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Determinants of Organization of Dialogical Self-Personalistic Perspective

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DETERMINANTS OF ORGANIZATION OF DIALOGICAL SELF – PERSONALISTIC PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

The presented article comprises an analysis of conditions which determine the organization of dialogical self. It is hypothesized that a dialogue between I-positions is determined by the way in which these I-positions can gratify I-motives. The author presumes that I-motives are a manifestation of personal attributes which are typical for human beings. I-positions which are able to gratify personal attributes would also be experienced as gratifying self-enhancement (S) and union with others (O) motives. Personal attributes are treated as a more fundamental source of I-motives than motives O and S. In this light, the author contends, that the S and O motives should be regarded as indicators of the realization of I-motives. The way of gratification of I-motives becomes a crucial reason for considering the ways of dialogical self organization.

At the same time, it seems that only these I-positions which are, *sensu largo*, “permeated” with other person’s presence (only a person allows to realize subject’s attributes such as identity or dignity) would have special meaning; only in this perspective the elements of culture, the past and future figures become meaningful for the subject. It is an interpretation in the spirit of personalistic thinking, which maintains, that all processes can be understood only if they are rooted in personhood and related to person. Consequences of I-motives frustration lead to some form of emotional commitment. A subject is forced by necessity to cope with emotional states and these states restrict possibilities to discover new I-positions. That is why the dialogical self may be in a phase of crisis and in a state of rigidity.

Key words: I-motives, person, dialogical self

1. INTRODUCTION

The author of the following article would like to propose distinct enough interpretation of mechanisms determining a quality of dialogical self. According to Hermans (1993, 2000, 2003) self has a dialogical nature; it is both an experiencing and an experienced subject; it is able to adopt different perspectives, to locate itself in positions ensuring better understanding of itself or to create an illusion of better

understanding of itself. Here one may pose a fundamental question – what kind of causes produce diverse types of organization of dialogical self? I suppose that explanations of self-development which deal with the sources of motivation are still very promising. The sources of motivation and the way motivations are fulfilled seem to be the main cause, the cornerstone of development of human personality. Primarily, it is psychoanalysis (though not only psychoanalysis) that strongly emphasizes the importance of this reality. However, the theory of dialogical self motivation and its sources may also become the foundation of an interpretation of self-development. The basis for estimating the quality of dialogical self on the level of experience (being the subject's own experience registered by an outer observer), is feeling treated as a manifest motive. In the psychoanalytic studies feelings are treated as a form of manifest motives. Manifest motives in turn stimulate the quest for their background or basis – and here we enter the second, deeper level, the level of hidden motives. In the case of psychoanalysts these hidden motives are drives, needs etc. In the case of Hermans' valuation theory the most rudimentary motives are the ones called self-enhancement motives (S) and union with others motives (O). I am really convinced that it is a very promising interpretation. Nevertheless one may ask the question, whether these motives are absolutely essential. It is worth discussing if there are some different kinds or categories of motives.

If we take into account natural human strivings, there can be no doubt about the interactive nature of man (human being can find fulfillment only in relations with others and thanks to the quality of these relations). The need to be bound with others becomes an expression of it. At the beginning, I'd like to consider mechanisms of self-development in the light of two theoretical propositions presented by William James and Hubert J.M. Hermans.

2. CRITERIA OF SELF DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIGHT OF JAMES' AND HERMANS' ANALYSES

Dialogue, in its simplest form, means openness and capability to take miscellaneous positions in which the I can be located. Depending on the opportunity and significance or necessity of discerning more fully an experienced reality, the I is able to enter a dialogue with different forms or versions of me. Dialogue means an ability to take different I-positions and openness to a stream of experiences, which stimulate individual development. Dialogue may also become impoverished, i.e. carried on only by means of certain forms of reality (for instance, the I may take the form of "I-as-somebody-accepted-only-if-in-relation-to-others"). Obviously, one may interpret this in a different way – Cooper (2003) for example indicates different forms of dialogical self which were earlier described by Buber: the "I-Thou" "I-It" dialogues.

Anyway, dialogue is a form of relation, and its quality depends on emotional and motivational processes in individuals engaged in it. An encounter of two perspectives creates specific emotional and motivational states. James (1954) who introduced two forms of the I, the I-as-a-subject (self-as-knower) and the I-as-an-object (self-as-known), emphasized that between different forms of Me and within a recognized Me, conflicts and rivalries may have appeared. They are the result of different urges, human motives and constrictions which stem from the properties of human nature.

