find themselves talking in monologues past each other, or conflicting over how to proceed.

What is generative about human interaction is the way such potential differences are reconciled into acceptable syntheses, or, 'ways of going on together' (Wittgenstein, 1953). But for such syntheses, or ways of going on together to occur, the people involved need to be predisposed to engage with each other's differences and be at least partly changed by them (Gadamer, 1988; Kelso & Engstrom, 2006). In her PhD research Couture (2005) examined the conversational moves and resources used by

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family therapist, Karl Tomm, as he worked with an adolescent and his parents, after the adolescent had been discharged from a psychiatric unit, following a suicide attempt. The son and father had locked themselves into complementary but conflicting positions over a suicide contract that had been developed with the son as part of his discharge back to the family. Tomm's positioning, as he alternatively engaged with father and son, was to welcome each position, and then extend and negotiate the positions, en route to re-opening a negotiation of dialogue between the father and son that had not been possible when their positions, and how they engaged from them, promoted heated arguments. The full discussion, examined using conversation analysis, is well beyond the scope of this paper, but Tomm's dialogic efforts focused on seeking what might be negotiable between father and son, without taking an expert position of his own on what the clients should do or see as negotiable. As potential areas of negotiability came from his questions and responses – responses given to Tomm but overheard by the son or father who was not immediately engaged – the positions softened. This enabled Tomm to invite new forms of dialogue between father and son that came to eventually enable them to move forward together in a more shared position.

In a related fashion, Lysaker and Lysaker (2006) conceptualize schizophrenia as barren, cacophonous, or monologically impoverished narratives (positions) occurring within clients' inner dialogues. For each of these impoverished client narratives they suggest particular conversational interventions for therapist to use in engaging with such client presentations in therapy. Their recommendations are made with an ear to helping clients restore a sense of narrative flow where impasses, such as differends (in the case of cacophonous narratives), have occurred. Particular to their conversational interventions are flexible modes of dialogic engagement that aim to engage clients' forward moving narration where it had been stuck.

Flattened Hierarchies – Relationally Responsive Stories in the Making

Humanity is not captured in common denominators – it sinks and vanishes there. The morality of the moral subject does not, therefore, have the character of a rule. One may say that the moral is what *resists* codification, formalization, socialization, universalization. The moral is what remains when the job of ethics... has been done. (Zygmunt Bauman, 1993, p. 54)

“Flattening the hierarchy” as I am referring to it denotes ethical dialogues based on an acknowledgment that clients will do with therapists' words what they will anyway – including ignoring them (Rennie, 1994). Bauman, author of the lead quote above, is taking a broadside at what psychologists typically cite as their ethical grounds for a hierarchical relationship of expertise with clients: evidence derived from normative social science. I have been referring to participating in the immediacies of dialogue in ways that defy such normative predictions. Normatively predictable therapy,

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ostensibly, is the ratio-technical pipedream of psychologists enamoured with scripted, evidence-based, practice, such as David Barlow (2009). Presumably, the clients' role is to take up assigned parts within this psychologist-directed monologue.

In non-hierarchical dialogues people can say to each other things like “wait a minute” or haggle over wording until they and their conversational partner get words right – in *their* estimation. Given that psychologists are seen to hold culturally and institutionally privileged roles to begin with, welcoming clients' disagreeableness, their corrections, and their editorial say on the content and process of therapeutic dialogues, can run counter to what clients expect. But, despite such traditional expectations, psychologists cannot expect to be able to speak *for* clients (cf, Alcoff, 1992) either. Perhaps counter-intuitively, given what I have written thusfar, I propose some constructive ways this hierarchical expectation can be used – to invite traditional therapy's deconstruction: namely, its roles, and manners of participation (Parker, 1999). Through such invited dialogues unconsidered conversational spaces and possibilities can be opened up.

A different language is required to describe the kind of dialogic practice I have associated with “flattening the hierarchy”. Since language is the negotiated resource and medium by which processes and outcomes are accomplished in this approach to therapy, a dialogic conception of meaning and action is required. Discourse analysis and discourse theory has offered much to this way of understanding practice (e.g., Edwards & Potter, 1992; Perakyla, et al, 2008; Strong, 2006): questions can be seen as invitations for clients to speak from unfamiliar discursive positions or ways to control the interview (Wang, 2006), therapist responses to what clients say can possibly ‘thicken’ particular accounts of experience (White & Epston, 1990), or words might be collaboratively put to formerly inchoate, but strongly felt, experiences (Shotter & Katz, 1999). What matters is what clients do with therapists' questions (and therapist responses) to what they say. Seen in the manner suggested by Duncan and Miller (2000), therapy is an opportunity for therapists to help clients articulate and enact personalized solutions, in *clients'* language and according to client preferences and resources. Others have related to this approach to therapy as improvised in ways that keeps meanings dynamic (Newman, 2000). The last say on what is taken from therapy is the client's anyway; so these therapists responsively attune their use of language to engage with clients' language, taking great lengths to explicitly invite clients' editorial decisions on dialogically going forward. Thus, a key tenet in dialogical approaches to therapy involves inviting clients contesting or improving on the inadequate language they might otherwise live by (Butler, 1996; Honneth, 1995; Strong & Sutherland, 2007). This extends to the therapist's language, and hopefully a therapist's openness to having their language agreeably improved upon, from the client's perspective. Basically, dialogic communication is an unending concatenation of responses without any final say ever being arrived at (Linell, 2001). Therapists can, however, presume to have the last say on

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therapy's developments even though this may drive clients' thoughts and language underground (Rennie, 1994).

'Final' Thoughts on Extending a Dialogue on Flattening Hierarchies

What is wrong, blatantly wrong, with putting System and Categories first is that to do so misconstrues the nature of ethical responsibility and in effect helps to diminish it. It is the individual that is responsible and he is so with respect to what is singular not universal. (Arne Vetlesen, 1997, p. 12)

Throughout this paper I have proposed an ethics of psychological practice wherein the dialogue between therapist and client has no hierarchy. This is not to suggest that therapists defer to the client, or vice versa. Instead, a flattened hierarchy of dialogue implies a different ethics, conception and practices through which the conversational work of therapy gets done (Gergen, 2006). Vetlesen's concern above relates to expectations that translate, in the present case, to fitting clients' words into psychological monologues where the language and ways of talking have already been decided. Given that psychotherapy's progress is often depicted as needing to converge on scientifically warranted understandings and ways of practice (Barlow, 2009) concerns like Vetlesen's are warranted. Flattening therapeutic dialogue's hierarchy is not intended as a prescription, but has been proposed in ways I hope highlight unconsidered dimensions of collaboration and social justice – namely, shared decision-making (or authority) on therapy's process and understandings – for dialogues psychologists have with 'their' clients.

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**DIALOGUE: WHERE LANGUAGE MEETS ACTIVITY.
AN ESSAY REVIEW OF *LANGUAGE AS DIALOGUE - FROM RULES TO
PRINCIPLES OF PROBABILITY* BY EDDA WEIGAND (2009).**

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The Urge for a New Perspective

Language as Dialogue is a book with a strong voice. It is Edda Weigand's voice, arguing for a decisively different understanding of language. The difference of this understanding lies in that it takes seriously the perspective of language as activity, that viewpoint which came into sight with the pragmatic turn in linguistics in the 1970s. Taking this perspective seriously means to go beyond the limits of the sentence into the conversational exchange itself, and beyond the pure addition of another speaker. Taking another speaker into consideration cannot be the point of the so called dialogic turn for Weigand, a turn associated with the field of dialogue analysis, conversation analysis, or discourse analysis. The point cannot be only to investigate dialogic material while retaining the old structural ideas about language and its use. Against this, Weigand's proposal puts forward a functional view, permitting the language phenomenon actually to be embedded in human activities, to be a genuine activity: with purposes, relating the actors and their activities, making them meaningful for the specific world they share.

As this book reflects, Weigand's work of the last decades has been the quest for this step into dialogue, for the shift from structure to function.¹ It leads her to move beyond the dichotomy of competence and performance, so deeply rooted within linguistics since Chomsky. This dichotomy was continued within the pragmatic framework in linguistics: the competence with its ideal, well-formed structure or pattern is still supposed to underlie the more or less chaotic performance; it is then the pragmaticists' task to uncover the rules, to reach for the well-formed patterns in order to explain what actually happens. Weigand denies the existence of such a competence, and, consequently, acknowledges the “chaotic” of the performance – this is nothing but the complexity of actual language activity, made out of chaos and order, and reaching beyond rules and patterns. Human communicative competence, as Weigand calls it, is thus “not a closed mathematical or logical system. It is an open system with various

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¹ For German readers note that *Language as Dialogue* (2009) is *not* a translation of Weigand's book *Sprache als Dialog* (2003).

parameters interacting in such a way that they do not always exactly fit together” (p. 169).² Thus, the system of human communicative competence is open-ended, and it is precisely in accepting such open points that it is able to “offer the possibility of coping with the infinity and diversity of the communicative worlds of the interlocutors” (p. 169).

Leaving behind the structural paradigm for a functional one as well as re-conceiving the duality of competence and performance, corresponds to a new stance in linguistics, a stance with far reaching consequences. Language rules are not the primary concept, but the wholeness of the language action as performed is; hence, *interlocutors* themselves rather than abstract rules give sense and meaning to language performances. This leads Weigand to advocate for a “humanized linguistics,” a “human linguistics”. Language becomes here “a kind of human behaviour, not an object of philology or natural science”, and therefore, “linguistics consequently has to be defined as a human science which describes and explains what human beings are doing when they try to negotiate their positions in social communities” (p. 281). Weigand aims at a true change for her discipline: “Linguistics has to be redefined as a human science which takes account of the specific conditions of human behaviour” (p. 293).

Language as Dialogue is clearly an important and necessary book for all scholars who are interested in going beyond the monologism still prevailing in language sciences, regardless of the quantity of dialogues actually investigated. This volume belongs to similar attempts in constructing a fundamental dialogic conception for the investigation of language as to be found for instance in Markovà and Foppa (1990), Linell (1998, 2009), as well as O'Connell and Kowal (2003) and O'Connell, et al. (1990). However, it is noticeable that Weigand does not refer to any one of these scholars. She has developed her stance within the field of research starting from classical speech act theory, and developing into dialogue analysis, conversation or discourse analysis belonging to a specific linguistic community. Precisely this focus on a field devoted explicitly to dialogue makes it clear that it is indeed not sufficient to investigate dialogues per se in order to be “dialogic”.

The book is therefore important and necessary from a linguistic perspective. But beyond this specific disciplinary interest, it belongs to a wider actual effort in human sciences aiming at constructing a dialogical conception of human activities, be they verbal or non-verbal or concerned with the self, consciousness, thinking, or speaking and listening (Bertau, 2008; Lipari, 2010; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Riemslagh, 2011; Bertau, Gonçalves & Raggatt, 2011). Weigand herself addresses the necessity to go beyond particular disciplinary interests and stresses the challenge “to go beyond a separate area of dialogue by embedding dialogue analysis within the analysis of human action in general” (p. 338). Dialogic approaches to human activities cannot

² All page citations refer to Weigand (2009) unless otherwise noted.

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ignore the means of language, a means so pervasive within human activity. Thus, scholars in the human sciences have to be concerned about an adequate *dialogic* theory of language. Hence, Weigand's work is another contribution to dialogism – in this case from a linguistic perspective.

Saying that Weigand's voice is a strong one is not just a nice metaphor or just a twinkle to those dialogicists who address the concept of voice. Indeed, it is a salient characteristic of this book that its author speaks clearly, urging its readers to look at possible positions, to make decisions, and to recognize the consequences in so doing. To this gesture belongs her explicit critique of scholars within the dialogical approach (e.g., pp. 74-75, 80-86), and suggestions about “the right way” to investigate language use. The aim of this gesture is that basic shift in perspective mentioned above: a fundamental reversion which takes the complex, or the whole rather than some abstracted essentials as the starting point for analysis:

“Language used by human beings can neither be represented as abstract competence nor as totally irregular performance. Linguists who try to find the way from abstract competence to performance are the victims of a methodological fallacy: there is no bridge from artificial constructs to performance. Human beings orient themselves in performance according to a complex ability which I called *competence-in-performance* [...] The scientific challenge then results from the fundamental methodological issue of how to address the complex. If we try to tackle the complex – which is more than the addition of pieces – *we must start from the right point, i.e. from the whole.*” (Weigand, 2009, p. 202)

Thus, *Language as Dialogue* reads like a kind of manifesto. This is not a disadvantage, rather, its clear positioning and addressivity is an opportunity for the reader to seriously think about the issue of language in use, beyond a seemingly neutral description of seemingly obvious facts about it, transporting an unsaid and taken-for-granted ideology about language. Because the book is so clearly positioned and positioning, it is interesting to look briefly at what I want to call its vocal structure.

