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Speaking of the Self: Theorizing the Dialogical Dimensions of Ethical Agency

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by

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Dedication

For my parents, Ron and Dottie, my brother, Chris, my son, Brad, and my wife, Katie

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"To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture."

--Frantz Fanon
The Wretched of the Earth

"[W]e are aware of the world through a 'we' before we are through an 'I.'"

--Charles Taylor
"Interpretation and the Sciences of Man"

"As we tell stories about the lives of others, we learn how to imagine what another creature might feel in response to various events. At the same time, we identify with the other creature and learn something about ourselves."

--Martha Nussbaum
"A Newly Rich Life with Yourself"

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Abstract

This dissertation attempts to fill, in part, three lacunae in contemporary philosophical scholarship: first, the failure to identify the two distinct types of dialogism—psychological and interpersonal—that have been operative in discussions of the dialogical self; second, the lack of acknowledgement of the six most prominent features of interpersonal dialogism; and third, the unwillingness to recognize that interpersonal dialogism is a crucial feature of human ethical agency and identity.

In Chapter One, I explain why dialogism has been relatively neglected—and certainly underappreciated—in contemporary Western philosophy. In Chapter Two, I offer a picture of Mikhail Bakhtin's conception of dialogism. I explain why and how Bakhtin focuses on the novel in his account of dialogism. I then offer an account of Bakhtin's claim regarding the dialogism of the 'inner' speech of thought. In the second part of Chapter Two, I offer an account of Gadamer's conception of dialogism. I begin my examination of Gadamer by discussing the event ontology that serves as the metaphysical framework for his account of "play" (*Spiel*) and dialogue. In doing so, I explain some of the most important ideas in this part of his thought, such as his notion of understanding, tradition, effective history, the fusion of horizons, and the text. I explain what Gadamer means by genuine conversation, or dialogue, and I then describe one of the most important ideas in Gadamer's thought—his notion of "play."

In Chapter Three, I give a critical account of the most influential contemporary account of dialogism in psychology, offered by Hubert Hermans et al., specifically in

terms of their establishment of dialogical self theory. My examination consists of several

parts. First, I discuss the ways they conceptualize the self, temporally and spatially.

Second, I offer a description of their account of *I*-positions within the dialogical self.

Third, I examine their claims about the necessary features of the dialogical self, and argue

against one of their claims, which says that dominance relations are intrinsic to dialogue.

Fourth, I describe their account of the four kinds of relations that can emerge within the

self (2010, 121). Fifth, I briefly discuss their view regarding the "[t]hree models of self

and identity, associated with different historical phases" (4), that have predominated in

Western history. Sixth, I consider their claim that there are "positions" within the self in

addition to the "*I*-positions" noted above. And lastly, I evaluate their account of (what

they call) the nine "features of good dialogue" (10).

   In Chapter Four, I offer a critical evaluation of the account of dialogue and

dialogism developed by Dmitri Nikulin, arguably the leading contemporary philosopher

on the subjects. While I address the features of his account that I think are correct, I

ultimately argue that it is problematic for three main reasons: first, it fails to recognize the

proper relationship between dialogue and agency; second, its elucidation of the necessary

and sufficient conditions for dialogue contains conceptual inconsistencies; and third, its

conception of the relation between dialogue and personhood has potentially disastrous

ethical implications.

   In Chapter Five, I show how Heidegger's notions of Dasein's "Being-with"

(*Mitsein*), "discourse" (*Rede*), and "solicitude" (*Fursorge*) help lay the groundwork for

recognizing some important features of dialogism. I do three things in Chapter Six. First,

I briefly discuss Charles Taylor's work on dialogism. Second, I offer my account of the

seven most prominent features of dialogism. And third, I argue that dialogism is a crucial

feature of ethical agency and identity. To do so, I offer an example of a personal (and

social) virtue, namely, empathy, which illustrates the important role dialogism plays in

ethical agency.

Chapter One: On the Philosophical Neglect of Dialogism

1.1 Introduction

Whether or not you accept Heidegger's famous dictum in his "Letter on Humanism" that "[l]anguage is the house of Being" (1993, 217), it is hard to deny that human discourse—or language, broadly construed—plays a fundamental role in human existence.[1] Dialogue, or conversation, is of course a well-known form that language can take, and a critically important human endeavor. It is indeed difficult to imagine human existence without something like dialogue. And yet what dialogue is and what role it plays in the ethical dimension(s) of human existence remains ambiguous.

Accurately theorizing the descriptive and normative aspects of dialogue has become increasingly more complex because of recent technological advancements. While it is hard to foresee what paths technology will take in the future, it seems hard to deny that for many Western people, both recently and currently, a reliance on social media platforms, made possible by technology, has begun to replace and not just supplement live, in-person social interaction. The ever-growing employment of technology as a replacement for the visceral experience of the encounter, i.e., conversation and dialogue, is a notable phenomenon. And while the various possible detrimental effects on the social development of children and adolescents have been widely observed and discussed, it would be a mistake to think that such technological changes have not dramatically

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[1] As will be clear later, I understand discourse, like Heidegger, as a broader phenomenon that allows for the possibility of human language and speech. But for my purposes here, I am referring to them as roughly the same thing.

affected the social lives of adults, as well. Casual observation yields the discovery that

adults are, arguably, just as easily distracted by their use of technology as children are,

and just as likely to use technology as a proxy for live, in-person social engagement. I

suspect that one main reason we find ourselves so enthralled by television and computer

screens is because in most instances—excluding perhaps face-to-face interactive

technologies—they don't demand any kind of ethical response, whereas our encounter

with a live human face does. The specific ways we have come to use and rely on

technology have complicated the attempt to figure out the best normative dialogical[2]

practices, an attempt which was difficult enough before the rapid progression and

expansion of interpersonal technologies. Given that technology has made it even more

difficult to normatively evaluate the various ways in which we express ourselves and

interact with others, the question, in line with this essay's title, of how the self speaks and

of how we speak of the self, is perhaps more relevant than ever before. For this reason,

along with others, I focus in this essay on some of the ways in which dialogism[3]

functions as a constitutive feature of the moral self.[4]

    To say that there has been a great deal of philosophical literature written about

moral agency or personhood[5] is an understatement. Although ancient Western philo-

sophers did not speak in terms of agency as we do now, the question of what makes a

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[2] Here I am using "dialogical" simply in its adjectival form as a qualifier of the noun "dialogue."
[3] I should note here that I am using the term "dialogism" throughout this essay simply to refer to the phenomenon of the dialogical. Dialogism is often associated specifically with Mikhail Bakhtin's work, but, as Michael Holquist points out, it is not a term that Bakhtin himself ever uses (D 15).
[4] I realize that "moral" and "ethical" are not always used synonymously in philosophical literature. But, for my purposes, I shall use them interchangeably throughout this essay.
[5] Again, "agency" and "personhood" are by no means always understood synonymously, as the concerns of the former can easily be understood as a subset of the latter. But I am construing them in broad terms, so for my purposes I shall use them interchangeably.

person ethical can be traced back in the West to Plato and Socrates, and, perhaps even more influentially, to Aristotle. And it has been addressed pretty consistently, through various approaches, throughout the history of Western philosophy.

Yet philosophical work in dialogism has remained relatively neglected in contemporary philosophy[6], especially in contrast to the interesting work that has been done in psychology, usually in the form of "dialogical self theory," in the last few decades. Indeed, dialogism has been underappreciated as a phenomenon as it is manifested in both descriptive and normative accounts of ethical agency. This neglect of dialogism in contemporary Western philosophical scholarship is perhaps unsurprising given just how much the West, especially since the inception of Early Modern philosophy, has come to value independence as a personal trait.

While, as will become clear, dialogism and dialogue are not synonymous phenomena, one could plausibly surmise that the early establishment of dialogue as a philosophical literary form would likely illuminate the conditions necessary for recognizing dialogical phenomena. If there is even a kernel of truth in Alfred North Whitehead's famous proclamation that "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato,"[7] then we might plausibly wonder why the ever-expanding "series of footnotes" has not made more mention of dialogism. Because of this, I devote the majority of my dissertation to

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[6] I say *contemporary* philosophy because it can be argued, as Joanne Waugh (2000, 49) has done skillfully, that Plato's use of dialogue did in fact indicate a conception of dialogism. Waugh points out, for instance, that "Socrates characterizes thinking (*dianoeisthai*) in the *Theaetetus* as a talk (*logon*) that the soul has with itself (189e-190b). This suggests that thinking is being modeled on external dialogue and not the other way around. One learns this sort of thinking by listening to those who are engaged in such conversations and then by engaging in them oneself" (Italics original).
[7] Alfred North Whitehead 1978, p. 39.

critical examinations of the most prominent dialogical thinkers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In one straightforward sense, we understand the "dialogical" as the ordinary adjectival phrase corresponding to the noun, "dialogue." But when I use the term "dialogical" throughout this essay, unless noted otherwise, I shall be referring to the phenomenon of "dialogism." As such, dialogism may encompass forms of communication other than dialogue. Thus the dialogical is not confined to actual dialogue (i.e., conversation).