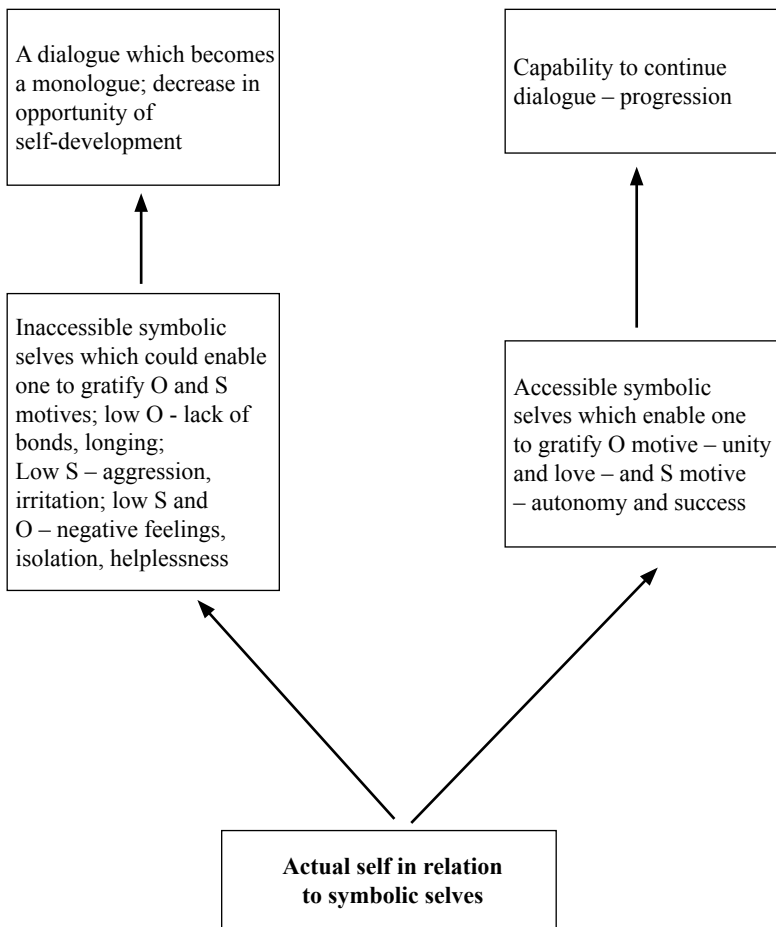
Sometimes a person concentrates only on the specific form of Me in which he/she emotionally engages (James called this emotional engagement a “self-feeling”). In the course of life, human being should focus on some features of Me to realize his/her own life tasks more effectively. Reversals suffered by the chosen version of Me might be a sore experience, but successes would be satisfying. For example, one wouldn’t find fulfillment as a scientist if this didn’t limit his/her aspirations of engagement in the family life. Choices lead therefore to realization of certain kinds of motives and, in consequence, produce adequate emotional states. These experienced emotional attitudes towards diverse figures of Me create together the quality of self-esteem. Moreover, the multiplicity of Me figures enables to establish specific hierarchical organization. For example, if in the case of Me-as-a-scientist reversals outnumber successes, this version of Me may be situated on a very low position in the hierarchical organization. And conversely, if in the case of Me-as-a-father-of-a-family successes outnumber reversals, Me-as-a-father may take a higher position in the hierarchical organization. All this indicates that dialogues between different forms (figures) of Me and between I and Me may sometimes have discrepant shapes. The dialogue between I as a subject and this version of Me which depreciates self-esteem may be broken. James’s interpretation proves that motivational and emotional states play significant role in the development of Me organization.

Are there any criteria of correctness of Me organization development according to James? It seems to me that the general laws of development could be sufficient enough. For example, the “material me” should be on the lowest level in a hierarchical organization, whereas the “spiritual me” should take the position on the top. I’ll return to this interpretation later. But first, it is necessary to take a look at Hermans’ theoretical proposition.

