Dialogism and Dialogicality in the Study of the Self

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Abstract

This article stems from the statement that dialogical approaches to a study of the self face a double challenge: that of developing a conception of the self that both avoids social reductionism and accounts for the stability of the self. In discussing this double challenge, we identify three much debated issues: (a) To what does the notion of "Alter" exactly refer? (b) How could we conceptualise the fact that Subject-Alter interactions are not only interpersonal but entail larger social entities, in particular institutions? (c) What importance should we attach to the materiality of objects? We discuss these three questions from two standpoints: that of linguistics and that of psychology, and illustrate our theoretical proposals with an analysis of an excerpt taken from a focus-group discussion. In conclusion, we argue that the dialogism of discourse provides us with some clues of the dialogicality of the mind, whereas the latter invites us to develop a theory showing the importance of interactions in the construction of the self, to pay more attention to the transpersonal dimension of the social, and to consider that the material world contributes to the construction of the self.

Keywords: dialogism, dialogicality, dialogical self, Bakhtin, focus group, artefacts

Introduction

A major characteristic of Bakhtin's work is undoubtedly its interdisciplinarity: with the creation of *metalinguistics* or *translinguistics* (according to Todorov's translation, 1984), that is "the study of those aspects in the life of the word, not yet shaped into separate and specific disciplines, that exceed —and completely legitimate— the boundaries of linguistics" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 181), Bakhtin stays at the crossroads of literary theory, aesthetics, linguistics and psychology. Just as he talked of *translinguistics*, many scholars in psychology aim at developing what might be called *transpsychology* in response to research strands that study individuals as self-sufficient and isolated units. Transpsychology could then even be defined in the same way as Bakhtin's definition of "sciences of the spirit": "Their field of inquiry is not one but two 'spirits' (the studied and the person who studies, which should not be merged into one spirit). The real object of the study is the interrelation and interaction of 'spirits'" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 144).

This definition, which would not be disputed by two other famous pioneers, G.H. Mead and Vygotsky, is the foundation of various contemporary lines of research that share at least two general assumptions: the first is that language and communication play a central role in human development; the second is that the term "dialogue" does not only refer to face-to-face interaction, but more generally to the fact that any discourse (even a dialogue with oneself) echoes the voices of discourses that were held elsewhere at other times and in other situations. These strands might be called *dialogical approaches* to language and cognition, in which the plural form stresses their variety as well as their divergences (Billig, 1987; François, 1999; Grossen, 2009a; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Linell, 2009; Marková, 2003; Rommetveit, 2003; Salazar

Orvig, 1999; Salgado & Gonçalves, 2007; Valsiner & Rosa, 2007). In many of these approaches, the self is a central research object that, in line with W. James and G.H. Mead in particular, is conceived of as fundamentally social, heterogeneous and dynamic.

In opposing trends that conceive the self as a "mental construct" (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004), these conceptions face a double challenge well formulated by Salgado & Gonçalves (2007): the first is the task of developing a conception of the self that avoids social reductionism, or *radical ecologism* (Clot, 2008). The challenge here is to avoid reducing the subject to a simple component of a system consisting of undifferentiated individuals and artefacts, or (as Stetsenko & Arievietch [2004] put it) to avoid dissolving "the self in the collective dynamics of social processes" (p. 479). It is therefore necessary to account for the subject's *uniqueness* without falling into an individualist, if not solipsist, stance (Cresswell, 2011; Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004; Valsiner, 1997; Zittoun, 2007). The second challenge is to account not only for the multiplicity and constant change of the self, but also for its stability (Salgado & Clegg, 2011). Here again, the problem is not simply to insist on the dynamic dimension of the self, but to account for the interplay between change and stability.

The aim of this article is precisely to discuss these challenges by drawing upon a dialogical approach inspired by Bakhtin and other scholars from linguistics and socio-cultural psychology. We begin by a brief recapitulation of the notion of self from a dialogical point of view and then discuss three issues that serve us as guidelines: (1) the notion of Other; 2) the institutional nature of Alterity; (3) the status of the Object and the materiality of the situations in which a subject acts. In comparing the viewpoints of our respective disciplines —psychology and linguistics—, we introduce a distinction between the dialogism of discourse, as applied to discourse analysis, and the concept of dialogicality of the mind, and show how their articulation may enlarge our conception of

the self. Finally, we illustrate our theoretical propositions by an empirical illustration taken from a focus-group discussion.