There are two types of dialogism, I argue, that ought to be recognized: *psychological dialogism* and *interpersonal dialogism*. *Psychological dialogism* refers simply to the inter-animation of "voices" or perspectives that one can make manifest within one's psyche, such as when one talks to oneself. As I shall discuss in Chapter Two, this is, in part, what Bakhtin refers to when he talks of "polyphony."[8] And, as we shall see in Chapter Three, this is the kind of dialogism to which Hubert Hermans et al. devote a lot of attention. *Interpersonal dialogism* refers to the kind of action one instantiates (or fails to instantiate) when one encounters an "other," whether that other is another person or an object. While I will address psychological dialogism, the majority of my discussion of dialogism throughout this essay will focus on the interpersonal kind.

Monological action, or what I shall refer to as monologism, is the result of interlocutors' failure to instantiate interpersonally dialogical action. Importantly, on my view monologism and dialogism are not binary, zero-sum terms. Rather, action should be recognized as falling along a spectrum between monologism and dialogism. While

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[8] I say "in part" because Bakhtin mainly discussed polyphony in the context of the author's relationship to the characters in her novel. But, for Bakhtin, polyphony refers as well to the relationship of the perspectives or "voices" one can adopt within one's self, psychologically.

genuinely dialogical (and monological) action is possible in practice and not just in theory, it is much more often the case that action falls somewhere in the middle of the monological-dialogical spectrum.

I shall incorporate as a common thread throughout this essay the view that the dialogical *event* ontology I am endorsing be seen as a corrective to and thus replacement for the Western tradition's substance ontology. This also means that the conception of dialogical interaction should replace the traditional terms of "subject" and "object." Indeed, I am adopting throughout this essay one of the main insights that Heidegger's critical account in *Being and Time* offers—that the subject-object dichotomy is an inaccurate picture of the everyday Being-in-the-world of human beings. So, even though theories of dialogism, generally, and theories of dialogue, specifically, might be viewed as theories of inter-subjectivity, I shall not speak in terms of "inter-subjective" relations because that term smuggles in the subject-object dichotomy that I reject. Thus, on my view, any talk of a dialogical *subject* is inappropriate. I shall talk, instead, of a dialogical agent or self, synonymously,[9] because neither agency nor selfhood presupposes the subject-object distinction.

The account I offer in this essay is novel in three fundamental respects. First, while dialogism is usually conceived of monolithically, I identify two distinct types of dialogism—the psychological and the interpersonal—that have been operative in discussions of the dialogical self. Second, I identify and describe the six most prominent features of interpersonal dialogism. And third, I argue that interpersonal dialogism must be recognized as a prominent aspect of human ethical agency.

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[9] I shall use "agent" and "self" synonymously throughout because I shall not be claiming, as Marya Schechtman (1996) does, for instance, that some agents can fail to be selves, in the robust sense of that word.

1.2 Why Not Dialogism?: Western Philosophy's Obsession with Interiority

The main reason dialogism has been neglected in contemporary philosophy is, in my view, because of the predominance, in Western philosophy, at least, of a belief in the legitimacy of the substance ontology—demarcated along the lines of a subject-object dichotomy—as well as the attendant notions of a theoretically isolatable, hyper-individualized self whose true locus of identity is interiorized. I want to offer a brief exegesis of Charles Taylor's account in *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989) of the ways in which the notion of the self evolved over time into the modern, hyper-individualistic model we see today, a model which required the neglect of everything dialogical.

Taylor devotes much of *Sources of the Self* to examining the way that the notions of "interiority" have contributed to the historical development of our modern conception of the self. One of his central claims is that the modern conception of the self, in our references to "'the' self, or 'a' self" (1989, 113), is unprecedented. This is not to suggest, though, that past people had no sense of an identity. As he says, "We can probably be confident that on one level human beings of all times and places have shared a very similar sense of 'me' and 'mine'" (112). But the sense one had of "me" and "mine" was itself only indicative of a capacity for differentiating between people, of identifying that "here is one person, and there is another" (113). Such a conception though does not amount to the particular modern conception of the self as a relatively self-contained, self-reflexive, autonomous agent. For instance, Taylor points out the now well-known fact that the Greeks did not "normally speak of the human agent as '*ho autos*,' or use the term in a context which we would translate with the indefinite article" (Ibid).

Taylor identifies four crucial stages in the historical development of the conception of the modern self. The first was Plato's development of the notion of a unified self mastered through reason. It was, Taylor says, indispensable to the emergence of the "modern notion of interiority" (120). But there were three additional developments which brought "interiority" to prominence. This is because "Plato does not use the inside / outside dichotomy to make his point" (121). The relevant dichotomies for Plato were the soul against the body, and the eternal against the changing (Ibid).

The second—and what would become the biggest transitional—stage, Taylor argues, was St. Augustine's development of the oppositions of "spirit / matter, higher / lower, eternal / temporal, immutable / changing...not just occasionally and peripherally, but centrally and essentially in terms of inner / outer" (128-129). As Taylor notes, Augustine implored us: "Do not go outward; return within yourself. In the inward man dwells truth" (129). On Augustine's view, by "going inward" one is "drawn upward" to God (134). Augustine, then, ushered in the notion of "radical reflexivity" (131), which involved the primacy of the "first-person standpoint" (130).

This turn to "radical reflexivity" became fundamental to the third stage, ushered in by Descartes,[10] which saw the "replacement of [Plato's] understanding of the dominance of reason by another, more readily accessible to our minds, in which the order involved in the paramountcy of reason is made, not found" (124; Italics original). Descartes' brand of "radical reflexivity" was noticeably different from Augustine's in that Descartes claims our moral sources no longer lie outside us. Descartes sought to prove that our real self was constituted by the immaterial soul, which lay within. As Taylor puts it, "Coming to a

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[10] In my account here, I am referring to Cartesianism as an intellectual trope rather than referring to the historically accurate picture of it. Whether Descartes scholars would agree with my account here is debatable.

full realization of one's being as immaterial involves perceiving distinctly the ontological cleft between the two..." (145).

Descartes developed a dualistic metaphysical landscape, marked by the dichotomous contours of mind / body, reason / emotion, and, perhaps most notoriously, subject(ive) / object(ive). On this view, the human mind is understood as residing in an 'inner' space—i.e., the human subject—and is considered the mechanism by which we process representations of the external, objective world. As Taylor describes it in "To Follow a Rule" (1997), the objects which we represent to ourselves—that is, our mind—include not only other people, their bodies, and "the objects we and they deal with" 'out there' in the world, but also our own body (169). The way we are in contact with this outside world, then, is "through the representations we have 'within'" (Ibid). The Cartesian subject is therefore a rational "subject of representations" (Ibid), and Taylor refers to the Cartesian epistemology as the "modern representational epistemology."

For Descartes, any clear and distinct account of reality required the subject's disengagement from its embodied experience. This has to do with his view that the body is an extension of the material world external to and independent of the mind. The human body is thus the most immediate contact point through which the human agent experiences the objects of the material world, and the desires, drives, inclinations, emotions, thoughts, affects, sensations, etc. which constitute it. As such, the physical corporeality of human subjectivity proved the greatest obstacle to attaining real knowledge of the external, objective world.

This disengagement from one's embodied perspective required objectification of both self and world. Objectifying oneself—in the Cartesian sense, this entailed the mind

objectifying the body—meant that, with respect to one's embodied experience, one tried to assume the same perspective or "stance" that an external observer would of objects whose contents held no personal significance. To objectify the contents of one's representations in this way is to "escape the distortions and parochial perspectives of our kind of subjectivity." It is to understand them as "mere mechanism, as devoid of any spiritual essence or expressive dimension" (1989, 146). This is why Taylor calls the Cartesian rational "subject of representations" the "disengaged subject" (159).

The fourth and final stage of the development of the modern conception of the self comes when Locke introduces a mechanistic procedure to the self's reflexivity and "reifies the mind" (166) to an extent even Descartes did not do. In so doing, Locke established a picture of the self which can disengage so totally from, and thereby objectify, its subjective experience that it can view its inner life instrumentally, as something to control and remake as one wills. As Taylor writes,

> "The subject who can take this kind of radical stance of disengagement to himself or herself with a view to remaking, is what I want to call the 'punctual' self. To take this stance is to identify oneself with the power to objectify and remake, and by this act to distance oneself from all the particular features which are objects of potential change" (171).