The silent framing voice is Weigand's own one, as the series editor of *Dialogue Studies (DS)* at John Benjamins, Publisher. The first perceivable voice in the book is Sebastian Feller's, its editor, writing the introduction to the whole book as well as short introductory pieces to each of the volume's three major parts and a brief conclusion. Each part contains six to seven articles from different years (ranging from 1990 to 2007), grouped under the heading of the parts that address “communicative competence” from different perspectives. Hence, the volume amounts to a collection of articles, leading the readers through Weigand's thinking of language as dialogue through roughly two decades. Feller is one of Weigand's former graduate assistants who “always attended her lectures” (p. 2). His short introductions to each part are meant as summaries and comments on the articles presented. In the general introduction the

reader finds a clear institutional-personal positioning of Weigand, introducing her as a great person and scholar whose voice Feller has heard for years. It is a listening voyage, the witnessed development of her work and ideas that is now offered to the reader in order to share it. I think that this procedure has the function of clearly positioning Weigand's work from another's perspective. This allows the double-voicedness of both speaking oneself and being commented upon, thus reinforcing the position to be defended and affirmed. This procedure shows how difficult it is for the scientific position advanced in this book to be accepted by the linguistic community. By its vocal structure, also supported by the extra references of Weigand's publications, the book amounts to a homage to her whole scholarly career.

That Weigand's voice is so present is also due to the origins of the articles: they are often oral pieces, such as plenary speeches and lectures, some of them subsequently edited in journals or books. This gives the book a specific form which, in turn, gives way to specific reading possibilities. It is a form located nearby the spoken word, suitable to the book's content as contribution to a fundamental discussion within linguistics, and open to further discussions. Further, the developmental pathway of Weigand's thinking becomes quite clear, although the arrangement of the articles – ranging from 1990 to 2008 – is not strictly chronological. It becomes clear precisely because the reader will find herself/himself examining the same topic in different articles, but rephrased, put in a different way and in relation to a different context of ideas. There are, due to the form chosen for the volume, unavoidable repetitions. Nevertheless, the form allows the reader to understand what Weigand aims at and means in cycles of “redundancy” – reading again the same ideas differently, thus experiencing a useful redundancy so that understanding builds up like a mosaic. In this way, the book invites a heuristic, a search-and-find reading, starting with topics or with words found in the index, or going through a whole part.³ This could be a difficulty for students, but this can also turn into an advantage, just because, as mentioned, Weigand does not take a seemingly natural position to language but defends a specific one. It also makes clear to beginners that thinking is a long and sometimes tedious journey, a development and not a dogma, not an inevitable result. Hence, the articles are rightly labeled as essays.

A Dialogical Theory

Taking up the challenge opened up by the pragmatic and then the dialogic turn, Weigand does not stay satisfied with some dialogic material to investigate, but with insistence asks for the object of conversation: “what sort of object is the dialogic one?” (p. 72), she asks for a theoretical framework as adequate instrument to dialogical

³ Although the whole book is well organized and presented, there is one important tool missing: a name index. This would have been a good instrument especially in regard to Weigand's critique of other scholars.

investigations, and thus for some basic criteria and principles grounding “serious analysis” and constituting the specific dialogic approach. This questioning is grounded in the basic gesture of “going beyond” mere structural and formal addition, and into wholeness, with the idea of addressing the complexity of language use, of preserving its complexity. This means a refusal to fragment language use into pieces which can only result in a monologic view of language which addresses the perspective of the speaker alone and isolates his/her *sentence* from its conversational context. Thus, a fragmentation of language use into pieces (single sentences) cannot address a *directed utterance*, that is, utterances directed to *someone*. An interdependence between individual speech acts becomes for Weigand the necessary assumption and the point to start with (p. 33).

The “genuine dialogic criterion” is – against the structural-isolating view – “an internal functional one” that assigns an utterance in a certain formal position a specific function (p. 74). Purposefulness of human activities is the leading notion here, specifically, the general communicative purpose of interlocutors coming to an understanding (p. 268).⁴ This gives way to the functionality of individual linguistic acts. Purposefulness is also what leads communication *beyond* patterns and rules into the above mentioned open-endedness: following an emergent view, Weigand agrees with Clark (1996) that “conversations are purposive but unplanned” (p. 269), so “the dialogic sequence is not calculable in advance but *emerges*” (p. 274).

Thus, “the purposes of linguistic action are always dialogic-oriented purposes” (p. 30), and the resulting dialogic interaction is based on acting and reacting. Acting corresponds to making a claim, and reacting corresponds to fulfilling that claim. The first speaker's act, and the second speaker's reaction constitute the founding sequence, what Weigand calls the “dialogic action game” as a two-step performance which gives the utterances a functional meaning. This functional meaning of the utterance is to be either initiative or reactive. Thus, utterances show themselves to be interrelated, and this *interrelatedness* of the utterances is constitutive for their dialogicality. Weigand distinguishes four types of minimal action games: REPRESENTATIVE, DIRECTIVE, EXPLORATIVE and DECLARATIVE, a taxonomy of speech acts on a first fundamental level (p. 57). Dialogue is thus a functional concept, not abstractable from purposeful human activity (p. 64), and the action game is a cultural unit, determined by its interactive purpose; it is a notion akin to Wittgenstein's language game, although slightly different (p. 271).⁵

⁴ See also the ten premises pp. 271-272.

⁵ “I use the term *action game* in this open, variable sense in which Wittgenstein also has introduced his term ‘language games’. However, I do not agree with him in assuming infinite games, only infinite ways of playing the game.” (Weigand 2009, p. 270-271).

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It is interesting to note here that a functional and dialogic approach to language, arriving at precisely the same idea of the internal interdependence of the utterances, was formulated earlier by Russian-Soviet linguists in the 1920s, with the most important contribution being Jakubinskij's *On Verbal Dialogue* (1923/1979).⁶ Not least among this text's influences was the work of the Bakhtin-Medvedev-Vološinov Circle, thus contributing to what subsequently has been called "dialogism" (Holquist, 1990), a crucial influence on contemporary dialogical approaches generally. However, linguistics after World War II was completely undialogical, and it took decades to arrive at least at the idea formulated in the pragmatic turn, namely that language is an act, interwoven with non-verbal acts within specific situations.⁷ The resulting speech act theory in its orthodox formulation remarkably did *not* attain dialogicality – a point thoughtfully analysed by Weigand rightly speaking of "Searle's monologic speech act theory" (p. 76).

Purposefulness and interrelatedness of utterances are the main themes in Weigand's proposal for a "genuine Dialogue Theory" (DT), based on two main *principles* (described below). It is important to note here that the term "principle" is understood as a technique with which speakers and listeners orient themselves in a complex, ever-changing and open surrounding (p. 273). Hence, with the notion of principle Weigand's model is capable of reaching further than any well-defined bases standing in opposition to the dynamics of natural systems:

Dialogue on the basis of principles goes beyond the view of codes, definitions and single patterns. On the contrary, it allows indeterminacy of meaning and different understandings of the interlocutors and is based on negotiations of meaning and understanding in a game best characterized as a 'mixed game'. (Weigand, 2009, p. 238)

The first of the two main principles is the Action Principle which assumes that human beings proceed along a line of purposive behaviour. It is worthwhile to note here that "purpose" is distinguished from "aim", the first is social and pertains to the dialogue as collective interactive purpose, while the second is individual, and corresponds to the intentional goals of the interlocutors, as related to their single actions. Weigand privileges the level of purpose, because the perspective of the individual goal "means leaving the level of the pattern considered as a whole" (p. 90). This opposition of social versus individual is a strong thread running through the book, and grounds her attitude to the psychological aspects of language use as I will address later on.

⁶ See also Yakubinsky (1997) for another (partial) English translation of this seminal text. See Aumüller (2006) for an analysis of the feature of interdependency of utterances in Jakubinskij and Bakhtin.

⁷ The pragmatic turn in the 1970s was instigated by philosophers of language such as Austin and Searle, see e.g., Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) as founding texts.

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The second principle is the Dialogic Principle which sets an internal mutual dependency of the individual acts: the “minimal autonomous unit of communication [...] is [...] the minimal action game consisting of the two-part sequence of initiative and reactive speech or of action and reaction in general” (p. 75). It is precisely by the second principle that the “new object DIALOGUE” is given, characterized by the interdependence of the individual acts. Weigand insists on the twofold-ness of the sequence, assuming (and illustrating it with a few examples) that any three-part sequence, as for instance “Initiation – Reply – Evaluation,” is to be understood as a two-part sequence where the second move is seen as an initiative for the next two-part sequence: the Reply is reactive to the Initiation and, subordinately, is itself an initiative for the third move, the Evaluation. From there, Weigand establishes a dialogic speech act taxonomy defining all speech acts as initiative or reactive acts and, thus, establishes their place in terms of mutual interdependence.⁸ For Weigand, the genuine dialogical feature of individual acts lies in this mutual dependency. Position is function: an initiative action is a pragmatic claim, and a reactive action fulfils that claim (p.75).

As different essays reveal, the Action Principle and the Dialogic Principle belong to a whole architecture of principles.⁹ This architecture answers the question of how human beings behave in the complex dialogic world of the action game and highlights the “Principles of Probability” as “guidelines of behaviour, as guidelines of our *competence in performance*” (p. 292). The task of orientation consists in navigating through the complex dialogical world while balancing between definiteness and incalculability– the different principles make precisely this double movement between certainty and uncertainty possible.

The Principles of Probability are themselves based on three fundamental types of principles with a series of corollary principles. The three fundamental types are the *Constitutive*, the *Regulative*, and the *Executive Principles* (p. 249, 292). These three types function as “explanatory devices” to tackle “all the issues which arise in describing human interactive behaviour” (p. 252). The corollaries are related to each type. Hence, the *Constitutive Principles* involve three corollaries: the Action Principle, the Dialogic Principal and the Coherence Principle; the *Regulative Principles* involve two corollaries: the Principles of Emotions and the Rhetorical Principle. The Principles of Politeness, as a kind of sub-corollary, belong to the Rhetorical Principle (p. 293); the *Executive Principle* does not, as far as I see, involve other principles.

Further, the three fundamental Principles, plus their corollaries, make use “of other techniques as reference points for orientation such as the Maxim of Rationality or

⁸ See Weigand, 2009, p. 79: REPRESENTATIVE – ACCEPTANCE; DIRECTIVE – CONSENTING; EXPLORATIVE – RESPONSE; DECLARATIVE – CONFIRMING.

⁹ It is not easy to get a complete overview on this architecture; its building bocks have to be constructed from different essays. Feller's introductions to the three parts could have been a place for such an overview.

Clarity, the Principles of Convention, of Suggestion etc.” (p. 293). The Principle of Suggestion acknowledges the fact that human beings are “always subject to irrational tendencies” and “often rely on suggestions and presumptions” (p. 169); as such, this principle contradicts explicitly the Principle of Rationality and Convention – thus, human dialogues go beyond rationality and conventional forms *because* they are human (p. 169). Nevertheless, some principles orient within a given order: the Sequencing Principle enlarges the unit of the minimal action game (p. 168), the Rule Principle and the Routine Principle are sub-principles to the Principle of Convention. That the complex and incalculable dynamics counterbalances these principles is expressed by the Principle of Different Worlds that acknowledges the difference between the partners' view, so that the Open System Principle is needed (pp. 168-169).

Weigand's Dialogic Theory starts thus with the definition of a “genuine new object, Language as Dialogue”, continues by formulating a set of basic assumptions about the object and then explains the “object-in-function” by principles of probability. Ten methodological principles for the theory are given, based on the Action Principle and the Dialogic Principle, and these encompass the following subjects: the concept of language as dialogue, the dialogic action game as basic unit, the role of a communicative grammar, the definitions of speech acts, of dialogue and of coherence; the topics of communicative competence and of convention, and the problem of dialogue typology; finally, the distinction between common purposes and individual goals of a dialogue is made (pp. 86-90). To these ten principles Weigand adds five guidelines for future research, situated on a theoretical as well as on an empirical level (pp. 91-92).¹⁰

Cognition, and Some Other Psychologic Aspects

In regard to a psychology interested in dialogic processes, for example, Dialogical Self Theory (DST, e.g. Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010), Weigand's transgression of the narrow linguistic boundaries – which argue for nothing but the reduction of language to structure – is particularly interesting. Her notion of human linguistics claims to address the complex beyond the linguistic pattern and involves behaviour explicitly. Cognition comes to play a role as related to behaviour, it is recognized by Weigand as a part of language use. Specifically, Weigand unfolds the dimension of cognition in two ways and situates cognition on two sides: the side of the communicative means, and the side of meaning. Starting with the meaning issue, she develops and presents a model integrating language use and cognition (p. 99, 105).