Hermans (1976, 1987a, 1987b, 1993, 2003) emphasizes the “polyphonic” character of the self. This “polyphony” may be described as an immanent capability of the I to take different positions (specified as “I-positions”). “The I is always positioned in time and space; as parts of a polyphonic novel the different I-positions are embodied in voices and able to entertain dialogical relationships, both internal and external, with other voices” (Hermans 2003, p. 101). By virtue of interactive nature of the I, it can move and allow dialogue to take place between different positions. The quality of this dialogue is signalled by the quality of feelings elicited from I-positions. Recurrence of feelings elicited from I-positions may be regarded as a foundation of the development of personal self-awareness. And this form of self-awareness would be mainly responsible for the quality of a further dialogue. Moreover, by reason of emotional involvement, a dialogue may change into a monologue (psychotic state seems to be an extreme form of such a monologue) – the I is then focused only on one specific I-position (this is my own interpretation). Every disorder may therefore be described as the essentially monological organization of the I. The monologue is indicative of the dominance of a given I-position over all other positions. Transition from dialogue to monologue should be regarded as a form of blocked experiencing process. This blockade suggests a dominance of a specific form of symbolic self which enables one to develop a vision of himself/herself. Concentration on the specific symbolic self leads in consequence to rigidity and closeness of potential I-positions (compare Hermans 1976, 2000).

Perhaps, this is the main reason why the capability of experience processing is regarded as a fundamental criterion of the correctness of dialogue. Accessibility of different symbolic experiencing selves is an indication of the opportunity to realize simultaneously two hidden motives (e.g. S and O). In other words, it means that an individual can refer to different I-positions, which by themselves have a potential to fulfill S and O motives.

Figure 1.
Criteria of correctness of dialogue – based on Hermans' theory



If we consider the forms of Me distinguished by James and treat them as I-positions, then perhaps our new interpretation will be legitimate. According to this interpretation, capability to carry on a dialogue depends on the opportunity to gratify S and O motives in relation to important figures of Me (see table 1).

Table 1. Integration of Hermans's and James's theories – the author's proposition

I-as-known				I-as-knower
Physical (material) me	Active me	Social me	Psychological (spiritual) me	
Subject has an access to such figures of material me, that enable him/her to gratify S and O motives	Subject has an access to such figures of active me, that enable him/her to gratify S and O motives	Subject has an access to such figures of social me, that enable him/her to gratify S and O motives	Subject has an access to such figures of psychological me, that enable him/her to gratify S and O motives	Subject experiences a sense of continuity, agency and individuality, that enable him/her to gratify S and O motives

3. DELIBERATION ON THE NATURE OF A PERSON AS THE SOURCE OF MOTIVES

Is the presented interpretation sufficient to understand the quality of dialogical self organization? From the practical point of view, it could be. But, there is a question whether O and S motives are the principal ones. I would like to consider this point from an ontological perspective.

From the point of view of an outer observer the most palpable phenomena are human activities and their results. Human activities may be treated as an expression of motives (this is of course a result of deduction). What matters here is the character of these motives and the question concerning their ability to explain activities: which of the motives best explains a given activity? I suppose that this dilemma is the cause of such diversity of interpretations in contemporary psychology – the category of motive engenders different psychological approaches such as psychoanalysis, existential psychology etc. Secondly, activities (and motives as their source) have interactive nature - they can be realized only in interaction with certain objects, persons, etc. These might be psychological clichés, but this reasoning is important for further analysis.

What are the results of so many psychological studies on activities and motivations? Analysis of various motivation theories reveals a special and fundamental role of self (me, I) as a central structure. Dominant motives (which are the source of other strivings) such as a tendency to be competent, efficient, to anticipate, to maintain self-esteem and dignity etc., unavoidably point to the I as a core (or an effective source) of motivation. Even theories which emphasize the importance of social learning and self-regulation, which return to behavioral situationism and functionalism, refer nonetheless to intentionality and agency. The I becomes the cause and object of regulation processing in the interactions with environment. If one accepts the assumption that the I is either a source or a final criterion in the creation of motives, one must also take into account the attributes of human nature. These attributes should be seen as the essential sources of human motives (more about it in Gasiul 2002, 2007).