The Self as a Dialogical Construction

Bakhtin was a theorist of literature, and as such did not develop a psychological theory of the self. However, many elements in his work (e.g., Bakhtin, 1986) challenged the classic theories of the self that consider the individual as an isolated subject. In fact, according to Bakhtin (1986), alterity is not something that is external to the individual and of which the developing individual becomes more and more conscious. It is itself a constituent of the human psyche: "Just as the body is formed initially in the mother's womb (body), a person's consciousness awakens wrapped in another consciousness" (p. 138). Individuality is created by and through others and the Other is part of the self (Bakhtin, 1990). Subjectivity and intersubjectivity (defined by Rommetveit [1992] as an "attunement to the attunement of the other" [p. 23]) are not two separate entities in interaction; they are intermingled and, like a Moebius strip, one cannot be defined independently of the other.

Bakhtin's view, coupled with that of other scholars, in particular Mead (1934) and James (1892/2007), inspired various theories of the self. For example, the Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans & Kempen, 1993) defined the Self as "a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I-positions in an imaginal landscape" (Hermans, Kempen & Van Loon, 1992, p. 28). According to Hermans (2002), the dialogical self is like a "society of mind" because "there is no essential difference between the position a person takes as part of the self and the position people take as members of heterogeneous society" (p. 147). The self, like society, is based on polyphony, that is, the expression of various and heterogeneous voices. This approach, and other related ones, converge in regarding

the Other as a constituent of the self, and in considering the self as dynamic and heterogeneous (made up of various voices or I-positions).

Starting from the present state of research into the self and its various dialogical versions (see for example Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004; Valsiner & Rosa, 2007), we shall focus upon three central issues that will guide us through this contribution.

The first concerns the *notion of Alter* or Other. In dialogical approaches to the self, many authors made a distinction between the Alter as a "real" flesh and blood person, and the Alter as an internalised symbolic Other that is constitutive of the self. For example, Marková (2006) distinguished the "Alter", who is involved in an external dialogue (in the sense of "speaking to others" [Marková, 2006, p. 135]), and the "Inner Alter", who is involved in internal (or inner) dialogues ("dialogue with themselves" [p. 135] or inner speech in the form an internal dialogue). In the same vein, Salgado (2006; see also Salgado & Gonçalves, 2007) presented a triadic model with the Ego, the Inner Audience and the Other-in-the-Self that he defined as "the present or virtual Other that we are trying to address" (p. 151). The "Other-in-the-Self" accounts for the constitutive alterity of the self, and enables us to see the person with his or her subjective world. The "real-other" "activates within the self a relational pattern with specific contents and objects" (Salgado, Ferreira & Fraccascia, 2005, p. 25), with the consequence that the "'real-other' is no more a "real-other" but a constructed other, based on the personal relational history" (p. 25), what he calls the "other-in-me". In this model, the "real-other", as someone who differs from the self, participates in the creation of the subject's uniqueness; however, it is not represented in their triangular model and, thus, tends to disappear or, at least, to merge with the "other-in-the self".

These two examples show that on a theoretical level, we have to navigate between two reefs: on the one hand, we have to avoid reducing the individual, as a subject, to a

mere copy of the "real other"; on the other hand, we have to avoid reducing the "real-other" to a mere subjective construction, that is, putting dialogues with "real" persons on the same level as dialogues with imaginary (virtual) persons. In other terms, not only do we need to account for an internal difference within the self (the alterity of the self), but also to develop a theory that accounts for the role of others in the construction of an inner alterity, what Descombes (1996) calls a theory of social links. Our first point is then that a dialogical theory about the self should be able to work at two related levels: that of the constitutive Alterity of the self, and that of the social links through which the self develops itself during a life span. We should then be able to understand both how subjectivity is constructed *by* others and how subjectivity is constituted *through* others.

The second issue concerns the institutional nature of alterity. In fact, even though the notions of "Inner Alter" and "Inner Audience" include elements pertaining to larger social processes, they both tend to reduce the social dimension to interpersonal relationships and, in our view, do not sufficiently account for historico-cultural and ideological dimensions, which were crucial to Voloshinov (1986). According to him, the construction of the self is inseparable from signs: "The reality of the inner psyche is the same reality as that of the sign. Outside the material of signs there is no psyche (…) the inner psyche (…) can only be understood and analysed as a sign" (p. 26). In Mead's theory, as in Voloshinov's, the relationship between I and the Other is not reduced to interpersonal relationships. With his notion of *Generalised Other* (the "attitude of the whole community" [(Mead, 1934, p. 154]), Mead emphasised that by using signs, individuals relate to social dimensions that go beyond interpersonal relationships. The self is developed through a person's participation in various social organisations; it is made by and through institutions that regulate these organisations. More recently, Gillespie (2007) raised a similar issue by showing that social interactions cannot in

themselves explain the subject's capacity for self-reflection. Referring to Mead's notion of the social act, Gillespie showed that social acts occurring within a stable institutional structure provide individuals with the opportunity to experience reciprocal actor and observer positions. Thus, institutions play a central role in the subjects' development of reciprocity and self-reflection .