In contemporary discussions of Taylor's criticism of the "modern conception of the self," many theorists identify Locke's "punctual self" (Ibid), not Descartes's "disengaged subject" (159), as the locus of Taylor's criticism. Although, as we see above, Taylor argues that Locke takes the Cartesian call for disengagement to a much further degree, it is nevertheless true that the features most relevant to the relationship between the modern conception of the self and the dialogical conception of the self are most salient in Descartes's conception, not Locke's. This is because it is only as a vestige of the

Cartesian tradition that we can understand the significance of the growth of 'inwardness,' 'interiority,' or 'inner depths' as it relates to the historical development of the modern conception of the self. In short, the dialogical conception of the self is a critical response more to Descartes's view than to Locke's.

One of the central assumptions of the Cartesian metaphysical paradigm—the subject / object dichotomy—remained intact, remarkably, up until Heidegger's influential critique in *Being and Time*. Yet even given the cogency, for many, of Heidegger's critique, the Cartesian assumption has remained incredibly influential, especially for Anglo-American philosophy. And even for those persuaded by Heidegger's critique of the subject / object dichotomy, dialogism never entered mainstream Continental philosophy as a serious metaphysical alternative.

1.3 A Note on Procedure

I should say a little something here about why I have chosen to focus on the thinkers I have in this essay. I should note especially why I omitted a serious examination of Levinas' work. I have avoided extended discussion of Levinas' work because I do not think there's anything especially novel about arguing that Levinas is a dialogical thinker. Although the same can be said about Bakhtin and Gadamer, I have chosen to discuss Bakhtin's work in some depth because, unfortunately, he is not usually discussed in philosophical scholarship. I have also decided to seriously consider Gadamer because his work is especially fruitful for the conception of dialogism that I endorse, whereas Levinas' is influential for my thought in only a couple basic, albeit important, respects which I note later. Also, ashamedly, I have difficulty grasping the intricacies of Levinas' work on the encounter in a way that would benefit my account of dialogism.

(Undoubtedly, the blame lies more on me than on him for this circumstance.) I devote a chapter to Heidegger because I think his work lays some important groundwork for being able to recognize prominent features of the dialogical self. Further, although Hermans and his colleagues are widely recognized as dialogists, they work in psychology, and I think their thought merits discussion in a philosophical work. I devote a chapter to Nikulin's work because, in my view, he is the leading contemporary philosopher who specializes in dialogue and dialogical theory, among other areas. I also disagree with his account in interesting ways whereas I do not so much with (what I understand of) Levinas' work. And I prominently feature Taylor's work in the final chapter, for reasons which that chapter will make clear. I want to argue that there are six features of the dialogical self that are most prominent, which I will identify by drawing on these thinkers. These thinkers have anticipated or failed to anticipate these features in various ways and I will describe these in my presentation of the dialogical self.

I have organized my essay as follows. In Chapter Two, I will not offer an account of the historical contexts which shaped Bakhtin's conception of the dialogical. Other Bakhtin scholars have already offered excellent accounts of those developments. I will focus, instead, on offering an account of Bakhtin's notion of dialogism. In addition to defining terms central to Bakhtin's thought, such as dialogue, polyphony, heteroglossia, and the novel, I also explain why and how Bakhtin focuses on the novel in his account of dialogism. I then discuss Bakhtin's claim regarding the dialogism of the 'inner' speech of thought, especially as exemplified in cases like meditation, prayer, and everyday conversations with ourselves.

In the second part of Chapter Two, I offer an account of Gadamer's conception of dialogism. I begin my examination of Gadamer by discussing the event ontology that serves as the metaphysical framework for his account of "play" (*Spiel*) and dialogue. In doing so, I explain some of the most important ideas in this part of his thought, such as his notion of understanding, tradition, effective history, the fusion of horizons, and the text. I explain what Gadamer means by genuine conversation, or dialogue, and I then describe one of the most important ideas in Gadamer's thought—his notion of "play."

In Chapter Three, I give a critical account of the most influential contemporary account of dialogism in psychology, offered by Hubert Hermans et al., specifically in terms of their establishment of dialogical self theory. My examination consists of several parts. First, I discuss the ways they conceptualize the self, temporally and spatially. Second, I offer a description of their account of *I*-positions within the dialogical self. Third, I examine their claims about the necessary features of the dialogical self, and argue against one of their claims, which says that dominance relations are intrinsic to dialogue. Fourth, I describe their account of the four kinds of relations that can emerge within the self (2010, 121). Fifth, I briefly discuss their view regarding the "[t]hree models of self and identity, associated with different historical phases" (4), that have predominated in Western history. Sixth, I consider their claim that there are "positions" within the self in addition to the "*I*-positions" noted above. And lastly, I evaluate their account of (what they call) the nine "features of good dialogue" (10).

In Chapter Four, I offer a critical evaluation of the account of dialogue and dialogism developed by Dmitri Nikulin, arguably the leading contemporary philosopher on the subjects. While I address the features of his account that I think are correct, I

ultimately argue that it is problematic for three main reasons: first, it fails to recognize the proper relationship between dialogue and agency; second, its elucidation of the necessary and sufficient conditions for dialogue contains conceptual inconsistencies; and third, its conception of the relation between dialogue and personhood has potentially disastrous ethical implications.

In Chapter Five, I show how Heidegger's notions of Dasein's "Being-with" (*Mitsein*), "discourse" (*Rede*), and "solicitude" (*Fursorge*) help lay the groundwork for recognizing some important features of dialogism. I do three things in Chapter Six. First, I briefly discuss Charles Taylor's work on dialogism. Second, I offer my account of the six most prominent features of dialogism. And third, I argue that dialogism is a crucial feature of ethical agency and identity. To do so, I offer an example of a personal (and social) virtue, namely, empathy, which illustrates the ineluctable role dialogism plays in ethical agency. I should note that nowhere in this essay do I offer an argument for *why* one should be moral. I take it as an assumption that human beings ought to be ethical.

1.4 Conclusion

Given that a central part of my thesis is on dialogue (as part of the broader dialogism within which it rests), I should say something about the format. While the format has not taken the form of a dialogue by any means, the approach I have taken to writing this dissertation *has* been relatively dialogical. I drafted Chapters Two through Six first, and only then drafted Chapter One last. And after having written Chapter One, I went back and revised the subsequent chapters Two through Six. So, in a way, the writing of Chapter One has benefitted from a kind of dialogue with the subsequent chapters. The subsequent chapters have benefitted from a kind of dialogue with Chapter One. And no

doubt each chapter has benefitted from a dialogue with every other chapter. This

illustrates the dialogism implicit within the hermeneutic circle, an insight which Bakhtin,

Gadamer, and others certainly understood.

Chapter Two: The Primacy of Dialogue: Bakhtin's and Gadamer's Theories of the Dialogical

2.1 Introduction

Because Bakhtin is such a foundational figure for the development of dialogism, I shall begin with a straightforward explication of his notion of the dialogical and the philosophical context within which it arises.[11] I shall then illustrate the role dialogism plays in Gadamer's work, especially as it emerges in his seminal work, *Truth and Method.*

It is true, as Michael Holquist has argued, that "all Bakhtin's writings are animated and controlled by the principle of dialogue" (2002, 15), notwithstanding the various distinct phases which characterize Bakhtin's corpus.[12] Bakhtin, indeed, always has in mind the concrete phenomenon of interlocutors engaged in actual dialogue. For Bakhtin, then, all human language cannot be understood through abstract theorizations and principles; it must be understood, rather, in its concrete, particular manifestations, in live utterances and speech acts. Yet, as Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson have accurately noted, Bakhtin understands the "dialogue" of dialogism in three distinct yet related senses. On Morson and Emerson's view, the first sense of "dialogue" is that "according to which *every* utterance is by definition dialogic" (1990, 131; Italics original). The

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[11] See Graham Pechey's (2007) discussion of whether Bakhtin should be considered a philosopher, in the former's essay, "Boundaries versus Binaries," in *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Word in the World,* pp. 13-32.

[12] See Morson and Emerson (1990) for their discussion of the five phases of Bakhtin's work.

second sense of dialogue "allows some utterances to be dialogic and some to be

nondialogic (or monologic)" (Ibid); and in the third sense, dialogue is "a global

concept…a view of truth and the world" (130-131). In my discussion, I shall focus on

two main ideas: first, how, for Bakhtin, the various authorial voices within a novel have a

dialogical relation to one another; and second, and more important for my purposes, how

such a relation obtains as well outside the fictional purview of the novel in the 'inner'

speech of thought. Dialogism does not just describe the type of discourse in the novel; it

describes psychological relations within the self as well—what I call psychological

dialogism.