¹⁰ See also the ten premises of the theory of the action game, pp. 271-272. Ordering and structuring, positing principles and premises are procedures often found in this book, due to Weigand's enterprise of constructing “human linguistics”: this necessitates a general level of explanation; to this comes a meta-theoretical level, reflecting diverse theories and approaches, including the one own in its development.

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Concerning the first side, communicative means come into play precisely because the perspective on language is enlarged to include purposeful linguistic actions, and because these actions not only have to follow rules and patterns but have to adapt to a complex, dynamic, ever-changing surrounding (p. 272, 326) – thus to a fundamental uncertainty, incalculability of what will happen next, and how, this is where probability becomes important. Starting with a functional whole – the action game – and recognizing the interlocutors as its agents, Weigand states that taking communicative actions is pursuing specific dialogic purposes, with specific dialogic means. As the agents are explicitly acknowledged, the means not only include verbal means, but also cognitive and perceptible (often also called visual) ones (p. 273); besides speaking, thinking and perceiving are needed, as human beings deploy “all their abilities”: linguistic, visual and cognitive means are used together (p. 100, 159, 273, 276).

Weigand hence states that “[s]peaking is always accompanied by thinking which goes far beyond what is expressed in the verbal utterance” (p. 273-274). This involves presuppositions, conclusions of various types, both rational and conventional, as well as moment-by-moment judgements, ad hoc associations, and non-conventional suggestions and presumptions (p. 272, 273). It is clear that from the stance of an observer it is often impossible to decide what utterance type occurs, and it is only “from within” the dialogic action game – by the interlocutors themselves – that such a decision is possible. Weigand argues here against corpus linguistics¹¹ and the notion that language is comprehended in the registered signals, the elements on the empirical level (p. 267).

But something else happens in ‘humanizing’ linguistics, something comes to the fore that leads linguistics not only into activity or action theory, but also into language psychology and philosophy: the relationship between thinking and speech, and the relationship of these both to activity, to the living dynamics of human beings. Thus, opening the language system to language use and acknowledging the actors of this use leads to what I think belongs to one of the most important questions in human sciences, often enough avoided by disciplinary fences. The dynamical aspect of this relationships (thinking – speaking – acting) is reflected by the aspects Weigand lists, beginning with presuppositions. Worth noting, all aspects show themselves to be time-sensitive, some being situated more before the speech act is performed, some others more alongside or simultaneously, others afterwards and in regard to the next action to be undertaken. There is a *time flow* which changes and alters what is both said and thought, the history of the exchanges alters these very changes, their meaning, their form, and their structure.¹²

¹¹ To the field of corpus linguistics see e.g. McCarthy and Sampson (2005).

¹² Jakubinskij (2004) addresses these changes in dialogue, for instance in abbreviations. The historicity of dialogical exchanges is also addressed by Lyra and Bertau (2008), in continuation of Jakubinskij.

Especially with the notion of presuppositions Weigand approaches issues of language psychology, as it has been addressed since Miller (1971).¹³ The language psychologist Hörmann has fruitfully developed Miller's approach, relating presuppositions and the utterance, and opening another perspective on “communicative means”. According to Hörmann (1976), the utterance is the continuation of preceding suppositions and assumptions, the utterance *completes* ('vervollständigt') the speaker's assumptions, and, as such, the utterance *may alter* these assumptions (Hörmann, 1976, p. 165). Hörmann aims at the entanglement of speech and actions, and sees speech as “pursued activity with other means” ('Fortsetzung des Handelns mit anderen Mitteln'). Just as Weigand does, Hörmann insists on examining the function which the utterances has to fulfill within this entanglement.¹⁴

Taking a psychological stance permits linguists to address the important moment of pursuing or completing which is fulfilled by an utterance on the psychic level, not the least *for the speaker her/himself*. This can be related to the third step in Humboldt's (1994) analysis of reply and address in his lecture on the dual, namely to the clarification of what was meant by the first speaker in addressing the other: a clarification made possible only through the reply of the other.¹⁵ Hence, I think that it does not suffice to see thinking as a kind of helpful process accompanying speech, one which only serves to support the process of coming to an understanding. Seen from the other side, from the perspective of language, language is *not only more* than registrable linguistic elements, it is *also* a formative act, altering thinking, forming it, allowing its clarification through a from-driven reflection (i.e. the act of speaking to someone): language is communication, a constant movement between exteriorization and interiorization.

Cognition is addressed from the first side, the issue of the communicative means, in a way that seems to take thinking and cognition as synonyms (“perceive and think”, “visual and cognitive means”). In contrast, thinking becomes a genuinely subordinated process from the second side or perspective, the issue of meaning.

Asking about the meaning of words, Weigand distinguishes three types of meaning according to her general functional stance and way of looking at the minimal action game. Thus, the utterances of the dialogic action game are used for communicative purposes, these are directed at specific states of affairs; there is an activity aspect and a propositional one which states something. Stating something amounts to predicating something of an entity or a process (e.g., to predicate that the rose *is beautiful*; that the reading *is demanding*) – entity and process are hence the

¹³ Since the 1970s, presuppositions are an intensely discussed subject in linguistics itself; their obvious psychological dimension is investigated in language psychology.

¹⁴ See Hörmann, 1976, e.g., chapter VI.

¹⁵ See, also, Bertau (2009).

reference (*the rose; the reading*) of the proposition. According to Weigand's analysis the resulting meaning types are: a) an action meaning, b) a predicative meaning, c) a referential meaning. To each of these meanings corresponds a specific type of expression. To (a) correspond the grammatical construction of the utterance, particles, utterance words; to (b) correspond lexical words (e.g. nouns and adjectives, the so-called open class units); and to (c) correspond grammatical words as units of a closed class (e.g., articles, pronouns) (see pp. 95ff.).

These clarifications concern so to speak the surface of the action game, as functional for a specific communicative purpose. The purposeful action game involves the performed or expressed meanings in a threefold way, easily observable on the expressive side in the verbal means used. The level underlying the action game with its three meanings leads beyond and into cognition, and here (p. 103) Weigand makes an important step: she goes from dialogic and social acts to cognition which is immediately associated with a universal dimension – i.e. detached from social and dialogic activities.

Weigand introduces the notion of “meaning positions” as “cognitive concepts formed from minimal units of meaning” (p. 102), these positions are independent of expressions pertaining to an individual language, they are universal concepts. Their relationship to an individual language and its expressive possibilities is clear: “for every complex of universal meaning positions there is a set of different expressions in natural language which are communicatively equivalent” (p. 102-103). A clear-cut distinction is made, leading to a universal cognitive base underlying the manifoldness of usages, of expressions, so the “difference between expressions is often not a difference in meaning but only a difference in use, e.g., *with high/great seriousness* versus *mit tiefem/großem Ernst*” (p. 103)

Thus, “[s]tarting from the expression side will not [...] lead us to meaning positions. [...] It is not empirical means themselves that may show us how to structure them. Evidence can only be found in a model developed to explain reality” (p. 103). This model further deepens the notion of the detached cognition introduced by the universality feature, as it becomes clear in its development for the predicating area [see (b), above].

Starting rightly with human beings and their ways of perceiving and describing the world, i.e. how they predicate, Weigand posits that *human abilities and mental states* are the base from which to derive specific predicating positions. These abilities and mental states “together form the cognitive basis of language action” (p. 104). The list of abilities encompasses the following: the five senses; cognitive abilities (to think, to perceive, to remember); emotional abilities (to feel); linguistic abilities (to act by speaking, i.e. to make pragmatic claims, to refer, predicate, use communicative means); physical abilities (strength of muscles, physiological processes); and consciousness (p. 104). This list is neither more nor less justifiable than any other list found within the

cognitive psychology literature. The question of what to name and how to group human abilities remains difficult and quite ideological. Nevertheless, one can see – as in most of these lists – that language is acknowledged only in its communicative function and remains otherwise *outside* cognition, thinking, remembering, emotional processes, and consciousness.¹⁶ From the stance of cultural-historical psychology this is questionable, at least in the cases of thinking, emotions and consciousness.¹⁷ The problem is thus, that these processes are conceived not only outside language but also outside a cultural-historical dimension. They become natural, biological and universally possessed by anybody in principally the same form. What differs are the usages of language. Hence, the step to cognition is clearly a step outside socio-cultural conditions and qualities of human life.¹⁸

A Dichotomy

I have the impression that – precisely because complexity and uncertainty lodging beyond the sentence in language use are recognized – the cognitive base has the function of giving and guaranteeing order. This order is assigned to and located in the individual brain, cognition, body: all conceived more on a biological than a cultural base, that is, conceived outside the incalculable reality of social life. This is corroborated by Weigand's specific notion of the subject's psyche.

This notion of the psyche can be labeled as ‘individualistic, non-social, private, totally subjective, including the irrational’. Hence, a strong dichotomy results, a line dividing the outer social and communicative life from the inner individual psychic or mental life. A mediating mechanism is then needed, and this is found for instance in the second type of the constitutive principles, the *innate* Regulative Principles that “mediate [...] between self-interest and social integration” (p. 327). The Principles of Emotions and the Rhetorical Principle belong to the Regulative Principles: the first one regulates the opposite emotion – reason, the second one regulates individual – social interests (p. 249-251). To this dichotomy belongs also the fact that the Principles of Rationality and of Convention are *contradicted* by the Principle of Suggestion, standing for irrational tendencies and unpredictable emotions (p. 169). Hence, the other pole of the psyche as labeled above is communication that is, in contrast, ‘rational, conventional, social, intersubjective’. From this it can be stated that Weigand's notion of the subject's psyche

¹⁶ At the same time, and on another level, cognition is taken as a comprehensive term, involving cognitive and other abilities together with mental states (which are beliefs and volition).

¹⁷ The following studies investigate the role of language in psychological processes: Bartl and Dörner (1998), Holodynski (2006), Werani (2009). Vygotsky (1999) and Vološinov (1986) highlight the role of language for consciousness from a more theoretical point of view.

¹⁸ Weigand tends to see even the life of human beings as more biologically than culturally determined, referring lastly to the survival drive to explain purposive interactive activity and the nature of human competence-in-performance (p. 248).

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is framed by an understanding where the individual is seen as totally subjective, i.e. as having emotions and irrational tendencies, both unpredictable and difficult to control.

Precisely because Weigand starts from the whole and vivid activity of human beings, she rightly acknowledges the irrational and emotional dimension in our communication. For human beings, linguistic action includes practical actions, it is based on linguistic, visual and cognitive means, and it always involves evaluations, specific interests, and emotions (p. 166-167).¹⁹ Hence, “language as purposive *rational* activity” (p. 85; emphasize added) is always achieved by actors “subject to emotions” (p. 167). In this, Weigand indeed reaches beyond speech act theory and all such approaches “obsessed only by the rational and conventional” (p. 165). But, as the inclusion of evaluative dynamics is done *outside* communication, i.e. as a force to be regulated in order to communicate intersubjectively, the possibility of including psychological aspects into communication is lost. Simultaneously, sociality is excluded from psychic processes, it is excluded from the self's dynamics. Thus, language as performed speech cannot play a role in the dialogic self, in consciousness, or in any cognitive process. Particularly, language is not conceivable with a formative function: forming the self, forming consciousness, thinking, and remembering.²⁰ Taking such a formative position toward language is not, of course, the mainstream position, neither in linguistics nor in psychology. But a serious dialogic approach to human beings must at least reflect this dimension of language.

This is not to ask a linguist to be a psychologist. Rather, it is a reflection addressing an individualistic psychology that invites the kind of exclusion observable in Weigand's theory – the exclusion of language from thinking, from consciousness, from the self. A cultural psychology, or a psychology in the tradition of the Soviet cultural-historical school, offers a different view, quite far from individualistic-monologic psychology which assumes an absolute privacy and naturalness of the inner life. It is a psychology near to a dialogic approach to self, as is DST, and thus also near and *in need of* a genuine dialogic approach to language, as Weigand's theory is. In cultural psychology (e.g. Cole 1996), concepts of consciousness and of specific psychic processes such as thinking and remembering are conceived on the basis of a fundamental developmental relationship between social and individual symbolic processes. Specifically, dialogic processes within the self can be modeled within the perspective of social dialogic processes.²¹

¹⁹ The topic of evaluation is also addressed in the Rhetorical Principle, see especially pp. 129ff.; to the related topic of interest see especially pp. 250-252. Human being's interests, needs and abilities are even the key opening up “the complex mix of order and disorder of the action game” (p. 348).

²⁰ Only some hints to the rare literature here: Larsen et al. (2002), Steels (2003), Bertau (1999).

²¹ A cultural-historical psycholinguistics underscoring the role of language in psychological processes is proposed in Bertau (2011a; 2011b).