Motives related to the I confirm originality of human motivation as compared to that of other living beings. Moreover, the I is like a lens in which total oneness (*unitas multiplex*) is focused. With this we're turning now to the essence of my argument. Discovering the sources of motives requires reference to human nature. Referring to this nature means that we reach a general level of interpretation; from this perspective one may interpret and predict more precisely the specificity of behaviour. This specificity can be modeled using as an analogy the principle of adaptation (the process of adaptation explains specific human behaviour). And, by the way, what does the word "nature" mean? After Swieżawski (1983, p. 119) we may define nature "as a stable and unchangeable basis of activities...; something that determines that we are people, not the other species of animals and something that makes our activities proceed in the specific way". Thus, human nature and its attributes leave their mark on every behaviour. Taking into consideration fundamental results of psychological research indicating a basic and specific role played by the I, it is legitimate to presume that human beings have a nature which is absolutely original and inimitable. No other word renders this originality better than the word "person". Man has a personal nature then. Having a personal nature means that human being has the potentiality or opportunity to behave in a specific way, determined by the attributes of this nature (compare the analyses of philosophers, e.g. Krapiec 1974, Swieżawski 1983). The person is at his/her own disposal, administers his own resources and delineates his own pathway of development. Obviously, there are many definitions of the person (compare Gacka 1996, Kowalczyk 1995). I accept the one which describes the person as "subjective-spiritual I (Me) who has at his disposal freedom, rationality, who has the property of transcending time and space". Identification of I with the person stems from an undoubtedly subjective character of individual acts. A person is "an individual, concrete, substantial and dynamic whole, aware of himself/herself, and subject to continuous development and improvement" (Krapiec 1974, p. 289). Paradoxically, motives related to the I (let me call them I-motives) indicate the attributes of a person. Psychological analysis proves that fundamental motives should be reduced to the following: a/ striving for comprehension and self-awareness; b/ striving for discovery of self-identity and public identity; c/ striving for subjectivity, self-management; d/ striving for authorship and responsibility for one's own activities; e/ striving for creative development, capability to transcend the here and now in the direction of the future; f/ striving for maintenance of one's own dignity, self-valuation; g/ striving for maintenance of privacy (intimacy) of one's own inner world. These motives have been analyzed by many researchers (compare Gasiul 2007, p. 427-456, Hormuth 1990, Reeve 2005) and they also indicate the attributes of human nature. Obviously, these attributes belong to a deduced level, a very general level - the one which allows to assume that prediction and interpretation of individual behaviour and personality is possible. In other words, motives related to the I indicate person's attributes among which we can mention respectively: a/ rationality and self-awareness; b/ identity and continuity (or agency); c/ freedom and intentionality; d/ responsibility; e/ creativity (transcendence); f/ dignity; g/ intimacy and privacy (inner independence and being decisive).

The attributes mentioned above (general level – ontological perspective) describe human nature and that is the reason why they are peculiar sources of creativity in

individual behaviours. Person's attributes are dynamic entities and their gratification is possible only through interaction with other persons. Attributes manifest themselves on the psychological level as motives related to the I. They are similar to needs or drives – they have to be satisfied (as hunger drive pushes an individual to satisfy it, so analogically striving after dignity forces an individual to assure its gratification).

