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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

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DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY: INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

From its first inception, Dialogical Self Theory is developing as a conceptual framework that is open to a great variety of phenomena in the social sciences and beyond. The theory brings together two familiar concepts, self and dialogue, in such a way that an “unfamiliar” combination emerges with the potential to disclose a broad range of phenomena that were earlier beyond the reach of self and dialogue as separate fields of study. The combination of the two concepts has the theoretical advantage that we can understand that dialogues are taking place not only between different individuals or between groups, but also within the self of the individual person. People develop dialogical relationships not only with other people, but also with themselves. By placing internal psychological processes in the broader context of external social and societal processes, a basic theoretical link is created between self and society. In this sense, the dialogical self rejects any antinomy between self and society and explicitly addresses their interface.

From a historical perspective Dialogical Self Theory is rooted in two different traditions. One is the theoretical conception of the self originally exposed by William James (1890) one of the main proponents of American pragmatism. The other is the dialogical school with Mikhail Bakhtin (1929/1973) as its main representative. Dialogical Self Theory is inspired by both traditions and profits from the richness of insights that have emerged from them over the past and present century. Although the theory and its expansion is inspired by the two traditions, we explicitly want to go beyond their original conceptions by studying individual, social, and societal phenomena on the interface of self and dialogue.

In its first formulation (Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992), the dialogical self was conceived of in terms of a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I-positions in the landscape of the mind and it was argued that the mind can only be properly understood when its functioning is considered in the context of other people’s minds. This social aspect was explicitly included in the theory by assuming that the I has the possibility to move, as in a space, from one position to another in accordance with changes of situation and time. The I fluctuates among different and even opposed positions. And it has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that dialogical

relations between positions can be established. The voices function like interacting characters in a story. Once a character is set in motion in a story, it takes on a life of its own and thus assumes a certain narrative necessity. Each character has a story to tell about experiences from its own stance. As different voices these characters exchange information about their respective Me(s) and their worlds, and the result is a complex, narratively structured self.

Since its original formulation in 1992, Dialogical Self Theory has stimulated a vast amount of studies that demonstrate its fertility. Apart from a large number of articles and books, special issues in a variety of scientific journals were devoted to the theory and its implications. In *Culture & Psychology* (2001, Vol. 7, no. 3), a more detailed conceptualization of personal and cultural positioning was exposed and commented on. In *Theory & Psychology* (2002, vol. 12, no. 2)), dialogical self theory was discussed from a diversity of (sub)disciplinary perspectives: developmental psychology, psychotherapy, psychopathology, brain sciences, cultural psychology, personality psychology, Jungian psychoanalysis, and semiotic dialogism. In the *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* (2003, vol. 16, no. 2), authors explored the implications of dialogical self theory for personal construct psychology, the philosophy of Martin Buber, self-narratives in psychotherapy, and a psychodramatic approach in psychotherapy. The notion of mediated dialogue in a global and digital age was the subject of a special issue in *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* (2004, vol. 4, no. 4). In *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* (2006, vol. 19, no. 1), the dialogical self was applied to a variety of topics relevant to the process of counselling. In the *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* (2008, vol. 21, no. 3), several contributors presented their actual research and demonstrated how Dialogical Self Theory stimulates empirical research. Other empirical and theoretical contributions were also brought together in a volume edited by Oleś & Hermans (2005). Finally, in an extensive review article, Hermans & Dimaggio (2007) showed the implications of the theory for the experience of uncertainty in relation to the accelerated processes of globalization and localization.

In order to stimulate theory, research, and practice, *International Conferences on the Dialogical Self* are organized bi-annually, the first in Nijmegen, The Netherlands (2000), the second in Ghent, Belgium (2002), the third in Warsaw, Poland (2004), the fourth in Braga, Portugal (2006), the fifth at Cambridge University, UK (2008). The sixth conference is scheduled in Kyoto, Japan (2010).

The conferences are organized by the *International Society for Dialogical Science* (ISDS), established in 2002. This Society publishes an electronic, peer-reviewed, open access journal: the *International Journal for Dialogical Science* (IJDS) (first issue, spring 2006).

The present special issue of *Studia Psychologica* can be seen as a new and original contribution to the series of publications that have been published in the past. It comprises a series of articles by authors who not only present their own interests and contributions, but also exemplify how the theory transcends the boundaries of countries, cultures and disciplines. For the sake of overview, we briefly introduce the several contributions.