The third issue concerns the status of the *Object* and, more generally, of the situations in which the subjects act. In fact, in our view, dialogical theories of the self tend to give precedence to the Object taken as an *object of discourse,* and to consider the Object as a discursive construction in a conversational event. However, according to Voloshinov (1986), signs are not limited to language or other semiotic tools, but include material objects and physical realities (see also Leiman, 2011). For him, as for Vygotsky (1988), physical objects and artefacts are embedded in social activities through which they acquire meanings. In turn, they become signs through which individuals and groups make sense of the world and of themselves. The role of physical objects and artefacts in psychological development (Moro & Rodriguez, 2005; Rabardel, 1995; Rochex & Kherroubi, 2002; Säljö, 1996) and, more generally, in human activity, has also been the focus of increased attention in contemporary research carried out in the field of socio-cultural psychology and activity theory, a fact that is testified, for example, by work-place studies (Engeström & Middleton, 1996). Researchers showed that cognition results from a distribution between artefacts and humans who interact with each other within a certain activity (Hutchins & Klausen, 1996). Without discussing this research field, that faces its own theoretical difficulties, we might keep in mind the idea that human interactions take place in social situations that are made up of material objects and artefacts. Consequently, when dealing with questions relating to the instability vs. stability of the self, more attention should be paid to the *situations* in which people

interact, and to their materiality. More specifically, we should assume that these situations have some degree of stability: they provide a frame (Goffman, 1974) and are made up of routines that generate certain expectations.

In as much as they concern the relationships between language, cognition and the self, these three issues touch on an overarching and very delicate problem: the interplay between the dialogism of discourse and the dialogicality of the mind that, according to Marková (2003), is "the capacity of the human mind to conceive, create, and communicate about realities in terms of the 'Alter'" (p. xiii). By comparing linguistic and psychological points of view, we show the importance on both a theoretical and methodological level, of articulating the dialogism of discourse and the dialogicality of the mind.

In the following section, we adopt a linguistic standpoint by briefly presenting the main features of our theoretical framework and by introducing some distinctions concerning the use of the term "dialogue". This will enable us to discuss our first issue, the notion of Other.

Dialogism: An Articulation between Real and Virtual Others in a Dialogue

Bakhtin's theory of language starts from the assumption that language is communication. According to him, discourse is the *living word* (Bakhtin, 1981): it is constructed and transformed through its use by concrete individuals and groups who act in different historical periods and in various social and cultural contexts.

In a similar vein, Voloshinov (1986) criticised *abstract objectivism* as well as *individualistic subjectivism* in linguistics for their neglect of the social nature of discourse. As a historical construction (Voloshinov, 1986), language is made of various layers created and transformed by its uses. As a social practice, discourse is made of

various languages that are used within certain contexts and constitute discursive genres, namely "relatively stable types of utterances" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 60). Heteroglossia, multivoicedness and dialogic relationships are thus fundamental properties of language, so that, as Bakhtin (1981) put it: "Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated— overpopulated—with the intentions of others" (p. 294). It also implies that any discourse is addressed to an addressee, even an absent or imaginary addressee (Bakhtin, 1981); discourse takes place in a discursive chain and is both a product of what precedes, and an anticipation of what follows. Thus, any discourse is orientated towards a *responsive understanding*, that is, an understanding that actively anticipates the interlocutor's discourse (Bakhtin, 1981; Voloshinov, 1986). These various aspects converge into the notion of bivocality (or *double-voiced discourse*), which, according to Bakhtin (1984): "inevitably arises under conditions of dialogic interaction" (p. 185) and refers to the double orientation of discourse: towards the object of discourse and towards the other's discourse. Hence, in any utterance, there is always a tension, an opposition, between various discourses.