　　　　Due to constraints of space, my discussion will not account for the various shifts

in focus and conceptualization that Bakhtin developed throughout his career—as others

such as Holquist and especially Morson and Emerson have already successfully shown—

but it will aim to philosophically capture precisely how Bakhtin understands dialogism.

This means that I shall not be discussing at significant length the historical contexts

which no doubt shaped Bakhtin's conceptions of the dialogical, among many others.[13]

For my purposes, it is most important to note, as Rachel Pollard says, that while for

Bakhtin "all language is inherently dialogic…[,] it is the ability to analyse it as such that

is a historical development" (2008, 29). My aim is only to distill from Bakhtin's broader

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[13] There is much to say about how, like any thinker, the historical context in which Bakhtin lived shaped both what themes he was responding to, both explicitly and tacitly, and what understanding(s) he established in response to them. For studies of Bakhtin that include extended consideration and discussion of the historical contexts in which Bakhtin developed his conceptions, see Pechey (2007), Holquist (2002), Morson and Emerson (1990), Clark and Holquist (1986), Todorov (1985). There is, unsurprisingly, considerable disagreement about the extent to which Bakhtin's thought was a product of historical context. As Rachel Pollard notes, "It has even been argued that Bakhtin's terminology and aesthetics cannot be understood in isolation from the dominant aesthetic, ideology and politics of the Soviet Union under Stalin" (2008, 28).

work the essence of what he means by dialogism. So, what my discussion lacks in comprehensiveness it hopefully makes up for in focus and clarity.

2.2 Bakhtin on Heteroglossia and Polyphony

One concern which unites all of Bakhtin's various works is the nature of human language. Despite dynamic shifts in focus throughout his career, Bakhtin nevertheless accurately summarized his (by then four decades of) thought by saying: "Language and the word are almost everything in human life" (1986c, 118; Morson and Emerson 1990, 83). He characterizes this rather general claim more specifically when he writes in the 1963 revised version of the Dostoevsky book, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*,[14] that "dialogic relationships are a much broader phenomenon than mere rejoinders in a dialogue, laid out compositionally in the text; they are an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life—in general, everything that has meaning and significance" (1984a, 40). Here he no doubt has in mind all three senses of dialogue enumerated above, and it is clear that, on his view, dialogism is an ontological feature for human beings' being itself.

Bakhtin captures the ontology of dialogism succinctly when he writes in "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book" that "To be means to communicate" (1984b, 287). His use of the word "communicate" should not be understood, however, in the traditional sense of hyper-individualized, theoretically isolatable monadic entities coming together from their separate starting points in an act of communication. For Bakhtin, we are not linguistic islands who must consciously decide to engage with others discursively; being

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[14] The Dostoevsky book originally appeared in 1929 under the title *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art* (*Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo*) and was only later revised and became *Problems of Dostoevksy's Poetics* (1963). Morson and Emerson translate the 1929 title as *Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Art.*

immersed in discourse is our natural, everyday condition from birth until death. "It is

therefore inaccurate," Morson and Emerson write,

> "to speak of entering into dialogue, as if the components that do so could exist in any other way. To be sure, particular dialogues may break off (they never truly end), but dialogue itself is always going on. In his linguistic work, Bakhtin endeavors to describe language so that dialogue is not a subsequent act of combination but is itself the starting point" (1990, 50).

I quote Bakhtin at length here because it is perhaps his most perspicuous and conclusive

statement on the ontology of dialogic discourse:

> "The dialogic nature of consciousness. The dialogic nature of human life itself. The single adequate form for *verbally expressing* authentic human life is the *open-ended dialogue*. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium" (1984b, 293; Italics original).

One finds in Bakhtin's conception of discourse one of his most important

intellectual contributions: the notion of "heteroglossia" (*raznorecie* or *raznorechie*). A

concept which he developed in the 1930s, heteroglossia, literally "varied-speechedness"

(Morson and Emerson 1990, 139), can be understood broadly as "many-languagedness"

(Holquist 2002, 1). By heteroglossia, Bakhtin refers to the fact that there is no such thing

as a single, solitary language which exists in a linguistic, literary, or existential vacuum,

untouched and unaffected by other languages. This is not to say, of course, that there is

no such thing as a singular, distinguishable, and identifiable language. We can identify

the English language from Russian, Swahili, German, and so on, along with the various

dialects therein, but within each of these languages are many more varied languages.

As Bakhtin says, in any given day, we experience these different languages: the

languages of various professions, social classes, geographical and political domains, etc. In the course of a day, there is the language of the philosophy professor, the political candidate, the businessperson, the farmer, the elementary school teacher, the linguist, and so on. And these relations, which heteroglossia designates, obtain not just amongst languages but within them, as well. That is, any given language is always in relation with and inter-animated by other languages. And we adopt different languages throughout the day. As Morson and Emerson note,

> "each of us participates at all times in several languages and their attendant sets of views and evaluations. We are all a specific age, belong to a given class, come from a given region, may work in a specific profession, and have developed private languages with unique sets of intimates; and so we speak differently on different occasions" (1990, 142-143).

So, the philosophy professor, for instance, will speak differently with her peers than she will with her introductory-level undergraduate students, and different still from how she speaks with her partner, her children, her parents, and so on. These many languages which everyone speaks "[reflect] the diversity of social experience, conceptualizations, and values" (140). They are, as Bakhtin puts it, each "specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values" (1981b, 291-292).

Importantly, heteroglossia should be distinguished from both dialogism and another of Bakhtin's seminal contributions, "polyphony," or multi-voicedness. Although he developed the notion of "polyphony" before "heteroglossia," the latter came to occupy a more foundational role than the former. "[P]olyphony is not even roughly synonymous with heteroglossia," Morson and Emerson write. "The latter term describes the diversity of speech styles in a language, the former has to do with the position of the author in a

text" (1990, 232). I shall say more about "polyphony" later, but for now, it is crucial to see that heteroglossia should be distinguished from dialogism, as well, in that the latter is the particular form in which the former manifests itself.

There is thus, strictly speaking, a difference between heteroglossia and *dialogized* heteroglossia. We can capture the difference by noting how the "several languages and their attendant sets of views and evaluations (142)" which the average person embodies everyday come to affect and "'interanimate' each other as they enter into dialogue" with one another (143). So the different manners of speaking and the various languages we speak everyday cannot be kept separate but are, rather, always interacting with one another and thus enriching our discursive experience.

Just how consequential the difference between heteroglossia and *dialogized* heteroglossia becomes, then, is questionable, as it becomes clear that, on the Bakhtinian view, it would be practically impossible for languages *not* to undergo dialogization. As Morson and Emerson note, Bakhtin "clarifies his point by asking us to consider a hypothetical person, who probably could not exist: an illiterate peasant, for whom languages are *not* dialogized (see Bakhtin 1981b, 295-296; 1990, 143, Italics original). Such a person's everyday experience would presumably be so monolithic and homogeneous as to lack the linguistic sophistication for such dialogization to arise. But even in such a case, it would be hard to imagine someone occupying such a singular, enclosed linguistic world as to not have experienced the interaction of varied and competing languages and value systems. Surely, the illiterate peasant would have experienced perhaps the language of prayer, the language(s) of the parent and the broader family, the language of some, albeit minimal, educational experience, broadly construed,

the language of the particular labors in which they are employed (e.g. farming, fishing, sewing, building, etc.), and these various languages would have become intertwined in the course of his discursive life. Indeed, to the extent that "[e]ach of us encounters a world that is 'already-spoken-about' (*ogovorennyi, uzhe skazannyi*), already 'articulated, disputed, elucidated and evaluated in various ways'" (Bakhtin 1986a, 93; Morson and Emerson 1990, 137), the difference between heteroglossia and *dialogized* heteroglossia seems more theoretical than practical. Morson and Emerson describe the seemingly inherent dialogic quality that would apply to even the illiterate peasant's heteroglot speech:

> "The complexities created by the already-spoken-about quality of the word, and by the listener's active understanding, create an *internal dialogism* of the word. Every utterance is dialogized *from within* by these (and some other) factors. Indeed, even a specific word can be dialogized in ways different from those dialogizing the rest of the utterance to which it belongs. In such cases, we sense that the word is somehow cited from another speaker whose tone is felt in it. In this case, not only is there the internal dialogism of the whole utterance but also a 'microdialogue' in that word" (1990, 138; Italics original).