4. FULFILLMENT OF PERSONAL NATURE AND REALIZATION OF I-MOTIVES

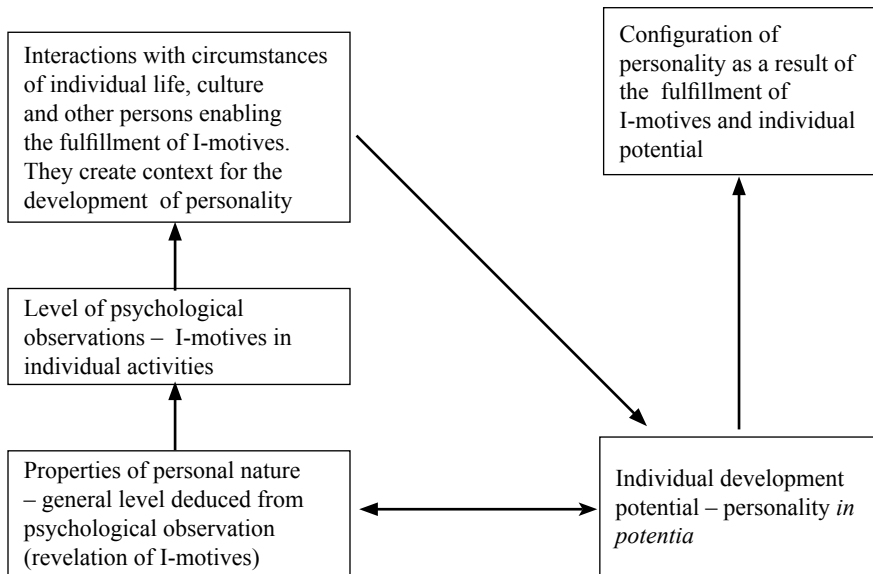
If the reasoning presented above is correct, it seems that development of a person should be conceptualized as a striving for fulfillment of person's attributes (rationality, responsibility, etc.). As a consequence (and depending on possibility of fulfilling person's attributes) an opportunity to realize individual personality potential appears. Human personality is in a state of permanent becoming and its specific "colour" depends on individual experiences and interactions. Of special importance for this becoming, as I suggest, is the way in which person's attributes are realized. Moreover, the fulfillment of striving after identity, freedom, dignity, etc., is determined not only by the individual way of living (one's interactions, experiences, etc.), but also by a given culture in which a subject is anchored – all these elements would contribute to the development of a specific pattern of individual personality.

Seen from a perspective of subjective experience, an emotional state (if it recurs) is a manifestation of the way in which the attributes are fulfilled. It may take a form of a second order (or manifest) motive. Possible disturbance of the very possibility to fulfill personal attributes gives rise to emotionally negative states; whereas unhindered opportunity to fulfill personal attributes results in emotionally positive states. Recurrence of activated emotional states strengthens in effect certain types of activities and becomes responsible for the quality of emotional self (conception of emotional self points to the central role of emotions in engendering the sense of the self and subjectivity; moreover, subjective conception of emotions is integral to a broader conception of the self – compare analysis in Gasiul 2001, Lupton 1998). In other words, the recurrence produces capability to orient certain I-positions. Naturally, personal attributes can be realized only in relations with other persons. During the period of childhood personal attributes of a child can be realized in his/her relations with parents – father and mother secure the sense of identity, dignity, the sense of freedom, etc. Thanks to the realization of personal attributes, a child "opens" to external and internal reality. In the period of adolescence relations with peers have a special importance – for example, playing football may have a special function because it allows to gain the sense of dignity or public identity. But playing football would not matter if it was not "confirmed" by adolescent peers. Later, this activity may become totally unimportant.

I dare to suppose that interactions (relations) with other persons mould individual cognitive-affective schemes and motivational dispositions. If the way in which personal attributes are fulfilled determines the quality of personality development, it should also explain the quality of the development of dialogical self. Dialogical self is a sphere "saturated" with individual experiences and the ways in which personal attributes were realized in the past.

Figure 2.

Fulfillment of person's nature and personality development – scheme of discussed interpretation



5. ROADS LEADING TO ORGANIZATION OF DIALOGICAL SELF

Dialogical self is in the state of becoming, it is fluent. Nevertheless, it also becomes a figure of relative stability, because some valuation areas retain their significance throughout the whole individual life course (e.g. the area of family or employment). If we deal with this within the framework Dialogical Self Theory, we can say that certain I-positions are stable. As regards the fundamental principles of development, it is possible to determine the character of a dialogue in various life periods. For instance, regarding the principle “development proceeds from more concrete states to more abstract states” and the principle “development proceeds from states which require referring to external reality to states of internal reality” one may suppose that an external dialogue with other persons or interaction with other objects should be of utmost importance, but later, thanks to the process of internalization, it should take a form of a dialogue which is partly internal. In other words, an external dialogue which appears in an earlier phase of individual development gives an opportunity to create structures which later become an object of internal dialogue. Numerous analyses and research studies (e.g. by theorists of object relations or attachment) convey the opinion that forming inner psychic structures requires appropriate interaction with significant persons, interaction which would establish some kind of foundation or basis the character of which will be determined by the way I-motives are gratified. This foundation will be responsible for engendering dialogical self and for further interactions with other persons. In later periods, after the basis is correctly formed, even if I-motives are frustrated, the capability to dialogue will be maintained.