This theorisation implies that the dialogism of discourse appears in different forms (written discourse, face-to-face interactions or monologues). Therefore, we propose to make a distinction between three aspects of dialogue (see also Bres, 2005; Salazar Orvig & Grossen, 2008) at the risk of adding confusion to the various terms found in the literature: (a) the term *external dialogue* (Bakhtin, 1984) refers to the compositional structure of speech (e.g., turn-taking system, illocutory aspects, etc.; (b) the term *internal dialogue* refers to the micro-dialogue that takes place within an utterance (discourse). The circulation of discourse pertains to this internal dialogue that accounts for the fundamental dialogism of discourse. Conceptually, the notion of internal dialogue

enables us to relate elements that are in the here-and-now and in the there-and-then of the present situation. It also leads us to conceptualise the Other both as a real person who may react in ways that are not fully predictable, and as a virtual or abstract social entity. With this meaning, internal dialogue takes on two forms (François, 1988): the dialogue *in praesentia*, when real participants interact together and link their discourse to each other, and the dialogue *in absentia* when a speaker's discourse refers to the discourse of absent third parties, be they real or virtual individuals, or even to generic discourse, such as law, proverbs, stereotypes, etc. (Salazar Orvig, 2005); (c) finally the dialogic relationships of a word or an utterance also concern the "dialogic relationships of a speaker to his own discourse" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 182). The speaker expresses various voices that can be more or less conflicting. Talking of internally polemical discourse, Bakhtin (1984) stressed that: "[…] here also belongs all self-deprecating overblown speech that repudiates itself in advance, speech with a thousand reservations, concessions, loopholes and the like" (p. 196). Therefore, hedges, mitigators, and other linguistic devices that a speaker can use to modify, qualify or even contradict his or her own discourse, can be regarded as indicators of a sort of polemical dialogue between the speaker and him- or herself. We might call this "autodialogism" (Bres & Vérine, 2002) not in the sense of "inner speech in the form of a dialogue" but of the dialogic relationships that can be traced within the subject's discourse, and that contain some sort of polemics.

This distinction shows that in a face-to-face encounter, three aspects work together (Grossen & Salazar Orvig, 2011): (a) the participants' moves (or gestures) in the here-and-now of the interaction and, more specifically, the fine attunements through which they anticipate the other's point of view; (b) the connection of the present situation with previous or anticipated situations; (c) the dialogic relationships that

unfold within a single speaker's discourse. As regards our first issue (the notion of "Other"), each of these aspects represents a different facet of the "Other".

However, this conception of dialogue is not totally satisfying in the way it accounts for the social dimension. By shifting to a psychological level and considering the dialogicality of mind, we should be able to show that alterity is made through social dimensions that go beyond interpersonal relationships and include an institutional dimension. This was our second issue.

The Transpersonal Dimension: A Way of Grasping the Role of Institutions in the Construction of the Self

The term "institution" has been defined in many different ways in social and political sciences. Borrowing our definition from classic work on the social psychology of groups and organisations, we define it as a series of rules, norms, regulations, values, procedures, routines, practices, etc. that, by their stability and continuity, regulate interpersonal relationships in small groups or larger organisations, and frame the members' activities (Barus-Michel, Enriquez, & Lévy, 2002). As a set of rules, prescriptions, etc. that are defined independently of any concrete activity, institutions pertain to what Clot (2008) calls an *impersonal dimension*. For example, job specifications are impersonal inasmuch they do not apply to a concrete person but to *any* person liable to apply for this job.

Institutions have no intrinsic agency: as research into institutional practices showed, categories used, for example, in social work (e.g., Mäkitalo, 2006), learning and thinking (e.g., Choo, Austin, & Renshaw, 2007; Mehan, 2001), mental health (e.g., Barrett, 1996) or psychological assessment (e.g., Gill & Maynard, 1995), are kept alive through interactions between institutional representatives and their clients. Moreover,

institutional categories contribute to the construction of a person's identity and may lead him or her to define him- or her self through the prism of these categories.

Stressing that institutions are constructed and transformed by social actors implies that in addition to a *personal dimension,* referring to the uniqueness of an individual and to his or her personal agency in internalisation processes (Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003), and of an *interpersonal dimension,* referring to the collective construction achieved by actual interactional dynamics, there is a third dimension, which we call "transpersonal", a term that we borrow from Clot (2008) who applied it to the analysis of professional practices at work and considered that a *professional genre* refers to this transpersonal dimension. A professional genre is a set of activities that has a history in a certain work community (or "work collective") and forms a repertoire of expected actions. It frames each individual's professional practices and is transpersonal because the workers recognise it as a collective property with socially shared values. According to Clot, a professional genre has a *psychological function* in a worker's activity: by regulating his or her activity within a wider professional field, a professional genre links him or her to a community of workers and acts as a psychological resource.