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Even emotions are not outside the ‘sociologising’ of our psyche, they are part of our culturally specific activities.²² In contrast to the kind of individualistic psychology Weigand follows, assuming emotions to be “non-rational, non-predictable, non-conventional phenomena” (p. 172), and human beings as “victims of [their] emotions” (p. 176), I would opt for the view that emotions are highly conventional – and this is not only a matter of their display or their expression. Rather, it is a matter of their acquisition and their performance in the social world, as social events. Hence, a West-European middle-class mother may well show a different verbal form in being angry and admonishing her child than a mother from a lower class doing the same: the intonation style, the loudness of voice, the chosen words and their arrangement may be quite different. Both mothers are displaying their own individual emotion toward their child, but simultaneously they do – express and experience – it in a genre and social specific way.²³

The exclusion of the psychological dimension of verbal communication also has an impact upon Weigand's notion of understanding. The outer social and communicative life is coupled with “coming to an understanding” (derived from German ‘*Verständigung*’), whereas the inner individual psychic life is coupled with “understanding” (derived from German ‘*Verstehen*’). So, coming to an understanding as *interactive* purpose stands in opposition to understanding, as *individual* mental act or cognitive ability. Thus, the dividing line distinguishes acting linguistically from understanding: “While coming to an understanding describes action, understanding represents a mental precondition of linguistic action: the hearer-oriented side of the speech act” (p. 30), the hearer, having understood, produces the reaction building up the dialogic game.

Understanding is obviously conceived by Weigand as happening only in *the other*, the addressee of the first action, not in the speaker her/himself as that speaker both utters and listens to his/her own words and receives the reply of the addressee. But, understanding *while* talking is underscored by Linell: “In fact, speakers speak not only to be understood, but also in order to understand what they themselves say and think” (1988, p. 46). As aforementioned, understanding through the reply of one's addressee is already highlighted by Humboldt (1994). This notion can also be followed up in Bakhtin, for whom understanding is related to acting linguistically in an indissociable way and, as such, it is itself interactive – not as a precondition, but a preparation for the next verbal act:

²² The ‘sociologising of psyche’ is an allusion to Vygotsky's “sociologising of all consciousness” (1999, p. 278) and said in the very same vein, i.e. “the recognition that the social moment of consciousness is primary in time and fact.” Holodynski (2006) offers a theory of emotions based on cultural-historical psychology.

²³ The contrast between the poles “subjective/individual/irrational” *versus* “conventional/rational/social” can especially be grasped in Weigand's essay *Emotions in dialogue* (pp. 165ff.).

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Thus, all real and integral understanding is *actively responsive*, and constitutes nothing other than the initial preparatory stage of a response [...]. And the speaker himself is oriented precisely toward such an actively responsive understanding. He does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his own idea in someone else's mind. Rather, he expects response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth [...] (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69; emphasis added)

Vološinov (1986) is even more explicit, and views understanding as a process operating with the necessary participation of inner speech, an act where signs respond to other signs.²⁴ In sum, dialogically oriented human sciences have to re-think the crucial notion of understanding, and particularly the role language plays not solely as an *object* to be understood, but as a *means* of understanding. The functioning and functionality of language as addressed by Weigand is important precisely in regard to a psychic dimension: it is the key to the question of how language may function as a means for psychic processes.

My final remark concerns a consequence resulting from the dichotomy, it concerns the figure of the third. Concentrating on action and reaction as the minimal action game, Weigand, referring to Humboldt (1994), does however not follow Humboldt in his third step: the clarification, through the reply of the second speaker, of the concept the first speaker uttered in audible words to the second speaker. The concept becomes clear for the first speaker *him/herself*, because it is uttered and receives reply, i.e. it is reflected by another.²⁵

I think there is here a form of completion which goes beyond the first speaker's acceptance or evaluation of the reply; it seems that this third turn addresses *both* previous turns.²⁶ The third turn in Humboldt can be seen as expression of an understanding, as such it cannot be part of Weigand's conception. Thus, the third move in Weigand does not seem to offer a new quality and is therefore seen as a reaction to the second turn, taken itself as action.

Within the area of dialogic thinking, Markovà (1990) insists on the third step (not necessarily a turn) as belonging to a dialogic understanding of dialogues. With the third step, Markovà aims to go beyond externally related events, beyond mere additions from which, according to Markovà, no new quality emerges. In contrast, internally related events cannot be disconnected, precisely because a new, a third moment emerges from their mutual dependency, from their actual interaction: “as the two phenomena interact, co-determining each other, they give rise to a new, i.e. a third, phenomenon that is qualitatively different from the two constitutive ones” (1990,

²⁴ See Vološinov 1986, part I, chapter 1.

²⁵ For more details on Humboldt's concept see Bertau (2011b) and Bertau (2012).

²⁶ This corresponds to the model by Mehan (1985), but rejected by Weigand because it is “without cogent justification” (p. 77).

p. 133). Recently, I proposed another version of the third, which argues that only witnessed verbal performances are performances at all. Thus, the third does not so much emerge from an actual interaction, rather, it is more the condition to any interaction, at the same time, it is present and addressed in any interaction (Bertau 2010).

Conclusion

Edda Weigand's book is inspiring, it is a rich resource to think seriously about the dialogicality of language, and the present review can be seen as the very effect of this seriousness and richness.

One of the qualities to be highlighted is that Weigand's approach is explicitly open to a necessary enlargement of the arena of dialogue “by embedding dialogue analysis within the analysis of human action in general” (p. 338) – an invitation and a challenge to all scholars working in the dialogic approach. In turn, Weigand's dialogue analysis can itself also relate to these approaches as well as to empirical work in psychology and linguistics supporting a dialogical view. A striking development in psycholinguistics can be mentioned here, namely the turning away from the traditional study of language comprehension and language production in isolation to the study of dialogue as put forth by Pickering and Garrod (2004, 2005), and fruitfully followed up for instance by Koostra et al. (2009). The notion of alignment, which plays a central role in describing the performance of dialogue partners, can be further developed within dialogue analysis.

Two basic procedures can be observed in Weigand's book: a reversal in the order concerning the point of departure for the modelling and investigation of language in use, and a “beyond” leading the conception of language into the open-endedness of dialogical dynamics. Thus, Weigand's approach does not treat pragmatics as a “coda” to linguistics, but as the aspect to begin with, and this aspect is nothing but human activity, a human being's life as a perceiving, thinking, speaking and listening social being, *with others*. This approach is hence an important endeavour for linguistics – obviously so reluctant to embrace a genuine dialogical view of language – as it recognizes theoretically and methodologically the other as interlocutor, and includes otherness as a grounding category. In this respect, bringing Weigand's approach into interaction with linguistic and psychological approaches explicitly addressing otherness, such as Marková's and Linell's work, would certainly be fruitful.

The core aspect brought to the fore by a pragmatic and dialogical view is understanding language as a process in its *open*, incalculable nature: thus, language is an activity between meaning making and negotiating individuals whose performances go beyond the rules. Hence, for Weigand, the primary point of departure is the wholeness of the language action performed – *performance* is the process, which further points to the dynamics and vivid materiality of speech. Here, too, it would be fruitful to

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relate Weigand's work to investigations of speech as temporal, patterned and conventional formation in the sense proposed by Bose (2001).

I agree completely with Weigand about the challenge of a dialogical approach, of a genuine dialogical conception of human activities, and I am glad that she offers with her thoughtful thinking and investigating one important step in this enterprise. It is an enterprise that should go beyond specialized disciplinary interests and that should acknowledge the outstanding importance of language for humans as socio-cultural, conscious, and symbolic beings bound to alterity.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH EDDA WEIGAND¹

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MCB: Mrs. Weigand, it was a pleasure to read your inspiring and rich book, not least because I think that a dialogic perspective on language is urgently needed in linguistics, and also in the domains addressing human activity, such as for instance pedagogy and psychology. So, I would like to know about the acceptability of the dialogic stance within linguistics – do you see any substantial changes in the discipline? (In Germany, in Europe, in the USA)

EW: As you know, there is no one discipline linguistics as such; there are various different approaches, among them semantic, pragmatic or discourse analytic ones. Pragmatics is still struggling to come to terms with its object and methodology. I think dialogue is the proper key to pragmatics. In recent years the focus on dialogue has been strengthened by various publications, in Europe as well as in the USA. With the pragmatic turn, our concept of language has changed from language as a sign system to language-in-use. Approaches dealing with language-in-use – dialogue analysis as well as pragmatics and discourse analysis – therefore belong to linguistics in a broad sense.

MCB: Yes, linguistics became a discipline with various branches, it has diversified since the times of de Saussure. But as you speak of ‘human linguistics’ I understand your enterprise as a real challenge to linguistics – where linguistics is deeply related to a certain *attitude* towards the phenomenon of language, leading its investigation as detached from human subjects and their activities. This is not to say that this kind of detachment is not possible or not legitimate, but it is questionable as the primary approach to language.

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¹ This interview was conducted by Marie-Cécile Bertau (MCB) and is coordinated with her review of Edda Weigand’s (2009) volume, *Language as Dialogue: From Rules to Principles of Probability* (S. Fuller, Ed.; Amsterdam, The Netherlands, John Benjamins) published in this issue (see pp. 17-35). The interview was conducted electronically as a written exchange between MCB and Edda Weigand (EW).

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So, I understand your enterprise not just as addressing pragmatics. It seems to me to aim at a reversal concerning our scientific perspective on language: only starting with dialogic interaction will allow an adequate understanding of language. Am I right with these inferences regarding your notion of ‘human linguistics’? If I am right, I am still interested in the acceptability of such a fundamental reversal.

EW: What I called ‘human linguistics’ is indeed a challenge to compositional models of orthodox linguistics. What ‘human linguistics’ means is best expressed by Marco Jacoboni in his blurb on the cover of my new book “Dialogue – The Mixed Game”: “If you are interested in language, you must study who’s speaking it: human beings.”

The ‘acceptability’ of such a view depends on how it can be justified. First, when de Saussure set up the dogma of language as a sign system, he was well aware of the fact that the sign system is different from language proper or ‘la parole’. At the time he was writing, ‘la parole’ was a concept which was too complex to address directly. He addressed it via the hypothesis of an underlying artificial level of ‘la langue’ which he established by definition and total abstraction from all variables of use. The hope of arriving at ‘la parole’ by starting from ‘la langue’ turned out to be illusory. There is no other way than to start directly with the natural object of ‘la parole’ and to derive an adequate methodology from it. This is the challenge a ‘human linguistics’ needs to take up. The acceptability of a theory is closely connected with its type of theorizing in relation to its object: we are finally prepared to address our complex object directly by making a change in theorizing from reductionism to holism.

Second, we are in the happy position of having experimental results from neuroscience at our disposal. They confirm that our abilities are not isolated abilities, there is no system of signs, but a complex network of integrated and interacting abilities. The brain is no longer a black box which allowed us to put forth any hypotheses whatsoever.

MCB: My next question continues this topic: I think that one of the challenges related to the opening of the closed-system linguistics lies in the necessity to open up disciplinary separations, so it is also an institutional endeavour – would you agree?

EW: Of course, we need to open up the scope of linguistics. In the same way as there is no language as such but the human ability of speaking integrated with other human abilities, there is no discipline linguistics as a separate study of language. Linguistics is interrelated in a cross-disciplinary fashion with other disciplines, such as psychology or anthropology, since they all deal with human abilities.

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MCB: I agree, and I would like to add that the other disciplines should also integrate more explicitly a *pragmatic* notion of language, I am thinking especially of psychology which would have to go beyond a cognitive view of language.

EW: Any scientist should be clear about its object, whether it is an artificial concept of language or the natural concept of language-in-use. I don't see any sense in dealing with an abstract concept of language such as the sign system or an exclusively cognitive system. There are no signs which have meaning on their own, no proof whatsoever of what cognitivists call a 'mental lexicon'. It is human beings who use verbal and cognitive means in an integrated manner when negotiating meaning and understanding in dialogic interaction. It is in the end the complex human mind where the scientific activities of different disciplines dealing with human behaviour meet. Even if dialogue is rooted in the human mind, it is more than 'the shared mind': it becomes manifest as dialogic action.

MCB: Dialogical Self Theory addresses the dialogic processes constituting the self, internally as well as externally. It is assumed that dialogues take place between different individuals or groups as well as within the self of an individual; dialogical relations are thus developed both externally and internally, and psychological processes are related to social contexts and exchange practices.

What kind of relationship do you see between this theory and your theory of language as dialogue? Or, put another way: What could be the impact of dialogically conceived language on such a theory of self?

EW: Whereas the focus of Dialogical Self Theory is psychological processes resulting from human beings' dialogic nature, the focus of the Theory of Language as Dialogue is integration and action: *integration* of psychological processes with other human abilities, mainly speaking and perceiving, and *action* in the sense of a dialogic theory of action which goes beyond orthodox speech act theory. The single speech act is dialogically dependent, either as an initiative act or a reactive act; action not only comes about by speaking but by the integration of speech with other human abilities. It is the emphasis on the integration of human abilities at the level of dialogic action which can enrich the Dialogic Self Theory.