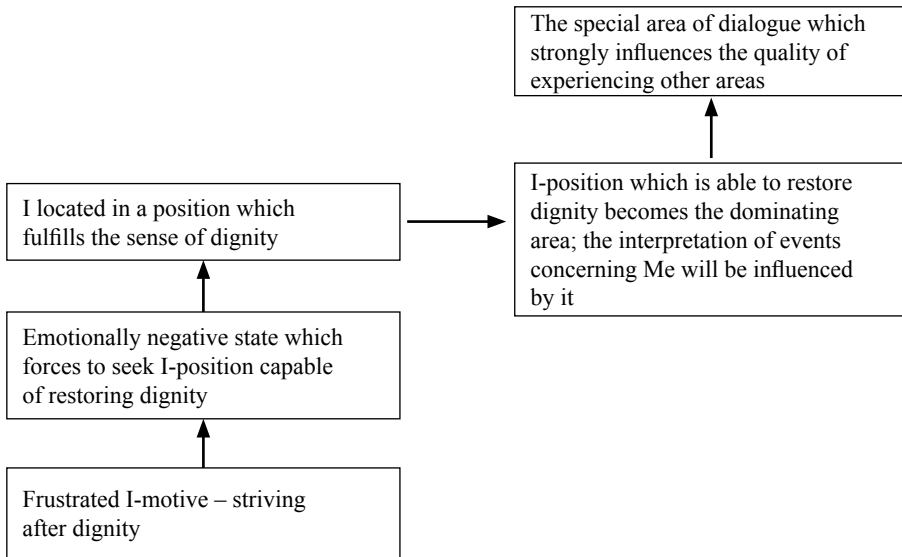
However, the abused basis will always produce emotionally difficult states. It is reasonable to suppose that unfulfilled I-motives become some sort of a center or core engaging psychic energy. Individual will therefore be “steered” by affective rules.

My analysis may be also formulated in a different way. Taking into consideration that personal attributes are the most dynamic sources, their frustration will always give rise to strong emotional states. These emotional states will in turn “radiate” on already accumulated and new experiences, and thus will become motives stimulating the search for such valuation areas which could gratify personal attributes (or, in psychological formulation, I-motives). One may say that these states would dictate strategies and ways of information processing.

Probably, the abused forms of external interaction which frustrate I-motives will

Figure 3.

I-motives and quality of dialogue (the example here is striving after dignity)

