

The Dialogical Mind

Dialogue has become a central theoretical concept in human and social sciences as well as in professions such as education, health and psychotherapy. This ‘dialogical turn’ emphasises the importance of social relations and interaction to our behaviour and how we make sense of the world; hence, the *Dialogical Mind* is the mind in interaction with others – with individuals, groups, institutions and cultures in historical perspectives. Through a combination of rigorous theoretical work and empirical investigation, Marková presents an ethics of dialogicality as an alternative to the narrow perspective of individualism and cognitivism that has traditionally dominated the field of social psychology. The dialogical perspective, which focuses on interdependencies among the Self and Others, offers a powerful theoretical basis to comprehend, analyse and discuss complex social issues. Marková considers the implications of dialogical epistemology both in daily life and in professional practices involving problems of communication, care and therapy.

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Common Sense and Ethics

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For Iša, Pavel and Sacha

Nechápu vesmír jako pevné body hvězd, ale jako víření kosmických těles, hmotu pak jako víření atomů a jako vztahy sil. V obrazech se snažím vyjádřit vnitřní dynamickou skutečnost kolem nás, nejsou tedy něco abstraktního a nereálného, i když tak snad povrchnímu pozorovateli na první pohled připadají.

[I do not conceive the universe as fixed points of stars but rather as a swirling of cosmic bodies, with mass consisting of a swirling of atoms and the interrelationship of forces. In my paintings I try to express the inner dynamic reality around us. My paintings are therefore not of something abstract or unreal even if at first glance they might appear thus to a superficial observer.]

Jan Špála, about his painting *Dobrodružství poznávání*
[*The adventure of knowing*] 1968.

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Preface and acknowledgements

Throughout my career as a social scientist my primary interest has been the study of thinking and its manifestation in language. Before arriving in the United Kingdom from Czechoslovakia in 1967, I worked in the field of cognitive psychology. In accord with the philosophical and cultural heritage of Central European scholars like Herder, Humboldt and Hegel, and Russian psychologists like Vygotsky and Rubinstein, I considered thought and language as social phenomena. When I arrived in the United Kingdom, I discovered that language and thinking were primarily studied as capacities of the individual. Thus, I thought – a different country means a different culture – I was in the wrong field. I should not be in cognitive but in social psychology. I therefore applied for a position as a lecturer in social psychology at the University of Stirling, United Kingdom. I then realised that in social psychology, too, the individual was the primary interest of study; explorations of social phenomena were derived from the capacities of the individual. I did not understand why social psychology conceived the individual as the basis for the study of thinking and speaking, and I involved myself in a life-long struggle to comprehend this question. In the book on *Paradigms, Thought and Language* (1982), I contrasted Cartesian and Hegelian epistemologies and their reflections in the psychology of thought, language and action. This study only partially solved my problem: social psychology followed the Cartesian rather than the Hegelian way of thought. During the 1980s two important socially orientated approaches came to the fore: Western scholarship discovered Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism and, approximately at the same time, Serge Moscovici's theory of social representations provided an approach in social psychology that was based on the interdependence between the Self and Other(s) or the Ego–Alter¹. These two approaches seemed to provide a theoretical foundation for the development of a social – or a dialogical – approach for the study of

¹ The Self–Other(s) or the Ego–Alter are fundamental theoretical constructs in this book. Therefore, throughout this book, whenever I use these terms in capitals, I am referring to the interdependent relations between the Self and Other(s) or the Ego and Alter. If these terms appear in quotations in which capitals were not used, I stick to the original small letters. Equally I use small letters if I do not refer to these terms as theoretical constructs.

thought, language and action. After a long reflection I have attempted to clarify and develop links between these two approaches and I have discussed these issues in *Dialogicality and Social Representations* (2003a). The end of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, and the study of problems involving people with communication disabilities, led me to examine empirically, together with my colleagues, dialogical and ethical features of daily thinking. These issues form the basis for my main argument in *The Dialogical Mind: Common Sense and Ethics*. Epistemology of daily thought, language and action does not stem from 'neutral' information processing of the individual but from the ethics of dialogicality. With hindsight, I see that in my three books I have intuitively followed the same problem: a continuous struggle to understand the interdependence between the Self and Others in thought, language and action in their historical and cultural perspectives.

I learnt a great deal about dialogicality from my colleagues involved with the care of, and research into, congenital deafblindness. I would like to thank the following persons in the working group for the Deafblind International Network on Communication and Congenital Deafblindness: Marlene Daelman, Paul Hart, Marleen Janssen, Flemming Ask Larsen, Anne Nafstad, Inger Rødbrøe, Jacques Souriau and Ton Visser. In addition, Franck Bearteu and Gunnar Vege as well as other students provided very interesting insights into deafblindness. I thank *Signo Kompetansesenter* in Oslo for giving me permission to reprint photographs (Figures 7.1 and 7.2) and to refer to materials based on the DVD *Traces*. I also thank Ingerid's family for permission to use materials from Gunnar Vege's research. Gunnar Vege gave me permission to reprint long quotations from his MSc thesis; he also drew my attention to an issue I missed.

A study group on common sense initiated by Martin Bauer and myself at the London School of Economics and Political Science has provided opportunities for discussions of common sense and science with Jorge Jesuino, Helene Joffe, Sandra Jovchelovitch, Nikos Kalampalikis, Cliodhna O'Connor, Chris Tennant and others.

I presented some aspects of this book at conferences in London, Zurich, San Paulo, Evora, Louvain, Neuchâtel, Naples and Helsinki, and in lectures to postgraduate students at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

I wish to thank Dr I. S. Marková for reading twice the whole text; she drew my attention to theoretical inconsistencies, structural imbalances and lack of clarity; she corrected my English and provided some references. Of course, any remaining errors are my own responsibility. I am also grateful to Alex Gillespie, who read the whole manuscript and suggested typographical changes and corrections. I discussed many issues with Per Linell, who drew my attention to issues in the book that could be misunderstood.

I started working on this book during the period of my Emeritus Fellowship awarded by the Leverhulme Trust, and I wish to acknowledge the Trust's generous support to enable me to complete my empirical studies on trust and responsibility.

Since 2007 I have been a Visiting Professor in the Department of Social Psychology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. I thank the successive Heads of the Department for their support: Sandra Jovchelovitch, Saadi Lahlou and Cathy Campbell. I greatly benefitted from the friendly and inspirational atmosphere of all my colleagues and postgraduate students.

I am thankful to the Kodl gallery in Prague for permission to reproduce the painting of Jan Špála *Dobrodružství poznávání* [*The adventure of knowing*] which I bought from the gallery.

Figure 1.1 was designed by Clíodhna O'Connor for her research and is reprinted with her permission. Figure 4.5, the Toblerone model, was originally published in Bauer, M. W. and Gaskell, G. (1999) 'Towards a paradigm for research on social representations', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 29: 163–186. Copyright © 1999 by John Wiley and Sons, Inc. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley and Sons, Inc. Figures 4.6 and 5.1 are reprinted from Zittoun, T. (2014a), 'Trusting for learning', pp. 134 and 145, in P. Linell and I. Marková, (2014) (eds.). *Dialogical Approaches to Trust in Communication*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishers. Copyright © 2014 by Information Age Publishing, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Information Age Publishing, Inc. Figures 6.1 and 6.2 are reprinted by permission of 123RF.

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