MCB: Regarding your answer, I would only like to add one remark, maybe you would like to react to it. The psychological processes as they are assumed and modeled in the Dialogical Self are not just or not only *expressions* of a dialogical nature. Rather,

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specific dialogical practices develop and form this “nature”, or the individual in specific ways. This is especially true of early development where processes of acquisition take place, but also of subsequent development in the course of life – not to forget intervention strategies which work dialogically, i.e. which *form* (new) developments, such as psychological therapy. Hence, from a developmental stance, a theory of language which addresses language as dialogic practice is interesting particularly in regard to the issue of a formative function of language.

EW: I completely agree with you. Human beings are by their very nature dialogic beings. Dialogical practices in our early childhood will, of course, strengthen our dialogical abilities.

MCB: Dialogical Self Theory builds very much on the views of the language investigators and thinkers of the 1920s in Soviet Union, most importantly on Bakhtin's notion of dialogicity. Did you consider this approach, to what extent does it play a role for your considerations?

EW: When I began developing my theory of language as dialogue in the 80s, Bakhtin's reflections on literary texts did not play a role. After the publication of my first book on this subject matter in 1989 (“Sprache als Dialog”) I became aware of approaches referring to Bakhtin and felt confirmed in my own view. Bakhtin's general notion of dialogicity comes close to my concept of language as dialogue but also includes dialogue and interaction between words and texts. Dialogic relations between words and texts need no longer be intentionally created by authors but wait to be discovered by the reader. Bakhtin's work helped to push the dialogic view but represents rather a collection of interesting aspects than a concise theory. Dialogue is more than a network of relations between words and texts. It is created by human beings turning relations into actions. Actions, to my mind, are intrinsically bound to agents who act intentionally. An extended concept of action without intentionality or of words as agents can only be understood as a metaphor.

MCB: I agree that dialogue is more than a network of relations, and I think that this focus on intertextuality is due to one prominent way of reading Bakhtin after his discovery in the West. This is, as it were, another way of detaching language from human activity. Nevertheless, insofar as Bakhtin locates dialogue not only between speaking and listening physical persons but also between different consciousnesses, dialogicity reaches into the psychological dimension, touches on psychic processes; dialogicity becomes available for the self which becomes itself a dialogical process.

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Further, with Bakhtin, dialogicality occurs between utterances as uttered with specific voices and positions to which the actual speaker has to take a stance: utterances lose their neutrality, and their authorship becomes more complex, as well as the notion of intentionality. For the DST and its central notion of position, this is of utmost interest. What kind of role does position play in your view of dialogue?

EW: With the topic of intertextuality and different voices we face an area of interpretation which is crucial for literary texts but has its place in everyday language use as well. In using certain phrases speakers may refer to phrases of other speakers and may hope that the audience will notice it and understand the specific meaning. We are thus shifting to the readers and their way of interpreting a text. If we include the area of interpretation we accept a complex notion of dialogism or – as I called it in my new book – multidimensional dialogue. Within multidimensional dialogue we can distinguish between different subdomains, among them dialogue between readers about their different interpretations of a text or the domain of polyphony, i.e. of splitting the speaker into different voices. Within this universe of dialogue DST and its central notion of position can also be embedded.

In 2009, at the University of Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, IADA, the International Association for Dialogue Analysis, organised a big international conference on “Polyphony and Intertextuality”. Selected papers will be published in a volume of “Dialogue Studies” (Benjamins) on the topic of “Spaces of Polyphony”, edited by Clara Ubaldina Lorda.

MCB: Thank you very much, Mrs. Weigand.

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STORY FORMED IDENTITY AND SPIRITUALITY IN PSYCHOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE

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ABSTRACT. Story formed identity seems to be an increasingly prominent way for conceptualizing the self. For the most part discussions about story formed identity appear to have existed as somewhat isolated voices within the respective disciplines of psychology and Christian theology. This essay is a product of bringing the two voices explicitly into dialogue with each other. The discussion in this paper is framed by an understanding of the dialogical self, and highlights the ways in which the conversation between disciplinary ideas is agreeable and where there is the potential for disagreement. The potential for disagreement seems to center on the theological assumption that the transformative experience of God's self-giving love may be a necessary condition for adaptive self-construction. Ideas about story formed identity are used to elaborate on the experience of narrative incoherence, and provide ways to resolve the tension between voices at the individual-experiential levels of analysis.

Key words: narrative identity, dialogical self, spirituality, theology

Conceptualizing the self has long occupied a central place in the discipline of psychology (Cushman, 1990; Hermans, 1996; White, 2004). One conceptualization that appears to have become more prominent in the psychology literature is that of story formed identity (e.g.: Angus & McLeod, 2004; Dimaggio, 2006; Dimaggio, Hermans, & Lysaker, 2010; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Hermans, 1996, 2004; McAdams, 2005, 2006; White, 2004, 2006; White & Epston, 1990). Influenced by social constructionist and constructivist philosophies, ideas about story formed identity do not reside exclusively within the discipline of psychology as similar ideas have informed Christian theological understandings of the self (e.g.: Cataldo, 2008; Erickson, 1999; Gergen, 2002a, 2002b; Hauerwas, 1981, 1999; Volf, 1996). However, one could argue that the presence of the self as story formed identity in the theological literature stems from exchanges with the psychological literature that have already taken place. Nevertheless, the conceptualizations appear to have for the most part remained in their respective discipline specific literatures as isolated voices or monologues (see also, Gergen, 2002a, 2002b; van der Ven, 2002).

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The purpose of this essay is to bring the two voices into explicit dialogue with each other. A dialogical metaphor is used to frame the discussion at disciplinary and individual-experiential levels of analysis: “as different voices these characters exchange information about their respective *Mes* and their worlds, resulting in a complex, narratively structured self” (Hermans, 1996, p. 29). By disciplinary level of analysis, I mean facilitating an exchange of ideas found in the respective literatures, with the understanding that the exchange occurs at the individual-experiential level of analysis. By individual-experiential level of analysis, I mean an inner dialogue between self-aspects constructed via experiences of self-other relating and self-God relating in religious and non-religious contexts.

In many ways the dialogue between psychological and theological ideas is agreeable and harmonious; and yet, the dialogue contains disagreement and tension particularly when theologically distinctive assertions enter into the exchange. Disagreement and tension however allows for a more complex conceptualization to emerge and is therefore embraced as necessary for advancing inter-disciplinary conceptual understanding. In addition, at the level of individual phenomenology, dialogue is thought to facilitate sense-making of lived experience and adaptive self-construction (Dimaggio et al., 2010). The essay is therefore simultaneously about conceptual sense-making of disciplinary ideas but also reflects intrapersonal-experiential sense-making at the level of individual self-construction. Individual level self-construction is informed by the internal dialogue between different aspects of the author’s own experience, making the essay a story about the author’s own story formed identity.

Situating the Dialogue: The Phenomenology of Self-God Relating

While some persons may emphasize the differences between religion/religious and spirituality, the constructs overlap significantly, particularly in the everyday experience of many people (Hay, Reich, & Utsch, 2006; Hill & Pargament, 2003). Shults and Sandage (2006) defined spirituality as “ways of relating to the sacred” (p. 161), with “sacred” referring to persons or objects of ultimate devotion, which includes relating to Deity. Relating to the sacred may occur in religious or non-religious contexts, and many people relate to the sacred both within and beyond religious contexts over time (Shults & Sandage, 2006). For many persons then spirituality and religion are best understood as interactive and overlapping. In addition, self-God relating is phenomenological, and therefore within the purview of psychological theorizing and research. This essay involves the application of the dialogical metaphor to individuals’ experience of God as other with whom they relate. It is an essay about the psychology of religion and spirituality, informed by ideas about story formed identity found in psychological and theological sources.

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Empirical research has generally demonstrated consistent positive associations between religious experience/spirituality and psychological well-being (e.g., George et al., 2002; Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Hill & Pargament, 2003; Oman & Thoresen, 2005; Plante & Sharma, 2001; Sandage & Jankowski, 2010; Seybold & Hill, 2001), although negative mental health outcomes have also demonstrated associations with spirituality (e.g., Cashwell, Glossof, & Hammond, 2010; Hill, Pargament, Hood, McCullough, Swyers, Larson, & Zinnbauer, 2000; Koenig, 2009). Persons also relate to the sacred from an array of complex motivations including: as means of gaining control over impulses, or resolving emptiness (McAdams & Albaugh, 2008); seeking intimacy and emotional connection, or what some have called spiritual dwelling (Sandage, Link, & Jankowski, 2010; Wuthnow, 1998) or communal growth (Bauer & McAdams, 2004); personal meaning-making and purpose-finding, or what some have called spiritual seeking (Sandage et al., 2010; Wuthnow, 1998) or agentic growth (Bauer & McAdams, 2004); and anxiety-soothing and comfort seeking during times of duress (Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Sandage & Jankowski, 2010). Along the lines of the latter, attachment theory has received considerable attention as an organizing theory for studying religious motivations, and does so by framing self-God relating in terms of safe haven and secure based functions and/or along the attachment dimensions of anxiety and avoidance (e.g., Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002).

Research on involving clients' spirituality directly in the therapeutic process has demonstrated effectiveness (e.g., Worthington & Sandage, 2001; Worthington, Kuru, McCullough, & Sandage, 1996), and this seems particularly pertinent given that increasing numbers of religious persons presenting for psychotherapy seem "uncertain how to connect their faith or spirituality to their lives," or seem to do so in maladaptive ways (Killmer, 2006, p. 56; see also, Cashwell et al., 2010; Cataldo, 2008). It may be that persons do not have language for making-sense of or talking about their religious experiences in meaningful ways (Cashwell et al., 2010; Cataldo, 2008; Erickson, 1999), let alone have some ideas about how to bring their religious experiences into beneficial relationship with other self-other relational experiences. Ideas about story formed identity, and in particular the metaphor of the dialogical self, are offered as possible aids or devices that might foster individual sense-making and adaptive self-construction.

The empirical literature and the anecdotal practice literature contain multiple means of describing and assessing the phenomenology of persons' relationship to the sacred (see also, Hall & Edwards, 2002; Hill & Pargament, 2003). The findings of both positive and negative mental health outcomes, and the range of motivations for self-God relating, suggest that persons' relationship with the sacred can be characterized along dimensions of functional-dysfunctional, adaptive-maladaptive, or developmentally immature-mature. From the perspective of dialogical self theory, relationships with the sacred that are associated with negative mental health outcomes can be depicted as

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experiences that range from fragmentation (Cataldo, 2008) to fusion between experiences of self-God relating and experiences of self-other relating. Extremes on the fragmentation-fusion continuum coincide with “clinical observations [that] suggest that both restricted multiplicity and its opposite, an excessive number of voices crowded together in the stream of consciousness, are linked with significant psychopathology” (Dimaggio et al., 2010, p. 381). Fragmentation refers to the lack of dialogue between self-aspects and connotes a distance or cutoff between self-aspects, and is captured by the phrase “restricted multiplicity.” Fusion is captured in the phrase “crowded together” and seems to connote the idea of too much closeness between self-aspects. Varying degrees of fragmentation to fusion seemingly account for the observed phenomenon of spiritual bypass (Cashwell et al., 2010), which involves interpreting experience exclusively in religious terms. Spiritual bypass can be described as a monologue in which religious self-aspects silence alternative non-religious voices, or in which self-God relating silences alternative self-other relational experiences, and may generally be regarded as a dysfunctional form of spirituality.

Elsewhere Hall and Edwards (1996, 2002) developed the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI) to measure functional-dysfunctional, adaptive-maladaptive, or immature-mature, forms of relating to the sacred. The SAI assesses self-God relational experiences along five dimensions; two of which seem particularly noteworthy when considering the phenomena of fragmentation-fusion. Spiritual Instability (SI) refers to an emotionally- and relationally-dysregulated self-God relational experience. SI demonstrated theoretically consistent associations with measures of alienation, insecure attachment and egocentricity. The Spiritual Grandiosity (SG) subscale measures self-God relational experiences that are consistent with characteristics of narcissistic personality. Both SG and SI seem consistent with experiences of fragmentation and/or the fusion of self-aspects where lack of self-in-relation awareness and/or the absence of dialogic relating between self-aspects can correspond to various forms of dysfunction (Dimaggio et al., 2010).