John Barresi discusses the case of John Griffin, a white man who, by changing his appearance, becomes a black man for only a short period of time. During that time he develops a black social identity that contrasts radically with his former white identity. From the perspective of both identities he becomes engaged in a dialogue with himself. Angela Branco, Ana Branco & Ana Madureira present the case of a man with AIDS and describe how he deals with his disease. They also present a second case in which they relate the story of a homosexual woman whose strong Catholic values entail a psychological dilemma that ultimately leads to the emergence of a creative new I-position. Thorsten Giesser examines the non-verbal dialogues between Siberian hunters and their prey and explores how empathetic relationships affect the integrity of the dialogical self. He shows how the hunter maintains his human identity while he imitates the movements of his prey and thereby “feels into” the animal. In a discussion of Erikson’s view of the adolescent identity and the postmodern challenge for this theory, Shinichi Mizokami makes a plea for a conception of adolescent identity that is more decentralized than usual in psychology. Along these lines he arrives at the conclusion that adolescents in the postmodern age develop two different positions in their identity formation process: the “specific-domains position”, which refers to several specific domains in the formation of self-definitions, and the “whole position”, which overarches and synthesizes potentially opposing specific domains into a whole identity. Tania Zittoun focuses her contribution on the experience of time and discusses an event that threatened the sense of time and caused strong uncertainty: World War II in England. In her discussion of the case of a young woman, she shows the relevance of social and personal time markers for establishing a sense of continuity. On the assumption that the self functions as a vocal society, Catarina Rosa and Miguel Gonçalves present a semi-structured interview, the Dialogical Articulation Task (DAT) that is applied in order to “give voice” to the multivocal assembly of I-positions in the self. In this interview, participants are invited to consider significant parts of their selves as “characters” and to narrate the possible dialogues between them. In a more quantitative study, Tomasz Rowiński explores the relationship between self and virtual space and focuses on the understanding of dysfunctional Internet use. On the basis of the data from a group of 339 participants, he discusses a series of factors determining the dysfunctional use of Internet. He finds, for example, that neuroticism and “time online” correlate positively with dysfunctional Internet use, while the experience of unity and love correlates negatively with dysfunctional use. He discusses the implications of such results for Dialogical Self Theory. Annet te Lindert and Hubert Korzilius investigate acculturation experiences among Iranian refugees in the Netherlands. Personal life-stories are described from three cultural I-positions: “I as Iranian”, “I as Dutch” and “I as Iranian/Dutch”. The authors find that it is healthier to acknowledge all cultural I-positions and give a place to all experiences of the multiple selves, even conflicting or traumatic ones. In this way they confirm central assumptions of Dialogical Self Theory that one can function as a whole despite the existence of conflicting positions. In

his contribution, Peter Raggatt argues that positioning theory, popular in the analysis of discourse, can be invoked to account for the dynamics of conflict in a dialogical self. He reports findings from a study that demonstrates interactions between personal and social positioning in the formation of the dialogical self. He argues that the self embodies the personal and the social simultaneously and holds that a reduction of the self to pure “social construction”, or its reverse, a self-contained reflexivity, reveals a reductionist point of view that ultimately limits productive inquiry. Maria Lyra and Marie-Cécile Bertau discuss the phenomenon of “abbreviation of dialogue” in different phases of the life-cycle. A microanalytic investigation of abbreviated mother-infant dialogues suggests that the infant is differentiating his or her position in a dialogue through the condensation of a relational history. The partner’s mutual understanding can rely on a well shared “mass of apperception” that enable dialogues to proceed almost without language. On the basis of their analyses, the authors conclude that the self is dialogical because it has internalized a selection of historically constructed interchanges that are abbreviated and condensed. Jaap Bos and Peter Zomer focus on “humorous learning” as a specific form of engagement in which contradicting or opposing voices are incorporated into the position-system through the use of humor. The authors present data from a case study in which a training session was evaluated. They find that in humorous learning participants are allowed to distance themselves from an immediate situation while simultaneously creating a window in which new, unforeseen possibilities appear. Ewa Trzebińska and Anna Gabińska are interested in the soundness of internal voices, conceived as subpersonalities, and explore the impact of inner multiplicity and multivoicedness on the quality of life. They hypothesize that positivity and completeness of subpersonalities are related to better mental health. The study was conducted via Internet. The results show that low quality of life, as indicated by personality disorders, is characterized by low positivity and deep emotional incompleteness of subpersonalities. From a personalistic point of view, Henryk Gasiul argues that a dialogue with I-positions is determined by the way in which these I-positions are able to gratify I-motives: self-enhancement (S) and union with others (O) motives. The author argues that frustration of I-motives leads to some form of emotional commitment. A subject is confronted with a necessity to cope with emotional states that restrict possibilities to discover new I-positions. This restriction, the author argues, can bring the dialogical self in a phase of a crisis or in a state of rigidity. Deepika Sharma and Brady Wagoner concentrate on two phenomena: polyphony and cognitive polyphasia. The former refers to particular voices through which we think and speak whereas the latter is about entire patterns of group thinking. To illustrate the relationship between polyphony and polyphasia, the authors interview second generation British-Asians, who simultaneously belong to two very different cultural groups. In the article they focus on the case of a girl, who uses multiple voices to answer the question whether she would tell her mother about her smoking. The authors show that the subject navigates between two distinct cultural frameworks, Asian and British. Self-dialogue can thus be

understood not only at the level of particular I-positions, but also at a more general level of confrontation between different cultural frameworks.

Altogether, the articles of this special issue reflect an interest of the multi-voiced contributors to understand their topics and phenomena from the perspective of an integrative theoretical framework. Although their contributions go into a diversity of directions, the common theoretical framework provides avenues in which they can meet as participants in a globalizing world.

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