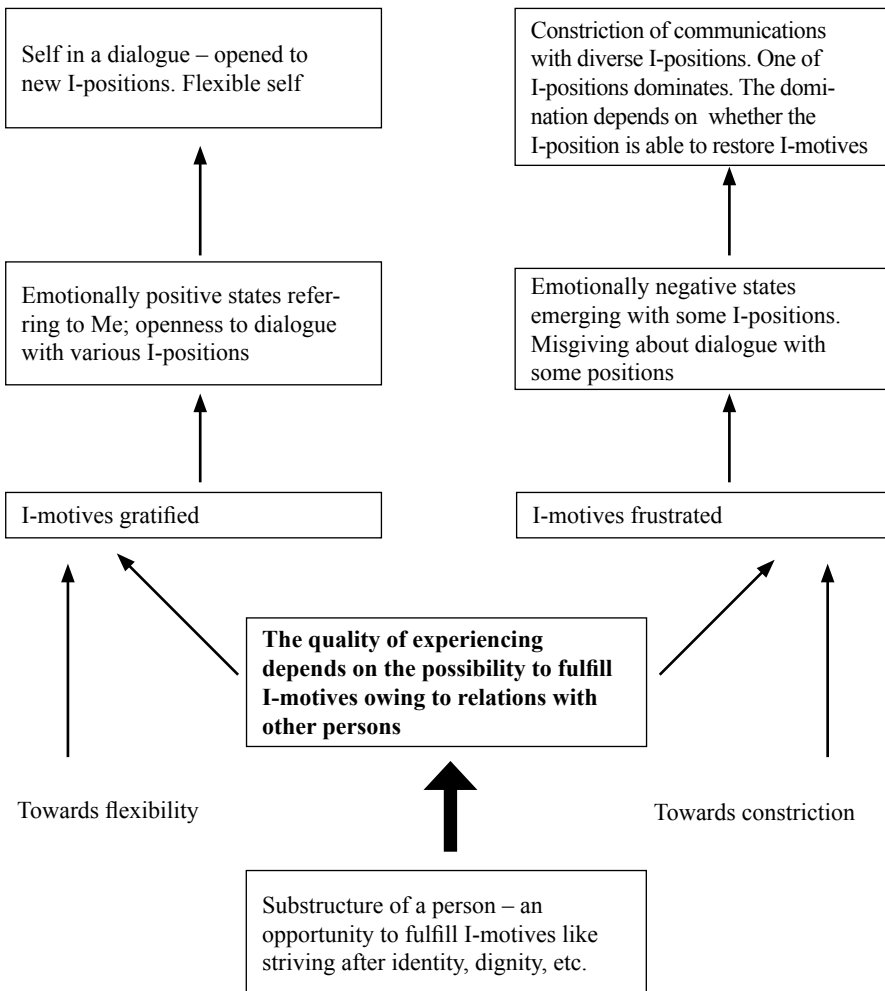


create a disposition to search for such areas which could compensate this frustration. That is why the dialogue will focus on areas (or valuations) compensating unfulfilled I-motives. In consequence, these valuations take a dominant position in individual awareness and experiencing process. The perspective of these compensating I-positions may further determine the quality of external interactions. Perhaps, this mechanism explains the behaviour of narcissistic persons (they gain self-esteem thanks to other persons' admiration). Anyway, the lack of opportunity to fulfill I-motives leads to the discovery of I-positions which allow to compensate for it. The reasoning I'm presenting here may perhaps be justified by the analysis of Michelangelo phenomenon (after Drigotas 2002). This analysis confirms that affirmation by significant person “promotes” the subject to open up a dialogue with a diversity of his/her ideal I-positions. Hermans (2004) emphasizes in this case the

role of promoter position, which creates the space for future development of different I-positions.

It is worth emphasizing that an obstruction of a dialogue with I-position may occur which deepens the frustration of personal attributes. It is a mechanism well described by psychoanalysts, which consists on barring the access to a threatening piece of information. Reduction of a dialogue to some I-positions limits the dialogical self's capability of development and exposes the subject to the danger of a dialogue being conversed into a monologue. The reasoning presented above can be retraced schematically as follows:

Figure 4.
The way of self-development



This mechanism is analogical to coercion exerted by passion. Coercion transgresses the limits of one sphere; it operates like compulsion when other experiences are subordinated to it. In this case I-motives are fulfilled in relation to the passion area. In the passion and thanks to the passion, personal attributes may be realized. This perhaps explains why so many people are deeply immersed in the world of their fervent feelings.

But sometimes a withdrawal from a dialogue with accessed I-positions might occur – an individual doesn't become aware of or doesn't want to open to some I-positions preferring to "stay where he/she is". This activity of "staying where one is" becomes a certain form of a dialogue – an individual is more active and seeks sensations instead of thinking about other forms of dialogue. Perhaps, this is some sort of defensive mechanism against frustrating I-positions.

In this context, answering the question "why is the way in which O and S motives are fulfilled insufficient for explaining dialogical self organization?" is essential. I assume that S and O motives are only secondary, if compared to what I have previously defined as I-motives (which are human nature and personal attributes). In my opinion, if one accepts my deduction, one may regard O and S motives as the result of activation of I-motives. For example, many researchers (Kernberg 1976, Kohut 1977, Winnicott 1965) point to the quality of relations with objects as a basis of development of the self (or ego) structure. But this development takes place only when relations with objects enable child's self-esteem to be gratified, create child's identity etc. Consequently, gratification of I-motives stimulates the emergence of S motive. In other words, O and S motives are instruments which can realize I-motives. I-motives are the basis of S and O motives. An individual strives to establish relation with others (O motive) in order to fulfill I-motives. As a result, S motive may be initiated. Or, to put the same thing differently, S motive is activated only when O motive is satisfied. There is no other way – I am unable to develop only by myself (the development is impossible outside the relations with others; other people serve as a criterion, support, mirror, and the like).

Most probably, love is the essence of human development. It fills human being with energy, because it gives a chance of positive realization of his/her dignity and opens new space for experience. It creates an opportunity to be active, to gain positive self-esteem, feel free etc. This, however, is a problematic enough issue to exceed the limits of any psychological analysis.