As is well known, Bakhtin argues that the novel is the most dynamic illustration of language's dialogical character. When one considers the phenomenon of human language, it might seem strange to focus first and foremost on the art form of the novel, since, among other reasons, it is by standard modern definition a work of fiction. Bakhtin, however, does not hold a view in which the novel represents the canonical characteristics we attribute to it as a genre in the modern sense, in the sense in which Cervantes and *Don Quixote* are regarded perhaps as the first modern novelist and novel, respectively. As Holquist points out, "'novel' is the name Bakhtin gives to whatever force is at work within a given literary system to reveal the limits, the artificial constraints of that system.

Literary systems are comprised of canons, and 'novelization' is fundamentally anticanonical" (Bakhtin 1981a, xxxi). Thus the modern novel's fictional quality, as it is canonically understood, in no way precludes it from being, for Bakhtin, the most dynamic illustration of language's dialogical character because the novel, as he understands it, is in no way definitionally fictional.

Bakhtin focuses on novels for three reasons. First, on Bakhtin's view, novels and novelists alone have adequately captured what Morson and Emerson call the "dialogic conception of truth" representative of "the dialogue of life" (1990, 60).[15] And Dostoevsky's novels, in particular, are exemplars of depicting how dialogue between characters reflects the dialogues that occur between actual people in a particular place at a particular time. So, for Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's novels illustrate the best "transcription" (Bakhtin 1981a, xviii) of the complex relational dynamics of dialogue. The second reason why Bakhtin uses novels as paradigmatic examples of dialogism is that they are the best illustrations of the ethical dimensions of human beings' lives—that is, they are the best pedagogical tools for ethical education. And lastly, novels are the genre which best captures the sense of time and "eventness" which illustrates the unfinalizability of human action and selfhood. As Morson and Emerson write,

> "[F]or Bakhtin, the novel, like the self, is a highly complex combination and dialogue of various voices and ways of speaking, each incorporating a special sense of the world. Dialogue is essential to selfhood, and the novel is the most dialogical genre. Thus, for Bakhtin (as for many others), the novel is the best form for psychological investigation" (1990, 218).

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[15] As Bakhtin (1981b) writes, "The dialogic orientation of a word among other words (of all kinds and degrees of otherness) creates new and significant artistic potential in discourse, creates the potential for a distinctive art of prose, which has found its fullest and deepest expression in the novel" (p. 275).

If dialogism is essential to selfhood, then Bakhtin's example of the novel is the best example of the dialogical self. It will become evident in what follows how each of these interrelated features of the novel comes to fruition.

2.3 Dialogism in the Novel: Polyphony as a Dialogical Event

I now want to turn to Bakhtin's conception of dialogism within the novel.[16] On Bakhtin's view, dialogism, or polyphony, was not an attribute of all novels—only the best novelists could create dialogic or polyphonic novels. And Bakhtin was adamant that Dostoevsky alone had best captured the dialogic quality of real life—he was the dialogist *par excellence*. "According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky changed the novel by creating a character governed neither by plot (as in the epic) nor by an impersonal authorial idea (as in monologic works)" (9), Morson and Emerson note. Rather, each character in the Dostoevskian novel stands at the intersection—and thus represents the inter-animation— of multifarious heteroglot languages. The Dostoevskian novel thus

> "keenly senses two aspects of language in their interaction and combinations: dialogicality (especially 'dialogue in the second sense') and heteroglossia. The novel takes as its special concern the ways in which various languages of heteroglossia may enter into dialogue with each other and the kinds of complex interactions that such dialogues produce" (309).

But, for Bakhtin, dialogue in Dostoevsky's novels doesn't emerge only between and amongst characters; it also presents itself and animates every word in the novel. As Bakhtin says in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*,

> "A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine

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[16] As Morson and Emerson (1990) put this, "The dialogue of life requires a dialogic method and a dialogic conception of truth to represent it. But in Bakhtin's view, such a concept of truth is missing from modern Western thought, at least insofar as that thought is represented in the tradition of philosophy. So far, only literary works have approached this more adequate representation. The best novelists are far ahead of the philosophers" (60).

polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event" (1984a, 6).

It becomes clear here that Bakhtin understands polyphony as a *dialogical event.* As Bakhtin claims, the reader encounters in Dostoevsky's novels "a *live event,* played out at the point of dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses" (88; Italics original). Indeed, this is precisely how Bakhtin understands the notion of the event—as the meeting place of two or more consciousnesses, perspectives, or voices. Bakhtin describes succinctly the Dostoevskian view he endorses: "Dostoevsky—to speak paradoxically—thought not in thoughts but in points of view, consciousnesses, voices" (93).

Bakhtin's conception of the event as the meeting place in which one perspective encounters another also involves the view that only in the event can knowledge become attainable; that is, the event, for Bakhtin, constitutes the condition for the possibility of any knowledge whatsoever. As Morson and Emerson put it, "All knowledge in the humanities begins as an interaction between two points of view. This kind of interaction, which is what Bakhtin means by an 'event,' inevitably entails an evaluation that must in turn anticipate a counterevaluation" (1990, 98-99). It is only in the dialogue which arises between various consciousnesses, perspectives, or voices that the interlocutors, whether in the novel or in real life, can come to an understanding of something. "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (1984a, 110), Bakhtin states.

As Bakhtin's picture so richly captures, the presence of other animating

consciousnesses, perspectives, or voices affects any given utterance from its very birth;

every utterance requires the presence of another consciousness or perspective in order to

exist at all. In other words, every consciousness or perspective requires otherness. As

Holquist puts it, "In dialogism, the very capacity to have consciousness is based on

otherness. This otherness is not merely a dialectical alienation on its way to a sublation

that will endow it with a unifying identity in higher consciousness. On the contrary: in

dialogism consciousness *is* otherness" (2002, 18; Italics original). Thus Bakhtin insists,

"What is realized in the novel is the process of coming to know one's own language as it

is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own conceptual horizon

in someone else's horizon" (1981b, 365).

The description above shows why Bakhtin so strongly opposes any kind of

systematic philosophical theory. He opposes the dialectics of the Hegelian and Marxist

systems for mostly the same reasons that he opposes the dominant Western traditional

ethical theories of Kant and Mill—they are abstract monologic systems that seek

finalizability and closure rather than the unfinalizability and openness inherent to the

dialogical event.[17] In fact, in Bakhtin's view, there are at least four important differences

between dialogism and dialectic: 1) the dialogical is descriptive of discourse, whereas

dialectic is not; 2) the dialogical requires the participation of at least one (embodied)

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[17] Bakhtin says the following about the distinction between dialogue and dialectics: "Dialogue and dialectics. Take a dialogue and remove the voices (the partitioning of voices), remove the intonations (emotional and individualizing ones), carve out abstract concepts and judgments from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness—and that's how you get dialectics. Context and code. A context is potentially unfinalized; a code must be finalized. A code is only a technical means of transmitting information; it does not have cognitive, creative significance. A code is a deliberately established, killed context" (Morson and Emerson 1990, Bakhtin 1986b, p. 147).

person or agent, whereas the dialectical obtains between things and can remain entirely theoretical; 3) given (2), the dialogical must be understood in terms of spatial metaphors or analogues whereas the dialectical is not; and lastly, 4) the dialogical is inherently unfinalizable or open-ended, but the dialectical is theoretically finalizable. Indeed, Bakhtin insisted often that any attempt to synthesize—say, dialectically—competing perspectives can preclude dialogue through the conflation of disparate perspectives.[18]

This helps explain Bakhtin's claims that novelists had outstripped philosophers in capturing the dialogic complexity and messiness of actual life. As Morson and Emerson suggest: "Specifically, novels are best adapted to those forms of experience not easily 'transcribable' into rules and abstractions, either because the principles of transcription are unknown or because transcription itself would decisively change the essence of the phenomenon described" (1990, 282). On Bakhtin's view, then, novelists like Dostoevsky were alone in capturing the appropriate "event ontology" and the sense of time expressed in it.