The transpersonal dimension not only applies to work situations, but may be generalised to any human activity. For example, child rearing practices are not only regulated by institutions, that fix the rights and obligations of the parents and their children (impersonal dimensions), they are also regulated by larger communities of parents and by the parents' representations of the assumptions and values that these communities share about what counts as "good child rearing practices". Here also, we may talk of a transpersonal dimension because child-rearing practices are experienced as a shared collective activity that indirectly link a community of parents together.

On a theoretical level, this transpersonal dimension enables us to apprehend a social dimension that refers neither to interpersonal relationships, nor to abstract and de-contextualised social values and rules. Moreover, with the articulation between the personal, interpersonal and transpersonal dimensions, a subject can simultaneously be conceived of as (a) unique; (b) concretely involved in various interpersonal relationships; (c) symbolically related to broader communities and systems of values that constitute his or her self.

However, at this stage, we should take into account the fact that human beings live in a world of artefacts that act as signs and play a fundamental role in human growth. So let us examine our third issue that concerns the materiality of objects and the role of the situation.

The Role of a Situation and its Materiality in Constructing the Stability of the Self

The terms *interpersonal, transpersonal and personal* all contain the word "personal", but ignore the fact that human interactions take place in concrete situations that are mediated by artefacts. Yet the interdependency between a subject and a situation in which he or she acts is a key-element of socio-cultural psychology. This view requires a careful analysis of the characteristics of the situation and of its external framing (Marková *et al.*, 2007) in order to understand the subject's behaviour. We should also consider that there are many different Others in a given situation; not only other potential participants but also various absent third parties who distantly participate in the situation and frame the subjects' activity. As a consequence, we need to account for the various times and places that are concentrated in a given situation.

Now, does this imply that (to paraphrase James, 1890/2001) a subject has as many Selves as the number of situations in which he or she is involved? Does it mean that as

soon as he or she interacts with somebody, his or her Self is reshaped? If we follow the Dialogical Self Theory, does the multiplicity of "I-positions" (Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992) imply that there is no stability, no recurrences, in the Self? In his answer to these questions, Valsiner (2002) claimed that whereas the complexity of the self no longer needs to be demonstrated, the crucial issue now is to show what types of dialogical relationships may be established between diverging I-positions, and to what forms of *dynamic stability* (that is "a temporary state that moves into some form of stability", p. 259) they give way. This is indeed one possible way to deal with the issue of stability. However, this view may imply that this "dynamic stability" is that of the subject, whereas it might also apply to recurrences *within* a certain set of situations (for example within various teaching-learning situations) and recurrences *between* various situations (for example similarities between doctor-patient and therapist-client interactions). In the social sciences, concepts such as those of activity type (Levinson, 1992), frame (Goffman, 1974) or format (Bruner, 1990) have accounted for these similarities within or between situations. Moreover, Bakhtin's notion of *discursive genre* is based on the assumption that situations are at least partly stable. Of course, all these concepts are not equivalent, but they suffice to show that situations, with their routines and similarities orientate and frame the subjects' actions. Hence, if we not only take into account the interdependency between the Subject and the Other (*I* and *You*), but also between the Subject and the situation (in a way which would be close to Lewin's notion of life space [Lewin, 1951]), we might claim that situations fully contribute to the construction of the self, as do material objects and social relationships.

Let us now illustrate our theoretical framework with an empirical illustration. In order to discuss this example, we first examine how at a discursive level, external,

internal and autodialogues create a particular discursive space (Salazar Orvig, 1999); we then show how the dialogical tensions of this discursive space relate to inter-, trans- and personal dimensions; finally, we examine the role of the situation and its materiality in the participants' discourse.

An Example Taken from a Focus-Group Discussion

Our example is taken from a corpus of focus groups in which the participants were invited to discuss five dilemmas dealing with medical confidentiality in the case of HIV infection (Marková, Linell, Grossen, & Salazar Orvig, 2007; Salazar Orvig & Grossen, 2004). One of these was the dilemma called *Couple*:

Jean and Pauline have been married for a long time. For several years, Pauline has regularly had extra-marital affairs in which she only occasionally protected herself. After she asked her doctor for a HIV test, it came out that she was HIV-positive. But she did not tell her husband. Now, it happens that her doctor is also her husband's doctor. The latter has known the couple for a long time and has a trust relationship with both of them. Should the doctor tell Jean that his wife is HIV-positive?