It also seems worth noting that experiences of fragmentation between self-God self-aspects and other self-aspects, or experiences of crowding together between self-aspects, need not only link to significant psychopathology; the latter defined by conditions such as personality disorders and schizophrenia (Dimaggio et al., 2010). There appear to be varying degrees of fragmentation-fusion that correspond to varying degrees of functional-dysfunctional intra- and interpersonal relating. Narrative incoherence (McAdams, 2006), or an experience of “dual citizenship” (McAdams, 2005, p. 115), can be a developmentally normative experience with varying degrees of function-dysfunction. The incoherence may be characterized by the silencing of one part over another or perhaps by a crowding of competing voices which can be distressing and disconcerting to varying degrees, and yet not approach conditions of significant psychopathology. The author’s own experience is in line with a

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developmentally normative experience of fragmentation; that is to say, I have experienced disconnection between self-aspects grounded in religious experiences and those self-aspects formed outside of religious contexts or self-God relating (see also, Dueck, 2002; Hasker, 1992). Most notably perhaps is the split I felt at times between my professional psychotherapy training that did not explicitly or consistently attend to clients' self-God relational experiences in the therapy room, and therefore did not attend to a significant part of my lived experience. In addition, I have experienced disconnect trying to reconcile training in positivist research methods with the hermeneutic methods learned in my theological training. The splits involved not knowing how to fit the contrasting experiences together or to make sense of one part of myself in coordination with the other part in any coherent manner. In fact, more often than not one part was kept silent in the presence of the other, depending upon the particular social context; or at least kept silent until I deemed it safe enough to give voice to the other self-aspect. Yet, even though the silenced part was voiced, it did not result in coherence as there was a sort of duplicity about it; that is, an experience of "not quite fully me."

It seems likely that some of religious persons' narrative incoherence stems from larger cultural "discourse[s] of public or private life" (Erickson, 1999, p. 122) and/or cultural narratives that "compartmentalize" persons' experiences (Killmer, 2006, p. 56). It also seems likely that some incoherence between self-aspects for many religious persons is due to the prevalence of a "rational control model of spirituality" (Maddox, 2001, p. 5), which portrays persons as disembodied minds, disembedded from their social context (Hauerwas, 1999; Jankowski, 2003; Maddox, 2001). Religious experience seems not only relegated to the private world of the individual, but also relegated to intra-personal splits between reason over and against emotion, mind over and against body, and an autonomous self that is independent of other (see also, Labouvie-Vief, 1994). A rational control model frames spirituality "almost exclusively in non-developmental and 'decisionistic' terms - principally, as discontinuous moments of obedience to God's commands" (Leffel, 2004, p. 130). A rational control model has also been identified in the psychotherapy literature, with similar assertions about the need for "'higher' intellectual processes [to] direct feelings and actions" (Mahoney & Lyddon, 1988, p. 216). Last, a rational control model shares similarities with McAdams and Albaugh's (2008) depiction of the religious motivation for self-God relating that stems from a desire for impulse control, or keeping emotions in check and suppressing "sinful" passions. So, for example, an individual in distress may be expected to exercise the rational capacity to choose otherwise, and may be admonished to dutifully persist in the study of scripture or seek God in prayer so that conformity to God's thoughts and perspective may occur; thereby resolving the distress. It is not the use of reflexive capacities or the exercise of human agency that distinguishes a rational control model from alternative models of spirituality, nor is it any particular spiritual practice; rather it

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is the rationalist ideals which guide the ends to which those means are directed that seems to account for the potential for incoherence.

In contrast, the notion of story formed identity embeds persons in social contexts and embodies their experiences, such that there is a complex systemic relationship between cognition, affect and behavior, mind and body, and self and other. In this essay, ideas about story formed identity are offered as a way to describe and make sense of the phenomena of persons' relation to the sacred. An exchange of ideas about story formed identity contained in the psychological and theological literature is presented as one means for potentially reconciling self-other and self-God self-aspects that may be fragmented from each other and/or crowded together. The essay consists of a description of the ways in which psychological and theological framings of the self as story formed identity exist in harmonious dialogue. A theological distinctive in the framing of the self as story formed identity is then introduced, with particular attention to the potential tension and disagreement the distinctive creates in the inner dialogue about disciplinary ideas. Last, spiritual transformation is described at the individual, phenomenological level of analysis as a form of dialogue that can result in adaptive self-construction. The latter defined in terms of narrative coherence and differentiated relating between self-aspects.

Disciplinary Voices in Unison: Self as Story Formed Identity

Volf (1996), a Croatian, Protestant theologian, writing from his experience of dual citizenship, as “a citizen of a world at war” during the war in the former Yugoslavia and a person in relationship with Deity (p. 10), offered an inter-disciplinary description of story formed identity as: (1) a self-construction process characterized by differentiation, and (2) a framing of the self as self-in-relation to others, including Deity. Self-in-relation refers to the individual as separate, and yet reciprocally embedded within social contexts (see also, Balswick, King, & Reimer, 2005). According to Volf (1996),

The human self is formed ... through a complex process of ‘taking in’ and ‘keeping out.’ ... a result of a distinction from the other and the internalization of the relationship to the other; it arises out of the complex history of ‘differentiation’ in which both the self and the other take part by negotiating their identities in interaction with one another. (p. 66)

The process of distinguishing oneself from the other and internalizing self-other relational experiences is thought to facilitate the construction of a multiplicity of self-aspects that exist in complex inner constellations of relationships (Hermans, 1996, 2004). Self-construction, in the form of story formed identity, from a psychological and theological perspective, can be understood as a dialectical and dialogical process: (1) a dialectic “between the experiencing and the narrative-making selves” (Greenberg & Angus, 2004, p. 345) and between intentionally constructed and “imposed identities”

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(Volf, 1996, p. 161; see also, Grotevant, 1992); and (2) dialogical in that there is an ongoing internal conversation between aspects of one's self (Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992) and a never-ending conversation between voiced self-aspects or I positions, and between internal I positions and other persons with whom the individual is interacting (Hermans et al., 1992).

The Dialectic of Self-construction

The individual is an active, meaning making agent continuously engaged in the process of organizing lived experience in the form of a narrative (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White, 2004, 2006; White & Epston, 1990). Geertz (2000) framed persons as "impassioned meaning makers in search of plausible stories" (p. 196). The word "impassioned" in Geertz's (2000) statement draws attention to the influence of emotion in the self-construction process (Greenberg & Angus, 2006; Mahoney, 1991). The view of emotions from the perspective of story formed identity stands in contrast to that described in a rational control model of human functioning. According to Greenberg and Angus (2004), "the self is viewed as a multi-process, multilevel organization emerging from the dialectical interaction between ongoing, moment-by-moment experience and higher-level reflexive processes that attempt to interpret, order, and explain elementary experiential process" (p. 332). Emotions provide persons with powerful and adaptive responses that are unavailable or less available to more conscious and rational processing of the self in moment-by-moment experience. Emotions are valuable ways of knowing that need not necessarily be kept in check or suppressed by conceptual knowing processes. In fact, tacit emotional experience can be reflected upon, listened to, and interpreted, and this process is frequently necessary for adaptive self-construction (Mahoney, 1991). Story formed identity is a result of the dialectic process of consciously making meaning of implicit emotional experiencing.

The dialectic nature of self-construction is also highlighted by the notion of imposed identities. Volf's (1996) claim that self-construction involves imposed identities can perhaps best be explained by Foucault's (1973, 1979) ideas of modern power and normalizing judgment. Self-construction tends to involve more intentional, explicit formation but can also involve implicit, less acknowledged meaning making (Greenberg & Angus, 2004). Imposed identities are often implicit. This is in large part due to the subtle, yet pervasive nature of modern power. According to White (2004) modern power "recruits people's active participation in the fashioning of their own lives, their relationships, and their identities, according to the constructed norms of society – we are both a consequence of this power and a vehicle for it" (p. 154). It is a form of power that initially comes from outside of the individual, from the social context the person is embedded within, but then begins to work from the inside out, such that people "participate in the judgment of their own and each other's lives" (White, 2004, p. 169).

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Imposed identities often have deleterious consequences for the individual. For example, a husband and wife in their mid-thirties who have yet to have children due to medical reasons can suddenly find themselves experiencing emotional distress, with each individual asking “what’s wrong with me?” They may experience themselves as “deficient” because they are “out of step” with cultural and/or religious ideals about childbearing, parenthood, and “God’s blessing.” These negative understandings of self were imposed from the particular social context, and often in the form of well-intentioned persons who offered a myriad of suggestions for how to get pregnant and/or how God will eventually answer their prayer if they just persist in “seeking God.” Yet, the self-construal taking place is also coming from within each individual as they each give voice to self-aspects that have in part been constructed by internalizing the messages from the relational context. This imposed yet self-construed narrative can stand in opposition to other preferred, previous and current, intentionally constructed self-narratives, resulting in an experience of fragmentation between self-aspects or the experience of a crowding of voices. For example, a self-aspect might give voice to the couple’s experience of intimacy and marital satisfaction, and this joins with voices about alternative definitions of family and alternative means to become parents, or ways to find fulfillment apart from parenting; but the voices about not receiving God’s blessing or not seeking after God enough drown out these other non-religious voices, and a sort of spiritual bypass occurs.

As the example illustrates, there is often a dialectic tension between imposed and intentional self-construction in a person’s moment-by-moment experience. The dialectic between imposed and intentional identities is simply one expression of the tension that exists between the embedded individual and the social context; a tension that is thought to be necessary for developmental and therapeutic change to occur (Mahoney, 1991). However, the tension can also be experienced as overwhelming, particularly when relationships with others do not provide the safety and security necessary to construct a self in more coherent and preferred ways.

Dialogic Self-construction

Given the dialectic process inherent in self-construction as story formed identity, it is common or typical to experience a disruption to one’s coherent sense of self as part of the dialectic process (McAdams, 2006). Story formed identity is thus a discontinuous coherence (McAdams, 2006). One’s identity is continuously challenged by the ongoing narration of lived experience and persistently critiqued by traditional and modern power and all sorts of competing understandings of self and other that circulate within the social context. The multiple and competing sources result in the individual having to internally negotiate and organize multiple voices. According to Hermans et al. (1992), this construction process results in

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a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous *I* positions in an imaginal landscape ... the *I* has the possibility to move, as in space, from one position to the other in accordance with changes in situation and time. The *I* fluctuates among different and even opposed positions. The *I* has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established. (p. 28)

Each aspect of the self can give voice to a different self-narrative (Hermans, 2004). Drawing attention to unacknowledged or little attended to self-aspects can result in changes to one's moment-by-moment experience. White (2004) suggested that there is a dominant self-narrative and alternative, internalized experiences of self and other that exist in subordination to this ongoing dominant narrative. These unacknowledged or little attended to alternative story lines offer rich opportunities for change in one's ongoing story formed identity.

From a dialogical perspective the self is "social – not in the sense that a self-contained individual enters into social interactions with other outside people, but in the sense that other people occupy positions in the multivoiced self" (Hermans et al., 1992, p. 29). Volf (1996) echoes the notion of the other occupying the self in the process of self-construction, and does so by grounding his perspective in a communal understanding of the Christian theological doctrine of the Trinity, or Triune God comprised of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "In the Trinity ... distinct persons are internally constituted by the indwelling of other persons in them. The personal identity of each is unthinkable without the presence of others in each; such presence of others is part and parcel of the identity of each" (Volf, 1996, p. 187).

A Trinitarian theology of self-construction involves the notion of "the presence of the other in the self" (Volf, 1996, p. 180). Intentionally receiving the other is a potentiality and a developmental ideal when it comes to interpersonal relating and self-construction. More often than not however the internalization of self-other relating as part of the self is experienced as a "threat to the organization of the self" (Volf, 1996, p. 91). This threat is often responded to by strategies designed to maintain an internal coherence. Intra-psychically, here-and-now experience of self-other relating may not be allowed to enter into dialogue with other self-aspects, and therefore not allowed to transform the ongoing dominant self-narrative. Strategies that prevent dialogue are often an attempt to maintain an identity of a rigidly self-contained individual with a "sharp self-nonsself boundar[y]" (Hermans et al., 1992, p. 30), both internally between aspects of one's self and interpersonally. In order to not feel threatened by self-other relating, the person must reorganize the inner constellation of self-aspects in response to the other by opening up space in his or her self to allow the other in. However opening space for the other in here-and-now relating can be difficult and demanding, as can opening space for dialogic relating between self-aspects.

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Introducing a Theological Distinctive into the Dialogue

One distinctively theological contribution to dialectical and dialogical self-construction is the idea that opening space might require that the individual's imaginative capacities be transformed through an experience of loving embrace by Deity (Volf, 1996). Volf posited that in order to genuinely receive the other as a part of one's self there is a need for a "de-centered center" (p. 71) within the self. The center of one's self is not "objective and immovable" (Volf, 1996, p. 69) nor is it a "'timeless' essence hidden deep within" (p. 70). Nevertheless, "the self is never without a center; it is always engaged in the production of its own center" (Volf, 1996, p. 69). The center can be thought to be whatever position or perspective from which a self-aspect is given voice (Hermans, 1996, 2004). There are therefore many centers, and according to Cataldo (2008), God may look different from each of the centers, and so there is a sort of "functional polytheism" (p. 50) at the individual-experiential level of analysis. For example, the internalization of self-God relating as loving embrace by Deity may exist alongside another self-aspect that gives voice to an experience of God as punitive and demanding. At the disciplinary, abstract level of theological proposition, the Triune God can be described as a community of oneness with Father, Son, and Spirit in loving dialogic relation (Volf, 1996). There is a sense then in which God can be understood as "stable and unified" (Cataldo, 2008, p. 52), reflective of the historic view of Christianity as monotheistic, and a sense in which God can be viewed as a differentiated multiplicity (Balswick et al., 2005). For Cataldo (2008) adaptive self-construction involves inner dialogue between "a sense of self as multiple and a sense of self as unified and continuous" and dialogue about God as both "multiplicity and unity" (p. 50).