Finally, there is a problem posed by the so called personification of I-positions. I think that inherent in each I-position is the activity of imagining the relation with other person as well as certain emotional quality (this latter depending on the extent to which I-motives are realized by this I-position). This aspect of my interpretation is rather difficult, I suppose, especially if we take into account the special role of personal attributes, if we regard it as a specific source generating emotional states. Frustration of the possibility to fulfill I-motives gives rise to emotionally negative states and reveals a tendency to concentrate on them. The concentration on the experienced emotional state and striving for restoration of well-being would provoke deterioration of subject's awareness. When a dialogue with special I-position

undermines someone's dignity, a tendency to search another I-position emerges which restores one's well-being and detaches one from frustrating I-position.

But not only frustration of attributes will lead to the search of compensating valuation areas. Equally important is the separation from such meaning areas which could infringe on I-motives (for example, one may separate himself/herself from thinking about the relation with X because this relation would generate the sense of worthlessness). It goes without saying that dialogical self has its own inner construction. And I hypothesize that this construction is established and maintained in accordance with the hierarchy of I-positions which are able to fulfill I-motives, may disturb this fulfillment, as well as compensate its deficiencies. This is the reason why we may say that dialogical self is always filled with personal charge, i.e. the actual I (Hermans's term) is always oriented towards the symbolic I (I-positions) which is more or less marked by interaction experiences of a person.

I assume that taking into account the idealizations is also very important, if we want to understand the development of dialogical self. By "idealization" I mean imagined states of reality or comfortable states of reality to which an individual may aspire and which do not jeopardize the fulfillment of I-motives. Idealizations are created according to the following rule: I become open to something which can fulfill my I-motives (it might be Internet or some other thing). Idealizations are important and pivotal only if they are adequate enough to fulfill I-motives.

So, as I suppose, there are some roads of dialogical self development which a subject may choose or which are the result of his past experiences with other persons. These roads of dialogical self development are conditioned by the ways of striving after the realization of I-motives:

A/ the subject may find relations with others which are able to gratify I-motives (there is an ability to be open to diverse I-positions)

B/ I-motives are frustrated by real relations with others – as a result the emotional tension is revealed (a subject is under pressure to search I-positions which could compensate for frustrated I-motives)

C/ there is no frustration of I-motives, but the subject doesn't find an opportunity to discover such relations with others which could ensure the gratification of I-motives – an individual is in search of idealizations (for example, the search for deluding I-positions such as "I as a worthy person on the Internet", "I as a religious emissary").

As a consequence, individual dialogical self may develop very specific organization. It seems possible to distinguish four types of this organization: a/ dialogical self in harmony (flexible, ready to open to new I-positions, capable of modification) – full accessibility of dialogue with different I-positions; b/ dialogical self concentrated on some I-positions which guarantee realization of I-motives; c/ dialogical self blocked – monologue and concentration on a subjective emotional condition; d/ dialogical self focused on imaginative, idealized I-positions, which are separated from real experiences and actual interpersonal relations. Each of these forms is subject to different rules.

Summarizing the arguments presented in this article, I permit myself to assume that diagnostic procedure should concentrate on such categories of feelings which

may be related to I-motives, but not only to Hermans' S and O motives. For example, "I-in-relation-with-my-mother" may be experienced as a sense of strength and unity (+HH), but this happens because "mother" raises my dignity (self-respect), allows me to be autonomous and, as a result, contributes to self-enhancement and attachment. "I-in-relation-with-employer" may be experienced as a sense of helplessness and isolation (-LL), because "employer" neglects my competence, depreciates my self-esteem and the result is frustration of S and O motives. Furthermore, S motive is activated thanks to the possibility of fulfillment of O motive. There is no S motive without O motive; S amplifies only by realization of O motive. One could imagine an analysis of dialogical self as an analysis of frequency of experienced feelings towards specific I-position, which fulfills I-motives, and in consequence creates configuration +HH. In other words, the subject enters a dialogue with some I-positions because one of them creates the sense of freedom, another one reveals the sense of rationality (for example "me-in-relation-with-the-Ultimate"), and still another one strengthens the sense of dignity (for instance "me-in-relation-with-beloved-girl"), etc. Fulfillment of personal attributes (i.e. I-motives) creates an opportunity to affect O and S motives, but these motives are something derivative.

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