Three students in psychology, Anabelle (ANA), Monique (MON) and Jöel (JOE) discussed this together in an office of a university building.

The Intermingling of External, Internal and Autodialogues

Excerpt 1 begins just after the moderator (MOD) has finished reading the dilemma (the third of a series of five).

Excerpt 1

ANA 30   and I think yes <brief laughter>   eh ben moi je pense que: oui, <petit

		rire>
MON 28	I think so too <brief laughter>	Moi je pense aussi <rire bref>
ANA 31	because there is already- there's no more trust in the couple, anyway because well uh as she has been having extramarital affairs for several years, now think a third person should intervene	parce que il y a déjà- la confiance déjà entre le couple elle n'y est plus. parce que bon ben si depuis des années elle a des relations extraconjugales, alors je pense que c'est un tiers qui doit intervenir, dans ce cas
JOE 48	for myself, it's YES, BUT, + <general laughter> YES, BUT <general laughter> , because (…)	Moi c'est OUI MAIS, + <rire général> OUI MAIS <rire général>, parce que (…)

ANA and MON declare themselves clearly in favour of a breach of medical confidentiality, whereas JOE expresses a shaded opinion. Each in turn explicitly positions him- or herself by using an "I" (me) pronoun. At first sight, this explicit positioning (which is recurrent after the presentation of the dilemmas and corresponds to what Vion [1998] called *enunciative uniqueness*), could be viewed as the expression of isolated subjects who answer separately a collective question. Hence, we might argue that the "I" and "me" that punctuate the participants' discourse show their singularity.

However, on closer inspection, we see that these apparently simple utterances contain at least two dialogical tensions. The first is induced by the question itself, and the second takes place between the participants' turns and is based on thematic continuity or discontinuity. So, in these first three turns:

1. ANA's response is double-orientated (or double-voiced, Bakhtin, 1984): firstly, it answers the dilemma question ("yes"). Secondly, her "and I think yes" anticipates

possible opposition from the other participants, and also implicitly refers to the response she gave to the preceding dilemma, in which she argued in favour of a breach of medical confidentiality.

2. MON's response refers not only to the dilemma question but also to ANA's response, as shows the use of "too".

3. JOE's response is directed towards the dilemma question, to ANA's and MON's previous responses, but also to his response in the preceding dilemma in which he also gave a more tentative response than the other participants by using the same expression "yes, but".

So, what seems at first sight to be an expression of opinion by a singular subject is in fact dialogically orientated towards one or more recipients; it expresses the speaker's anticipation of the recipient's response and reveals a tension between the participants' discourse. External dialogue is thus built upon internal dialogism.

Let us now see how the discussion develops:

Excerpt 2

JOE 48	for myself it's YES BUT, + <general laughter> YES BUT <general laughter> , because first of all when you say that the trust relationship is broken, it's yes and no, + in the sense that it's you who's making a judgment about the broken trust relationship §but I think§	moi c'est OUI MAIS, + <rire général> OUI MAIS <rires des autres>, parce que déjà quand tu dis la relation de confiance est rompue, oui et non, + dans le sens que c'est toi qui portes un jugement sur le fait que la relation de confiance est rompue §mais je pense§
ANA 32	§but if she doesn't say it§ because	§mais si elle le dit§ pas parce que

	§(xxx)§	§(xxx)§
JOE 49	§YES BUT§ but it's it's I think it's also up to her to bring herself come to the point of saying it, I don't think that it's up to- I don't think you can just simply §say it§	§MAIS OUI§ mais c'est c'est c'est je pense que c'est aussi c'est aussi à 'elle d'être amenée à le à un certain moment à le dire, je crois pas que c'est au-je crois pas que tu peux §dire§
ANA 33	§yes, but§	§oui mais§
JOE	just like that (…) *[JOE suggests that the doctor should convince Pauline to tell her husband]* yes I agree with you but one should proceed gently	simplement comme ça (…) donc 'oui, je suis d'accord avec toi mais il faut y aller doucement
ANA 34	well I I am maybe a little bit a bit hard because- <general laughter> but well I start from the fact that a couple- and well I think that there must be trust within a couple and for myself it seems to me from what's been said that first of all she's an irresponsible woman who- well if she's already had extramarital affairs and didn't protect herself uh […]	bon moi je je suis peut-être un peu un peu dure parce que- <rires en arrière fond> mais bon je pars du fait qu'un couple-, et pis bon moi je pense qu'il doit avoir confiance entre le couple, et pis MOI il me semble que c'est déjà par les les remarques ici, c'est déjà une femme qu'a déjà pas pris ses responsabilités, parce que pour moi bon si elle a déjà fait des aventures extraconjugales, après elle s'est pas

protégée, (...)