Bakhtin's endorsement of an event ontology explains why he considers novels to have a special ethical utility, namely as a tool for moral education. Bakhtin rejects the notion that ethics must be based on and systematized through abstract rules governing decision procedures. And although Kant's influence on Bakhtin is clear early in the latter's career, especially in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (1993), Bakhtin nevertheless argues that abstract systems like Kant's cannot adequately account for the sense of "eventness" (*sobytiinost*) established in lived experience. Ethics, Bakhtin insists, must deal with "particular, concrete cases" (Morson and Emerson 1990, 366) and the

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[18] As Morson and Emerson (1990) put this, "As Bakhtin often observed, real dialogue is destroyed by the attempt to make a synthesis (dialectical or otherwise) that conflates distinct voices" (118).

responsibility that one ought to assume therein. Bakhtin's conception of the ethical does

change, nevertheless, from his earliest work in the late teens and early twenties from a

focus on the ethics of the singular, theoretically closed act to a focus on the unfinaliz-

ability and open-endedness of a more generally theorized responsible self in the late

twenties and thereafter.[19] But Bakhtin remains consistent in arguing that philosophy is

not the best paradigm for ethics in general or moral education in particular. As Morson

and Emerson note, "If ethics were an object of knowledge, then philosophy would be the

best moral education. But ethics is a matter not of knowledge, but of wisdom. And

wisdom, Bakhtin believed, is not systematizable" (1990, 27). "For good or ill," they

write, "[novels] are powerful tools for enriching our moral sense of particular situations.

They locate obligation in eventness—still incompletely of course, but much more fully

than other available forms of representation" (Ibid).

2.4 Bakhtin on the Inner Speech of the Dialogical Self

Bakhtin considers dialogic novels—and their characters—as analogues of the self. As

Bakhtin argues, "Dostoevsky's novel…is constructed not as the whole of a single

consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole

formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an

object for the other…" (1984a, 17-18). Analogously, the self understands itself

psychologically through inner speech in which various animating perspectives or voices

interact. In one of his most telling passages, Bakhtin describes a picture of inner speech

that applies equally well to the self of a Dostoevskian character and to the non-fictional,

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[19] See Chapter Two of Morson and Emerson (1990) for an elaboration of this aspect of Bakhtin's
thought.

actual self. I quote Bakhtin frequently here to show, in part, how emphatic he was on this point. He says,

> "It is as if we have taken a conversation between two people, then have omitted the statements of the second speaker, but in such a way that the general sense is not violated. The second speaker is present invisibly.... An inner conversation unfolds, for each present, uttered word of the first speaker responds and reacts with its every fiber to the invisible speaker, points to something outside itself, beyond its limits, to the unspoken words of the other person" (209).

In its discursive engagement with others, then, the self internalizes the conversations and dialogues it has with others and incorporates them into its understanding of others and itself. The character or self's "inner speech is constructed like a succession of living and impassioned replies to all the words of others he has heard or been touched by" (238). And lastly, "In Dostoevsky, consciousness never gravitates toward itself but is always found in intense relationship with another consciousness. Every experience, every thought of a character is internally dialogic" (32).

Bakhtin's notion of inner dialogic speech seems entirely accurate when we consider ordinary activities like, say, meditative breathing exercises. In such a case, my focus is meant to be entirely on my breath, moving in and out. But as any novice meditator knows, focusing on one's breath to the exclusion of any additional thoughts seems impossible in practice. (Indeed, this is no doubt an experience which expert meditators should be familiar with as well, even if they have largely overcome it.) What I experience, in addition to my breathing, now made more salient by my exclusive focus on it, is the intrusion of myriad random thoughts about things I have to do, things I have already done, and things I am glad I have done or things I wish I had not done. These

inner ruminations may involve not just the inner speech we have with ourselves but that which we have with imagined others, as well.

One might be tempted to treat this example as an unusual, rather than paradigmatic, case, as, one might argue, our experience of meditation usually does not coincide with our regular experience in waking life, notwithstanding our greatest efforts to make them coincide. Nevertheless, I want to suggest that rather than see the meditative experience as an unusual case, we recognize it as an example of our normal psychic experience, only intensified. Thus the experience is different only in degree but not in kind.

And, surely, I may find myself having a dialogue with an imagined other just as often not while meditating but in just going about my everyday activities. While stuck in rush-hour traffic, I may find myself imagining how I will tell my partner about the terrible accident I saw.[20] This may involve just my imagined projection of our future conversation, in which I play over in my mind only my part of the dialogue; but it may also involve my imagining the dialogue in full, that is, I may invoke both parts, both interlocutors' utterances and gesticulations in the imagined conversation. I may even take the additional step and interpret my current situation—e.g. being stuck in traffic, perhaps worried about the fate of the injured motorists, etc.—from the imagined perspective of my partner in evoking how she might respond upon being told of it. Or we could consider what is, for many people, perhaps the most obvious example: prayer.[21] In such a case, the worshipper engages in an apparent conversation with her respective God, while also interpreting herself from the imagined perspective of God that she assimilates for herself.

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[20] I am indebted to Charles Guignon for offering me this example.

[21] See Morson and Emerson: "Bakhtin's ultimate image of such dialogic faith is, character-istically, a *conversation* with Christ" (1990, 62; Italics original).

Bakhtin refers to the way "the other is 'captured' in a person's discourse and inner speech," evident in these examples, as "double-voiced discourse" (Richardson et al. 1998, 509).

Just as with the myriad similar cases that exemplify such dialogism, it is only because of shared linguistic experience within a common world that such dialogical experiences are possible. The words we choose and the actions we undertake in our linguistic experience are always inevitably affected and informed by, as well as inflected with, the words and actions of others. Thus Bakhtin says that our words are always "half-ours, half-someone else's" (1981b, 345). Again, the self / novel analogy becomes evident: "Novels constantly assimilate and reaccentuate the discourses of daily life, and, as our psychic life grows more and more complex, we develop new ways to reaccentuate the discourse of others. In this respect, too, *the self, as an assimilator of discourses*, resembles a novel (1990, 220; Italics original)," Morson and Emerson suggest.

Bakhtin's account would be remarkable if for no other reason than his account of psychological dialogism. But his work is also important because he identifies two of (what I take to be) the most prominent features of interpersonal dialogism. First, such dialogism requires the participation of at least one human agent. His crucial identification of these points emerges within his discussion of the difference between dialogism and dialectic, in that dialectic does not require the presence of a human agent. And second, interpersonal dialogism is inherently unfinalizable whereas dialectic is theoretically finalizable. Nevertheless, Bakhtin fails to recognize other of the most prominent aspects of interpersonal dialogism, which I shall elucidate in Chapter Six.

2.5 Dialogical Understanding: Gadamer on Horizons, Events, and Texts

In this section I aim to show how dialogism is a central, foundational feature of

Gadamer's hermeneutic phenomenology as he elucidates it in *Truth and Method*.

Dialogism emerges in Gadamer's conception of play (*Spiel*). Specifically, I want to argue

that Gadamer's notion of play is perhaps the single most important concept in all of *Truth*

and Method, as it 1) marks the beginning of Gadamer's own constructive philosophical

views therein, and it 2) thereafter permeates his subsequent discussions of hermeneutic

understanding, aesthetic experience, language, historical understanding, and, ultimately,

truth. As will become clear in what follows, Gadamer endorses an "event ontology," just

as we saw in Bakhtin. For Gadamer, an "event ontology," in its most provisional sense,

takes as its characteristic feature the view that beings appear as the beings they are, in

their essence, in their emergence in events of hermeneutic discourse.

In order to understand Gadamer's notion of play in all of its dialogical

significance, it is necessary to first show the context within which such a notion is

situated. Like Heidegger before him, Gadamer rejects the subject / object dichotomy so

pervasive in Anglo-American philosophy since the modern period, and which can be

traced back to ancient Greek philosophy.[22] Gadamer's notions of "effective history" and

the "fusion of horizons" represent his effort to overcome the subjectivism / objectivism

divide.[23] "*Understanding*," Gadamer writes, "*is to be thought of less as a subjective act*

than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and

present are constantly mediated" (2004, 291; Italics original). As Charles Guignon writes,

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[22] For an excellent account of Gadamer's critique of "methodologism," see Guignon (1999), especially pp. 221- 228.

[23] For good examples that illustrate the plausibility of Gadamer's effort to undercut such a divide, see Charles Taylor (2002) in Malpas, Arnswald, and Kertscher (2002, 288-289).

"Gadamer notes that the primary meaning of the word *understanding* in German is 'reaching an understanding' or 'coming to an agreement' with someone about a subject matter or topic" (1999, 228; Italics original).

Tradition, for Gadamer, provides us with a reservoir of shared discourse, belief, and meaning. It is, as Gadamer explicitly claims, nothing less than language itself.[24] We are always to some degree beholden to the tradition from which we come. Gadamer uses the term "effective history" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) to refer to, in Georgia Warnke's words, "the operative force of the tradition over those that belong to it, so that even in rejecting or reacting to it they remain conditioned by it" (1987, 79). Our understanding, then, is both governed by and yet only possible through our language and tradition.