It may also be possible to talk of center in terms of a meta-position within the imaginal landscape (Dimaggio, 2006). A meta-position from which the I can move in and out of and within while giving voice to self-aspects. White (2006) framed the movement of the I in terms of remembering. As a person retrieves memories of lived experiences he or she can stand in a position to reflect on and rework his or her dominant narrative. White (2006) drawing on the work of James (1892) and Meares (2000), referenced the notion of stream of consciousness as the place where one can move to gain a meta-position for remembering, reflecting, and re-authoring. As White (2006) stated, "in states of reverie or meditation, when we have stepped back from tasks of living and from our immediate social and relational contexts, we often experience immersion in this stream of consciousness" (p. 71). When doing so "memories light up, are often powerfully visualized, and are taken into the personal storylines of our lives" (White, 2006, p. 84). Decentering is thus a reorganizing of the dialogical relations among self-aspects; and given that self-construction is never ending, multiple decentering experiences seem necessary for adaptive self-construction.

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Volf's (1996) Christian theological contention is that in order for a person to experience open, non-threatening receiving of the other, and move to a decentered meta-position from which to facilitate dialogue between self-aspects, he or she may need to enter into loving relationship with Deity; and this seems particularly so when the other person does not reciprocate, and/or when someone has been wronged by the other and experienced injustice. Self-God relating is thought to potentially transform and internally re-orient the individual such that he or she is enabled to receive the other into him or herself and facilitate adaptive dialogue between self-aspects. It is a claim that the experience of God's self-giving love can be empowering and freeing. The person is freed from having to maintain a self as a rigidly bounded and self-contained individual and freed to enter into authentic, open dialogic relationship with the other and between his or her internal aspects of self. In many ways, it may be an entirely internal embrace of the other as the other may not choose to reciprocate, voluntarily give of self nor receive the individual.

Decentering depicts a particular self-God relational experience, and Hauerwas (1981) draws attention to the way in which story mediates the decentering experience. Decentering experiences thus occur in the context of drawing on the Christian story as source material for self-construal. According to Hauerwas (1981), persons

depend on narratives to guide [them] ... And this is particularly important to Christians, because they also claim that their lives are formed by the story of a prince ... defenseless against those who would rule the world with violence. He [God the Son - Jesus] had a power, however, which the world knew not. For he insisted that we could form our lives together by trusting in truth and love to banish the fears that create enmity and discord. (pp. 34-35)

Hauerwas (1981) suggested that the story of God's self-giving love can form "the kind of [individual] and community where" (p. 35) genuine receiving of the other can occur. Self-construction involving self-God relating, mediated by the story of God's love and the relational context in which this story is told, can potentially consist of a decentering experience that allows space for dialogue and internally (re)organizes self-aspects.

Self-construction involving a decentered center formed through story and community is illustrated in the work of Erickson (1999) who examined the spiritual writings of three women who were part of the early formation of the Wesleyan/Methodist faith tradition. John Wesley (1872/1958) organized his identity around the experience of having his "heart strangely warmed" (p. 103). It was this particular experience and the resulting narration of it over time that gave the Wesleyan tradition the identity of a "heart religion" (Maddox, 2001, p. 3). According to Maddox (2001), Wesley's "heart religion" rested on the experience of God's love and a "change of affections" (p.17). Maddox (2001) argued that Wesley, particularly later in his life, primarily thought of a change of affections as an intentional process of self-

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transformation. Erickson (1999) summarized the intentionality of three founding women of the Wesleyan tradition, and commented that “they assiduously practiced ... as part of a community ... the personal and private act of keeping a spiritual journal [which] became a community vehicle for [change]” (p. 104). Erickson (1999) described a decentering experience as she explained how her own self-construction was transformed by encountering God’s embracing love through these women’s stories.

The experiences of faith chronicled in these writings touched me ... As I read these life writings, I heard echoes of these voices from the past in the agonies of a friend dying from cancer as she, like they, longed to live and die in full awareness of God’s presence ... it came alive to me. (Erickson, 1999, p. 90)

Erickson’s experience can be described as a movement of the I to a meta-position (Dimaggio, 2006; Dimaggio et al., 2010) from which to reflect and contemplate, and as she did, memories lit up (White, 2006), and she accessed implicit emotional experiencing (Greenberg & Angus, 2004) and facilitated dialogue between voices which led to more personally meaningful self-construction. Decentering seemed to enliven alternative voices such that each voice was able to contribute to an increased sense-making of her own lived experience.

Initiative in Story Formed Identity

Woven throughout the discussion on the dialectical and dialogical construction of the self, and found in both the psychological and theological literatures, is the theme of initiative in the process of constructing an adaptive and preferred story formed identity. A preferred story formed identity (Freedman & Combs, 1996) stands in stark contrast to a problem-saturated story of self (White & Epston, 1990). Imposed and implicit constructions of self tend to be related to problem-saturated stories and often correspond to experiences of narrative incoherence (McAdams, 2006), disunity of self (Hauerwas, 1981), or fragmented-fused self-aspects, which may coincide with any number of difficulties in living and negative affective experiences. Even imposed identities that are functional and fulfilling or at least non-distressing for a time will at some point conflict with lived experience. It is at this point that new initiatives seem necessary to form an identity that is experienced as satisfying and meaningful. The social context, particularly in Western cultures, tends to impose identities characterized by themes of injustice, inequality and the exclusion of the other (Volf, 1996); independence and individualism (Weingarten, 1997); deficiency and pathology (Gergen, 1990); disembodied and disembodied minds (Hauerwas, 1999); and materialism and consumerism (Cushman, 1990). Intention, and very often counter-cultural intention at that, seems necessary for constructing a preferred, personally meaningful story formed identity.

One initiative that seems necessary in constructing and maintaining a preferred self is that of actively seeking out others to constitute oneself in the kinds of ways that

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provide for coherence. Freedman and Combs (1996) articulated the role of community in supporting preferred identity constructions in this way, “communities ... serve as participant audiences that can hold each other accountable for the kind of selves and relationships each is bringing forth in its members” (p. 274).

In addition to seeking particular community memberships, preferred identity construction also seems to involve the intentional selection of source material. Hauerwas (1981) framed the importance of source material selection for constructing preferred identities as such, “the necessary existence of the other for my own self is but a reminder that ...we become who we are through the embodiment of the story in the communities in which we are [immersed]” (pp. 148-149). Not any story will do (Hauerwas, 1981). A useful story “forces me to live in a manner that gives me the skill to take responsibility for my character” (Hauerwas, 1981, p. 149); that is to say, encourages a person to take initiative in his or her self-construction process.

Last, intentional practices, akin to the notion of spiritual disciplines within many religious traditions, seem necessary for constructing preferred kinds of identities. Hauerwas (1981) suggested that there were “appropriate exercises and disciplines of self-examination” (p. 149) for constructing preferred identities. Freedman and Combs (1996) suggested various “accountability practices” and “reflecting practices” to assist in constructing and living out preferred identities (pp. 278, 284). Whether it involves opening space for the other, contemplating one’s own story in light of the other, voicing conflicted or divergent aspects of self, performing or narrating new self-constructions in front of witnesses, some form of intentional action seems necessary to constitute one’s identity in preferred ways. A significant theme that seems to cut across these practices is that of self-reflection. As Dimaggio et al. (2010) noted, a person’s capacity for self-reflection seems tied to “psychological health and social adaption” (p. 383). Self-reflection enables persons to identify multiple self-aspects, to engage in perspective-taking between self-aspects and facilitate dialogue between differing I positions (Dimaggio et al.). Self-reflection also fosters “the creation of superordinate points of view ..., which allows for a sense of coherence and which coordinates the different aspects of the self and makes it possible to solve conflicts and find new more effective solutions” (Dimaggio et al., 2010, p. 383). Spiritual genograms (Frame, 2001), spiritual autobiographies (Vaughn & Swanson, 2006), and spiritual journals (Erickson, 1999) are just a few techniques that might facilitate self-reflection and foster inner dialogue between self-aspects.

Responses to Dialogic Tension

As outlined above, the dialogue between psychological and theological voices appears largely harmonious. Ideas about dialectical and dialogical self-construction and the role of initiative in adaptive self-construction can be found in the existing literature of both disciplines. However, the theological distinctive about the potential necessity of

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experiencing God's love for adaptive story formed identity raises the possibility for disagreement and tension. Pointing out a seemingly non-shared idea about story formed identity at the disciplinary level of analysis does not in and of itself constitute dialogic tension. Rather, the tension occurs at the individual-experiential level of analysis: (1) as one negotiates the theological distinctive into his or her inner dialogue between self-aspects, and/or (2) as one opens space to dialogue between self-aspects through a decentering experience of God's self-giving love. First, regardless of the context in which one might encounter the theological distinctive, for example, reading an essay or conversing with a client in therapy, making sense of the distinctive can seemingly result in varying degrees of dialogic tension particularly if the phenomenology of the distinctive departs significantly from one's own experience. Second, a decentering experience of self-God relating seems to involve negotiating two related phenomena, and it is these phenomena which seem to hold potential for disrupting dialogue and creating fragmentation and/or fusion between self-aspects. The phenomena can be described as temptations to make an experience prescriptively normative and to privilege one self-aspect over and against another. It is the potential for these temptations to foster tension in a decentering experience of self-God relating that is examined in detail in what follows.

According to Hauerwas (1981), "By learning their part in this story, Christians claim to have a narrative that can provide a basis for a self appropriate to the unresolved, and often tragic, conflicts of this existence" (p. 149). Thus it would seem that the experience of God's self-giving love coincides with a temptation to make the experience prescriptively normative for other persons, which can potentially lead to disagreement in interpersonal and intra-personal relating. Negotiating the temptation as part of decentering seems to involve recognizing that the story of God's self-giving love is inherently invitational. The story contains an invitation for persons to enter into communion with God and experience God's self-giving love, and not as a meta-narrative or "story of stories" (Hauerwas, 1981, p. 149) that is imposed on persons. Rather, the invitation is to draw upon the story as additional source material in the process of adaptive self-construction and potentially encounter God's loving embrace in doing so.

Freedman and Combs (1996) made clear that immersion in any community's particular story will privilege particular themes for living in relation to the other that will then be lived out in very concrete kinds of ways; that is to say, a particular social ethic. For them and many others conceptualizing the self as story formed identity, not "all stories [are] equal" (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 266) and they are intentional about seeking out communities and source material to support their preferred identity; for example, living out and privileging an ethic of social justice and reflexive practices (e.g., Freedman & Combs, 1996; White, 2004; White & Epston, 1990). Participation in the community of the Triune God and one's local congregational community can

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privilege a similar social ethic but also one that among other things sees the necessity of experiencing God's self-giving love for adaptive self-construction. Phenomenologically, there seems to be a temptation to place the story of God's self-giving love in a somewhat privileged position relative to other source material for constructing and/or supporting preferred identities.

Spiritual Transformation

Negotiating self-God relating with other self-aspects could result in a number of responses to the tension that results as one decenters and seeks to re-organize relationships between self-aspects. These intrapersonal responses seem to range along the functional-dysfunctional, adaptive-maladaptive, and mature-immature continuums. First, adaptive negotiation of self-in-relation to God may be understood in terms of what some have called spiritual transformation (Cohen, Gruber, & Keltner, 2010; James, 1902/1958; Sandage, Link, & Jankowski, 2010). William James (1902/1958) described spiritual transformation as unifying the "divided self" (p. 144), which resulted in "firmness, stability, and equilibrium" (p. 147). James also noted that such experiences may involve negative emotions, despite the positive outcomes associated with the experience. Negotiating self-aspects in relation to God may be distressing and involve anxiety, confusion, and/or guilt, and yet, there is potential for positive change and development. Cataldo (2008) described how, in the context of therapeutic work with religious clients, unifying fragmented self-aspects may be one form of spiritual transformation. Dialogue about self-as-unity and self-as-multiplicity and dialogue about God-as-unity and God-as-multiplicity may facilitate therapeutic change. Experiences of fusion may similarly be resolved through dialogical exchanges between therapist and client and through the facilitation of inner dialogue between a client's self-aspects.