JOE's argumentation (JOE 48) takes up the notion of trust introduced by ANA (Excerpt 1, ANA 31: "there's no more trust in the couple"). His discourse echoes other voices pertaining to social values and institutional rules. Firstly, he questions common sense discourse, namely that extra-marital affairs imply that "a trust relationship is broken", as ANA says. Secondly, by noting that she is making a judgment on the couple, he echoes a widely shared "professional rule" (Cru, 1987) of his future profession, namely that psychologists should not make judgemental statements about their clients.

Now, in her answer, ANA (34) produces a self-categorisation ("well I I am maybe a bit a bit hard") that she inferred from JOE's discourse. Her discourse expresses a double tension: (a) a tension between two conflicting (and morally loaded) voices: being "hard" vs. not being "hard". She uses various hedges, such as "well", "maybe", "a bit", that are traditionally seen as indications of the speaker's position towards his or her own discourse (autodialogue), or as circumvention strategies (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998) that show how the speaker anticipates the other participants' responsive understanding; (b) a tension between her own discourse and that of JOE, so that all her hedges can be seen as *dialogical hedges*, that soften the impact of her discourse on the other participants.

To sum up, the intermingling between external, internal and auto dialogue created a specific discursive space in which ANA was led to display a certain conception of a couple ("there must be trust within a couple") and to look reflectively at herself.

The Personal, Transpersonal and Interpersonal Dimensions in the Construction of a Discursive Space

What can we now further evidence if we shift to a psychological perspective and analyse the same excerpt in the light of these three dimensions?

The *transpersonal dimension* can be identified in the use of ANA's self-categorisation "hard". According to Bruner's notion of *transactional self* (Bruner, 1986), the self develops within culturally shaped transactions and through narrative formats in which individuals learn how to speak of themselves. This is why, according to Bruner (2002): "(…) the nature and shape of selfhood are indeed as much matters of cultural concern, *res publica,* as of individual concern" (p. 66). By qualifying herself as "hard", ANA enters into a virtual community of "hard" persons and excludes herself from those who are "not hard", a process that illustrates the interdependency between I and Alter (e.g., Marková, 2003).

The interpersonal dimension refers here to the participants' interactions and modes of relating to each other. Such a focus-group discussion requires, in particular, some sort of cooperation that motivates each participant to consider the other participants' point of view and to discuss it. Thus, the discursive space that we just described also resulted from specific interactional dynamics that had to do, for example, with the participants' previous relationships, their reciprocal perceptions, their role enactments during the discussion, their expertise in the topic, etc.

Finally, as regards the *personal dimension*, we might consider that the autodialogism that we traced in ANA's discourse is a manifestation of a psychological process. In this respect, the whole sequence (Excerpts 1 and 2) could be seen as an illustration of Vygotsky's law of double formation (Vygotsky, 1988), in which a dialogue *between* the participants was transformed into a dialogue within the subject (see also

Leiman, 2011); it even showed that this process is not a mere copy from the "outside" to the "inside" (Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003), but an original creation, since nobody in the group called ANA "hard".

However, by suggesting that we assisted (*in vivo,* so to speak) in an internalisation process, we have surreptitiously shifted from a discursive standpoint in which we identified discursive traces testifying to the dialogism of discourse, to a psychological perspective in which the same clues enabled us to infer something about the subject's mind and to grasp the dialogicality of the human mind. Briefly stated, we started with a "speaking subject" and ended up with a "psychological subject". Does this mean that dialogicality overlaps the dialogism of discourse itself? Our answer is clearly no, for two reasons at least: firstly, because discourse is of course not a mere reflection of the mind (for a discussion on this point see Clegg & Salgado, 2011). In this respect, working on linguistic units or devices does not enable us to accede to the psychological subject, since there is no one-to-one correspondence between a given linguistic device and a certain psychological state (Grossen, 2009b). Secondly, because from a psychological standpoint, discourse is not the only clue from which psychological processes can be inferred. In this sense, it is important to maintain a distinction between the dialogicality of the mind and the dialogism of discourse. However, we also believe that if we examine how, in the dynamics of discourse, meanings are constructed, changed, modulated, negated, etc., that is, if we focus on discursive moves and the sense they create, we obtain some clues that allow us to make certain inferences about the psychological subject.