It is against this vast backdrop of tradition that we can have a "range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (Gadamer 2004, 301). This is what Gadamer calls a "horizon." A "horizon," for Gadamer, is simply the background understanding which always already serves as the context of meaning through which we encounter anything. And this context of meaning involves the prejudices we invariably hold as finite, epistemically limited human agents. In so far as a given horizon is a "range of vision," it is necessarily limited. But Gadamer is clear that horizons are not as limiting as their name might suggest, for he explicitly says that "'to have a horizon' means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it" (Ibid).

Horizons are not isolated phenomena, however. If they were, each of us would

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[24] As Gadamer says, "Hermeneutical experience is concerned with *tradition*. This is what is to be experienced. But tradition is not simply a process that experience teaches us to know and govern; it is *language*—i.e., it expresses itself like a Thou. A Thou is not an object; it relates itself to us" (2004, 352; Italics original).

remain forever hermeneutically sealed off from one another, incapable of constructing shared meaning. "*Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves*" (305; Italics original), Gadamer says. In order for any kind of understanding to emerge, the various horizons must be mutually inclusive of one another. The fusion of horizons has both a temporal dimension and an interlocutory dimension: temporal in that "because we are continually having to test all our prejudices," the horizon of the past necessarily encounters the horizon of the present (Ibid),[25] and interlocutory in that my horizon must merge with my interlocutor's in my encounter with her. Thus Gadamer claims, "*Understanding is, essentially, a historically effected event*" (299; Italics original).

It becomes clear that while horizons invariably limit the scope of what is available for us to come to understand, they also, more importantly, serve as the condition for the possibility of us coming to understand anything at all. It is therefore not the case that understanding emerges from some universally valid, ahistorical objective standpoint; but neither is it the case that understanding is merely restricted to the sphere of an individual's subjective interpretations. As Jens Kertscher notes, "[T]he idea," then, "of an objective meaning that belongs to the *interpretanda*...is inconceivable since it would presuppose the idea of a neutral standpoint beyond all horizons" (2002, 147; Italics original). But this does not render all meaning as merely subjective either. Indeed, Gadamer clearly rejects the kind of relativism such subjectivism becomes, calling it, in reference to Paul Valery's view, an "untenable hermeneutic nihilism" (2004, 82).[26]

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[25] Indeed, as Gadamer puts it, the "horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past" (305).
[26] This quote was pointed out to me by Jean Grondin (2002) in Dostal (2002, 43). Guignon uses it as well (1999, 223).

For Gadamer, there can be two or more equally plausible interpretations of a text or (other) work of art, but not all interpretations will be equally plausible. As Guignon says, "By clarifying the event-character of human phenomena, Gadamer hopes to dispel the illusion that we are forced to choose between objectivism and relativism" (1999, 225). Gadamer argues that while no one interpretation, utterance, or truth-claim can be the objectively 'right' one, there can and will be ones that are plainly mistaken or inaccurate because of the degree to which their meaning fails to correspond to, or adequately capture, the meaning of the text or work of art. An utterance, interpretation, or truth-claim is therefore evaluable against the background of presuppositions, beliefs, and practices constitutive of the given horizon(s), where this just means that the correctness or appropriateness of the utterance, etc. can be judged only in the "space of interlocution"[27] within a given horizon.[28]

Although hermeneutics, as Gadamer notes, is in fact "[t]he classical discipline concerned with the art of understanding texts" (2004, 157), it is important to note that for Gadamer what constitutes a 'text,' in addition to its literal designation of a literary work, has broad metaphorical significance. Gadamer, in fact, considers history, or tradition itself, as a text. "It is not just that sources are texts, but historical reality itself is a text that has to be understood" (196), he writes. "*Thus the foundation for the study of history is hermeneutics*" (197; Italics original). Moreover, hermeneutics, when done properly, requires "entering into dialogue with the text" (362). "For tradition," Gadamer says, "is a

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[27] I am borrowing this term from Taylor. See *Sources of the Self*, p. 31.

[28] See Jens Kertscher (2002) in Malpas et al (2002, 148-149). Kertscher seems to treat utterances, interpretations, truth claims, and texts interchangeably. It is problematic, though, to attribute to speech acts the attributes of texts, and vice versa, because, for instance, speech situations can occur without texts. See Joanne Waugh (2000) on this point, especially p. 49. See also Roger Ariew and Joanne Waugh (2013) where they argue, among other things, that speech acts are prior to texts and should be seen as the model for language (110).

genuine partner in dialogue, and we belong to it, as does the I with a Thou" (352).[29]

Indeed, Gadamer argues that traditions, literary works, paintings, and other works of art are all types of texts with which we can become dialogue partners.[30] Additionally, if, as Gadamer claims, "Understanding must be conceived as a part of the event in which meaning occurs, the event in which the meaning of all statements—those of art and all other kinds of tradition—is formed and actualized" (157), and hermeneutics is the art of understanding tradition itself, then hermeneutics amounts to a philosophical account of the event of understanding. Hermeneutics, then, is nothing less than the phenomeno-logical working out of an event ontology through dialogues with 'texts.'

2.6 Gadamer on the Art of Genuine Conversation

Given Gadamer's emphasis on dialogue, it is unsurprising that he would discuss at length the dynamics that obtain between interlocutors in a conversation. Gadamer begins his discussion of the interlocutory dynamics of conversation by rejecting the traditional view which sees the ideal conversation as one in which the interlocutors aim for autonomous authority over every aspect of the dialogue itself. Engaging in what Gadamer calls "genuine" conversation is not a matter of each interlocutor imposing his will so as to control and manipulate every aspect of the dialogue, such as the subject matter, the speed with which utterances are made, the style in which they are delivered, and the tone which they may evoke. Instead, Gadamer insists that engaging in genuine conversation is more a matter of remaining open to the play of possibility and allowing the dialogue to unfold in its own unprecedented way. It involves recognizing, as Gadamer says, that

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[29] As Gadamer says elsewhere, "[T]here is dialogue between tradition and its interpreter" (2004, 457).

[30] Jean Grondin (2003) captures this idea nicely when he says, "To understand a text or an event is to understand it as a reply to a question" (p. 125).

"conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it—i.e., that it allows something to 'emerge' which henceforth exists" (385).[31] That conversation takes on a life of its own means that, as interlocutors, we assume more of a peripheral role in the development of a given dialogue. Thus he says,

> "We say that we 'conduct' a conversation, but the more genuine a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner. Thus a genuine conversation is never the one that we wanted to conduct. Rather, it is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it. The way one word follows another, with the conversation taking its own twists and reaching its own conclusion, may well be conducted in some way, but the partners conversing are far less the leaders of it than the led" (Ibid).

Gadamer's description suggests that in order for "genuine" conversation to emerge, one must relinquish one's will to control with respect to the subject matter and other aspects noted above, as well as to one's interlocutory partner. That Gadamer invokes the notion of "genuine" conversation shows that he clearly has a normative conception of dialogue and conversation. Indeed, he speaks of dialectic as the "art of conducting a conversation" (361). "To conduct a conversation," Gadamer writes, "means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented. It requires that one does not try to argue the other person down but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion" (360-361). How well the conversation comes off, then, is dependent upon the attitude that the interlocutors bring to it. If we are to engage in "genuine" conversation, we must recognize that we cannot (and should not try nevertheless to) make the conversation conform to the plans we have for it.

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25. Further, Gadamer (2004) says, "[W]hat emerges in its truth is the logos, which is neither mine nor yours and hence so far transcends the interlocutors' subjective opinions that even the person leading the conversation knows that he does not know" (p. 368).

Rather, we have to respect the subject matter and remain faithful to the path on which the conversation leads us.[32] This requires that we remain open and receptive to the other with whom we are engaged in dialogue, even if that means encountering an idea or truth-claim that we did not foresee or which may unsettle us.[33] As Gadamer says,

> "In human relations the important thing is, as we have seen, to experience the Thou truly as a Thou—i.e., not to overlook his claim but to let him really say something to us. Here is where openness belongs. But ultimately this openness does not exist only for the person who speaks; rather, anyone who listens is fundamentally open. Without such openness to one another there is no genuine human bond. Belonging together always also means being able to listen to one another" (355).

Nevertheless, real, or "genuine," conversation, for Gadamer, ultimately entails the interlocutors' willingness to seek agreement on the subject matter. This interlocutory willingness is perhaps the most important feature that distinguishes real dialogue from its proxies. It is, as Gadamer writes, fundamentally different from

> "a conversation that we have with someone simply in order to get to know him—i.e., to discover where he is coming from and his horizon. This is not a true conversation—that is, we are not seeking agreement on some subject—because the specific contents of the conversation are only a means to get to know the horizon of the other person. Examples are oral examinations and certain kinds of conversation between doctor and patient" (302).