Empirical research has generally supported an association between spiritual transformation and positive adaptation and development. Cohen et al. (2010) found that spiritual transformation corresponded to positive changes in participants' understanding of self, and involved both positive and negative emotions. Sandage et al. (2010) found that a recent spiritual transformation moderated the curvilinear relationship between spiritual seeking and spiritual dwelling. Sandage et al. concluded that spiritual transformation may result in an increased capacity to experience doubt, confusion, and anxiety, while remaining intimately connected to Deity; that is to say, a differentiated form of relating (Kerr & Bowen, 1988) may result from spiritual transformation. Albright (2006) noted that spiritual transformation can correspond to gains in cognitive complexity which enables persons to hold seeming contradictions together and tolerate associated anxiety and tension. Similar capacities for cognitive complexity have been observed in the adult cognitive development literature (e.g., Benack & Basseches, 1984; Kramer, Kahlbaugh, & Goldston, 1992; Labouvie-Vief, 1994). While spiritually

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transformative experiences may foster positive development, research suggests that other processes also account for positive adult development. For example, the experience of successfully coping and resolving the inevitable contradictions and tensions of life, such as loss of a loved one, can facilitate positive development. While resolving loss can and does involve self-God relating for many persons, spirituality need not be a part of one's coping and meaning-making in order for positive development to occur.

Spiritual transformation as a result of loving relationship with Deity has been discussed in detail within the literature that uses attachment theory to study persons' relating to the sacred (e.g., Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). For example, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) suggested that there is a complex relationship between early caregiver-child and adult attachment and an individual's attachment to Deity. The complexity of this relationship, particularly over time, seems tied to changes that occur in what can be framed as an individual's inner constellation of self-aspects, or internal working model. More specifically Kirkpatrick and Shaver asserted that, "learning to experience a secure attachment relationship with God may have enabled some people to subsequently develop more secure and stable relationships with other people, including love partners" (p. 273). When the aforementioned research findings and theoretical ideas from divergent literatures are taken together, and reframed in terms of dialectical and dialogical self-construction, negotiating self-God relational experiences with other self-aspects can potentially open space and result in a decentering experience. This reorganization of self-aspects may then have positive developmental and relational outcomes.

Narrative Incoherence

The temptation to privilege one position over and against another, along with the temptation to use one particular self-God relational experience as a normative lens with which to interact with other self-aspects, can also result in increased narrative incoherence; and do so, to varying degrees along the continuum of fragmentation-fusion. One possible outcome of making normative or privileging a particular self-God relational experience could be fragmentation in which one part negates the other self-aspect and prevents dialogue. For example, during the experience of a recent loss, a self-aspect that experiences God as cold and distant might get activated and coincide with a voice that calls for "rational acceptance of God's will." This voice may negate or silence another self-aspect that experiences God as loving comforter, grieving alongside and aching with the person during the loss. In yet another instance, the negative emotions associated with dialogue between self-God relating and other self-aspects may be too unsettling and distressing. The person therefore works to maintain a rigidly defined, "sharp self-nonsel self boundary" (Hermans et al., 1992, p. 30) as a means

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of managing the distress. The person may then employ numerous strategies to manage the distress that negotiating between self-aspects can generate; such as, discounting the voice of the other, distancing from or ignoring the perspective of the other self-aspect, and denying or minimizing the effects of one self-aspect on the other. In these instances, fragmentation seems to account for the phenomenon of spiritual bypass, in which self-God self-aspects are privileged and monopolize inner dialogue.

Fusion of self-aspects may also occur in an attempt to negotiate self-God relating into the inner constellation of self-aspects. Fusion can be depicted as “the crowding together of a multiplicity of voices, struggling to get heard, drowning each other out, [and] competing with each other” (Dimaggio & Semerari, 2004, p. 268). A person for example may be immobilized and unable to make a decision as he or she tries to discern what God would have him or her do in a particular situation. The search for the one “right” voice out of the multiple, divergent, and competing voices about what to do can result in frustration and/or disappointment. Thus, fusion could also account for the phenomenon of spiritual bypass, as religious meaning-making drowns out other voices even while multiple religious voices crowd together and compete for dominance. For example, someone may encounter a religious voice that suggests that “perhaps there are multiple ‘right’ choices that could be made in this situation and that God would be fine with whatever decision you make” and this voice competes with another self-aspect that asserts that “God must have one ‘right’ option that is most desired by God.” In such an instance, competing self-God self-aspects crowd out other self-aspects.

Last, it may be that negotiating between self-aspects does not involve extremes of negation or “an unintelligible whir” (Dimaggio & Semerari, 2004, p. 268) rather it could involve two self-aspects simply co-existing with each other, with little to no exchange. It is not a privileging of one position over and against another, nor is it an over-spiritualized sense-making that drowns out the other voice. It is merely a lack of dialogue between self-aspects that prevents a decentering reorganization of self-aspects. In co-existence, the other self-aspect may be acknowledged but the seemingly irreconcilable incompatibility between the two positions prevents an exchange of ideas. In some ways, co-existence may be deemed a transitional space between more fragmented or fused relations among self-aspects and dialogic relating. For example, it may be that a person receives God’s self-giving love and yet parallel to this self-aspect is another self-aspect that struggles with feeling loved and accepted. Or, it may be that the self-aspect of God’s loving embrace exists parallel to another self-aspect that struggles to forgive someone, even while space has been opened for forgiving another person. There is awareness of the alternative I position, and perhaps even perspective-taking but movement to a meta-position from which to more fully reflect and facilitate dialogue does not occur. Whether spiritually transformative, fragmenting, or over-crowding of self-aspects, negotiating an experience of self-God relating into one’s self

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seems highly idiosyncratic; unique to each person's existing constellation of self-aspects and embedded life situation.

Differentiated Self-aspects as Adaptive Self-construction

An outcome of a spiritually transformative decentering experience may be described as differentiated intra-psychic functioning. Facilitating dialogue between self-aspects positioned along the fragmentation-fusion continuum can result in a wide array of adaptive self-constructions. Recent conceptualizations of intrapersonal differentiation that extend Bowen's initial ideas (Kerr & Bowen, 1988) have drawn particular attention to the capacity to self-soothe and regulate affect in the midst of distress (Sandage & Jankowski, 2010; Skowron & Dendy, 2004; Skowron, Holmes, & Sabatelli, 2003). Differentiated intra-psychic relating is a developmental ideal and can be defined as non-reactive, intentional negotiation between multiple self-aspects. Differentiated intra-psychic functioning seems to involve the capacity to distanciate (Sandage, Cook, Hill, Strawn, & Reimer, 2008; see also, Ricoeur, 1981). Distanciation can refer to the self-reflexive capacity to distance oneself from different internal positions, thereby allowing self-aspects and current here-and-now experiences to inform and influence each other in adaptive ways.

Both differentiation and distanciation are spatial metaphors about the intra-psychic processes involved in self-construction. The dialogical notion of opening space is similarly a spatial metaphor and similarly describes a metacognitive-positioning within the "imaginal landscape" of the mind (Hermans et al., 1992, p. 28). Differentiated intra-psychic functioning involves a keen awareness of self-in-relation that then allows for juxtaposing self-aspects and the facilitation of dialogue between self-aspects. Dialogue between self-aspects will necessitate making space for each self-aspect through distanciation and regulating difficult emotions. Differentiated intra-psychic functioning is distinct from merely having the two parts coexist without dialogue, and distinct from experiences of fragmentation and/or fusion. In contrast, differentiated intra-psychic functioning enables one to access multiple self-aspects effortlessly as relational contexts may necessitate.

Dialogue about the ideas of story formed identity from the theological and psychological literature may result in a number of possible differentiated intra-personal negotiations. More specifically, negotiating between parts of the self around the notion that self-God relating may be a necessary part of adaptive self-construction may result in new, more complex alternative understandings. One possible outcome of the negotiation might be the understanding that imaginative capacities that allow for dialogue and differentiated relating between self-aspects need not only be enlivened by the felt experience of God's love. It might be that self-giving love from one human being to another may be enough to open space and facilitate a decentering experience. Experiences of being loved outside of the context of self-God relating may also be

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transformative, and still spiritual. Spirituality as relating to the sacred, and a definition of sacred that includes experiences of ultimate devotion beyond self-God relating, opens the possibility for alternative decentering experiences. Furthermore, ideas about story formed identity embed persons in relational contexts, and as such highlight the importance of particular community memberships for adaptive self-construction (Freedman & Combs, 1996). A self-in-relation perspective, informed by dialogue between psychological and theological ideas, allows for adaptive self-construction to occur via self-giving love in the context of human relationships. Research, for example, has demonstrated that secure attachment experiences in interpersonal relationships correspond to positive developmental outcomes (Balswick et al., 2005; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992).

Another outcome might involve the understanding that dialogue is inherently invitational, and it is perhaps this differentiated positioning that allows for the example just noted above. Arriving at an understanding of dialogue-as-invitation may stem from self-God relating and engagement with the Christian story that depicts God's love as invitational. Decentering invites the alternative position to give voice to its experience, and this invitation may be enough to resolve the narrative incoherence. Interpersonally, an invitational stance respects and values the other's autonomy and self-determination. An invitational stance frees the individual to dialogue rather than impose or negate another's experience and story. In a similar way intra-personally, the conflicted voices may develop an invitational stance with each other. An invitational stance opens dialogue without privileging either position or making one perspective prescriptively normative. Dialogue may then result in a differentiated constellation of self-aspects, with each self-aspect dependent on the other and mutually defining the other; an interdependence among self-aspects. Ironically, privileging invitation allows for non-privileged relating between alternative self-aspects.

Researchers in the area of adult cognitive development have described this complex state of internal functioning as commitment-within-relativism (Perry, 1970) or dialectical thinking (Benack & Basseches, 1989; Kramer et al., 1992). The phrase commitment-within-relativism seems to be an apt description for privileging an invitational meta-positioning in order to prevent privileging of one part of the self over against another self-aspect. It also seems to connote the capacity to achieve some kind of resolution or coherence, while maintaining an overall stance of openness to ongoing negotiation of self-aspects as future situations might necessitate. It might also be described as an awareness and acceptance of development as discontinuous coherence. As Freedman and Combs (1996) suggested, privileging particular themes for living is unavoidable. There is therefore an inevitable contradiction between knowing that an invitational meta-positioning seems necessary for dialogic relating between self-aspects and yet, knowing that an invitational meta-positioning itself is a privileged positioning. The contradiction provides further illustration of self-construction as a dialectic process,

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and highlights the role of initiative in adaptive self-construction. For example, dialogue from a meta-position of commitment-within-relativism might involve answering inter-related questions about one's initiative such as: what community membership(s) will support my preferred identity and help me adapt to my ever-evolving social context? What reflexive practices might increase my awareness of inner self-aspects? And what self-other relating might facilitate a decentering experience, that is to say, a movement to a meta-positioning from which to invite dialogue between self-aspects?

Conclusion

The essay described the author's dialogue between ideas contained in the psychological literature and the literature on Christian theology, and their respective understandings of self-construction as story formed identity. From the perspective of story formed identity self-construction is a dialectical and dialogical process, which involves distancing and affect regulation as one decenters and opens space for fragmented and/or fused self-aspects to mutually inform the other. A theological understanding of self-construction brought tension into the dialogue with the suggestion that the experience of God's self-giving love may be necessary for re-organizing persons' inner constellation of self-aspects in optimally functional and adaptive ways. This theological premise was tempered through dialogue with ideas in the psychological literature that included acknowledging that the sacred can be encountered more broadly in self-other relating and that self-giving love is inherently invitational. The latter seems particularly necessary for dialogical relating between self-aspects and preventing temptations of privilege and prescriptive normative-ness.

The essay illustrated a "re-authoring conversation" (White, 2006, p. 57), in the sense that the essay was about the internal dialogue between different self-aspects within the author, or a story about my own story formed identity. Ongoing resolution of the author's experience of narrative incoherence has involved: (1) decentering experiences, facilitated by self-God and self-other relating and intentional reflective practices, (2) maintaining an invitational meta-position, informed by source material about God's love, story formed identity, and differentiated intra-psyche functioning, and (3) regulating negative emotions as self-aspects along the fragmented-fused continuum dialogue with each other. Resolution is by no means complete, as self-construction is a discontinuous coherence. Self-other relating in particular social contexts can still call forth self-aspects that seek privileged positions and prescriptive normative-ness, which can generate momentary degrees of fragmentation or fusion; and so, multiple decentering experiences remain necessary.

Last, the essay illustrates what others have already noted about the dialogue between psychological and Christian theological understandings of self-construction; and that is, that in many ways it is still "in its infancy" (Gergen, 2002a, p. 11) and one that has been "writ[ten] off altogether" by some (van der Ven, 2002, p. 292). And yet,

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dialogue opens the possibility for “renewal and innovation” (Hermans, 1996, p. 43). “New vistas are opened – both conceptual and practical,” for “do we not approach the ecstasy of dialogue when our conjunction brings forth realities never imagined in isolation” (Gergen, 2002b, p. 273)?

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