The situation and its materiality

Our focus-group situation may be described as a triadic interaction between each participant as a Subject, among the various participants, including the moderator, as Others, and the dilemma as the Object with its own constraints. This triadic interaction takes place in a situation that is new to the participants but can nevertheless be related to other familiar situations. In this respect this situation is not totally unique. It echoes other situations that may frame the participants' orientation toward the task, and towards the other participants.

Now, each of these poles is diffracted into many other triangles situated in other places and times: (a) on the pole *Subject*, there are the various social roles that the participants may connect with the characters of the dilemmas, for example the role of a mother or of a physician. There are also all the situations that the participants might relate to the focus-group situation itself (e.g., face-to-face interviews, everyday conversations among friends, academic seminars, debates on TV, medical consultation). All these situations and social roles, that may have been experienced by the participants either directly or indirectly through cultural objects such as films, narratives, etc. (Zittoun, 2006), are liable to frame their activity in the focus group and to orientate their answer (Marková et al., 2007); (b) the pole of the *Object* is diffracted in the tasks that present some similarities with the present one (for example discussing an article in a newspaper) and in all the stories that are similar to the dilemma, typically stories in newspapers, rumours, lawsuits, etc.; (c) on the pole of the *Other*, there are absent real, virtual or generic third parties who might for some reason orientate the subject's opinion. There are also the researchers who lead this study, as well as a potential and invisible audience, for example the readers of scientific publications, other students, etc.

In this context, we may consider that the participants' definition of this focus-group situation, and of the task, is an outcome of the dialogical tensions resulting from the intermingling between the here-and-now of the situation and the numerous other there-and then situations and discourses that are relevant for the participants (Marková et al., 2007).

Conclusion

Our starting point for this article was that dialogical approaches to the self face two challenges: avoiding social reductionism and accounting for some sort of stability of the self (Salgado & Gonçalves; 2007). We discussed them by considering three issues.

The first referred to the notion of Other that, as we showed, has been conceptualised in various ways within theories of the dialogical self. We stressed that the Other should be considered as both an *absent third party* (or voices) with whom the subject enters into a distant dialogue, *and* a "real" partner in the interaction. From the standpoint of psychology, this involves combining one theory to account for the constitutive Otherness of the Self, and another theory showing how social links promote human development. From a linguistic point of view, a theoretical model showing the various facets of dialogism (Salazar Orvig, 2005) (external, internal dialogues and autodialogues), and describing their intermingling in actual face-to-face interactions may, at least partly, account for this combination.

The second issue concerned the notions of "Inner Alter", "Inner Audience" or "Third parties". We suggested that, in order to avoid social reductionism, that is, to account for both the subject's uniqueness and his or her fundamental "Otherness", we should add a new dimension to the personal and interpersonal dimension: the transpersonal dimension that accounts for social links that refer not only to actual face-

to-face interactions but, more widely, to the individuals' experience of being linked with other people and of forming a community with shared values (Clot, 2008).

Our third issue concerned the notion of "Object". Drawing on Voloshinov, Vygotsky and other representatives of dialogism and socio-cultural psychology, we stressed that artefacts and the physical environment play a semiotic role in psychological development. However, we also stated that dialogical approaches to the self tend to reduce the Object to a discursive construction and we claimed that more attention should be paid to the Object as artefacts and on situations and their recurrences. Our argument was that the stability of the self is not necessarily a characteristic of the subject, but stems from the stability of the situations in which individuals act. In our view, the artefacts and the material world in which individuals live, as well as the routines that create similarities between situations, all contribute to constructing the stability of the self and the subject's experience of "being the same".

To summarise, we tried to show that the articulation between the dialogism of discourse and the dialogicality of the mind widens our conception of the self. Indeed, the dialogism of discourse provides us with some clues of the dialogicality of the mind, whereas the latter invites us to develop a theory showing how social interactions contribute to the construction of the self, to pay more attention to the transpersonal dimension of the social, and to consider that the material world contributes to the construction of the self. In this regard, alterity and subjectivity construct each and, like the surface of a Moebius strip, are both "inside" and "outside".

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Appendix: Transcription Norms

-	interruption
{terrible}	uncertain transcription
(xxx)	unintelligible syllables
<laughter>	contextual information, such as laughter, telephone rings, sigh, etc.
"I don't see"	reported speech
'	stress on the next syllable
LOUD	capitals indicate speaking aloud
::::::	stretched sound
.	end of an utterance
,	short pause (to delimit syntaxic units)
+	pauses within a turn (++= 1 sec)
§xxx§	overlaps