I want to suggest, however, that "genuine" or "true conversation" requires more than the two conditions described above: 1) that the interlocutors not try to control the

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[32] As Gadamer notes, "Every conversation presupposes a common language, or better, creates a common language. Something is placed in the center, as the Greeks say, which the partners in dialogue both share, and concerning which they can exchange ideas with one another" (2004, 371).

[33] Thus Gadamer writes, "Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that *each person opens himself to the other*, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says" (2004, 387; Italics mine).

development of the dialogue and 2) that they exhibit a willingness to seek agreement on the subject matter.

It is important to note that Gadamer looks more favorably upon dialectic than Bakhtin does. Gadamer's longtime interest in Plato's dialogues no doubt influenced his favorable view of dialectic. For Gadamer, it is not the case, as it is for Bakhtin, that dialectic occurs only among things and not people. For instance, Gadamer writes,

> "It is called dialectic because it is the art of conducting a real dialogue. To conduct a dialogue requires first of all that the partners do not talk at cross purposes. Hence it necessarily has the structure of question and answer. The first condition of the art of conversation is ensuring that the other person is with us" (360).

Consider also his claim: "*Thus the dialectic of question and answer always precedes the dialectic of interpretation. It is what determines understanding as an event*" (467; Italics original). It might seem, then, that for Gadamer dialectic, as "the art of conducting a real dialogue" (360), is more primordial or foundational than dialogism. But such a conclusion overlooks a fundamental insight: Even though dialectic is the "art of conducting a real dialogue" (Ibid), the dialogical, in so far as it describes discursive or interlocutory space, actually represents the condition for the possibility of dialogue itself. Thus, that there is anything like the art of dialectic for dialogue is contingent upon the more primordial dialogical interlocutory space. For Gadamer, it is true that the "I-Thou relation" (352) has a dialectical structure, but it remains the case that the dialogical is what makes the "I-Thou relation" itself possible.

2.7 The Significance of Play (*Spiel*) in Gadamer's Hermeneutic Phenomenology

To get a clearer sense of how (Gadamer shows that) we are perpetually called upon or

addressed, one must look at Gadamer's notions of "play" and "aesthetic experience."

And because, as Guignon points out, "Gadamer's attempt to characterize artworks as

events of truth begins, oddly enough, with a description of play (*Spiel*)" (1999, 225), I

shall first turn to that. In fact, Gadamer himself goes so far as to say that he has

"developed the concept of *play as the event of art proper*" (2004, 138; Italics mine).

      According to Gadamer, when players play a game, they enter into a different

domain—"Human play requires a playing field" (107) —whereby they voluntarily

submit to the game's authoritative structure. Within this structure—and what Gadamer

refers to, in its most basic sense, as play—is a to-and-fro movement that obtains amongst

players of a game.[34] As Gadamer says,

> "The movement to-and-fro obviously belongs so essentially to the game that there
> is an ultimate sense in which you cannot have a game by yourself. In order for
> there to be a game, there always has to be, not necessarily literally another player,
> but something else with which the player plays and which automatically responds
> to his move with a countermove" (106).

Gadamer in this passage is clear that play requires at least one person or agent *qua* player,

but he is even more adamant that the game is in no way reducible to the player's (or

players') subjective action,[35] for the game's structure provides the context within which

the players' action has the significance it does. To cite just a couple of the many times

that Gadamer unequivocally asserts the distinction between play and the players'

subjectivity, he says, "We can certainly distinguish between play and the behavior of the

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[34] See Jean Grondin (2003, 40-41) for an alternative discussion of the game.

[35] This is true as well in cases of conversation: "We have seen that the words that bring
something into language are themselves a speculative event. Their truth lies in what is said in
them, and not in an intention locked in the impotence of subjective particularity" (2004, 483).

player, which, as such, belongs with the other kinds of subjective behavior" (102). And also that "[P]lay has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play" (103).[36] And as one last example of many, he writes, "We have seen that play does not have its being in the player's consciousness or attitude, but on the contrary play draws him into its dominion and fills him with its spirit. The player experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him" (109).

Each of the players, then, must have a certain hermeneutic sensitivity to the other with whom they are engaged in order for play to arise. In fact, Gadamer recognizes the need for such sensitivity when he says, "Play fulfills its purpose *only if the player loses himself in play*" (103; Italics mine). Gadamer is describing how, in conversation or when viewing artwork or a performance, we can become enthralled and, in a sense, *forget our self* in the play of the event. The performance instantiates the *event that, if we let it, happens to us*. The movement of play in some sense does require effort on the part of the players, but it is an effort undertaken only in so far as the players must let go of their will to control the play itself.

Gadamer explicitly rejects the notion of a *telos* inherent to play. As he says elsewhere of play, "In each case what is intended is to-and-fro movement that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end" (104). He under-scores this lack of a *telos* two lines later when he says, "The movement of playing has no goal that brings it to an end; rather, it renews itself in constant repetition" (Ibid). To illustrate Gadamer's point, it might be helpful to think of two people playing catch with a baseball. Within the to-and-

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[36] Indeed, Gadamer goes so far as to talk of "[t]he self-playing-out of play" when he writes, "The self-playing-out of play does not take place in a closed world of aesthetic appearance, but as a constant integration in time. The productive ambiguity that constitutes the essence of a work of art is only another way of expressing the play's essential characteristic of continually becoming a new event" (2004, 499).

fro movement there is of course the repeated goal of trying to accurately hit the target of the teammate's glove, but the game of catch is nevertheless ultimately without an overarching goal or *telos*. The players of a game of catch, strictly speaking, accomplish nothing, and this is exemplified, in part, by the fact that the players can end the game at any moment without having failed to fulfill any predetermined goal inherent to the game.

That the game is devoid of a *telos* does not mean that the game lacks a structure, though, for clearly the structure of the game involves at least two players standing sufficiently far (yet not too far) apart from each other, with each player having the reasonable expectation that his teammate will make a sincere effort to catch the ball and throw it back with attempted accuracy, etc. So, as I argued above—and indeed as Gadamer *does* mean to say—it is the case that the game is dependent on the players, for after all, the game cannot be played, and thus is not the game it is, without the players to play it. The players are therefore both governed by and, notwithstanding the game's prior existence, 'creators' of the game they play.[37]

In what Guignon calls his "phenomenological account of the being of works of art" (1999, 225), Gadamer suggests that art has the same authority over its participants as games do over their players (Warnke 1987, 49). The play as work of art has, as Gadamer refers to it, "absolute autonomy" (2004, 110) over the creators, participants, audience, and so on. He is right in claiming that the work of art exerts power over or, rather, *through* its audience. As Gadamer writes,

> "[T]he work of art is not an object that stands over against a subject for itself. Instead the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it. The 'subject' of the experience of art, that which remains and endures, is not the subjectivity of the person who

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[37] For a more comprehensive account of game playing, see Warnke's discussion (1987, 48-50).

experiences it but the work itself" (103).[38]

Gadamer rejects the notion of aesthetic experience as one in which the subject as observer views the work of art as object. As he says, "The picture is an event of being—in it being appears, meaningfully and visibly" (138). And because the work of art "is an event of being…[it] cannot be properly understood as an object of aesthetic consciousness…" (Ibid). Gadamer nevertheless defends the classical mimetic approach to art. That art is mimetic or representational suggests a view that takes it as imitative of 'reality' as it really is; but Gadamer rejects such a view. He simultaneously endorses art's representational quality while rejecting an absolutely objectively real 'reality' in itself. To reconcile this apparent tension, Warnke writes,

> "he distinguishes between a copy of reality and 'the appearance of what is there.' His point is that, although art represents an aspect of the world or reality, this aspect is not one that is apparent outside the painting or representation. Works of art are not reproductions of a reality that can be identified independently of the work of art and used to judge the adequacy of its representation; rather, the features of the objects works of art represent...are illuminated only by means of the representation itself..." (1987, 57).

Play's "consummation in being art" is what Gadamer refers to as "transformation into structure" (*Verwandlung ins Gebilde*) (2004, 110). This occurs when play "is in principle repeatable" and takes on the "character of a work," or what Gadamer calls a "structure" (*Gebilde*), such that it can be presented to an audience.[39] That is, in the work's

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[38] As Grondin describes it, "The work of art addresses itself to us, as *Aussage*, as enunciation or message before which we cannot remain indifferent…. This art which 'looks' at us provokes a response from us. The poem that is the *Gedicht* unfolds not only as the diktat which we must follow, but also as *Gesprach*, as dialogue…. The speech (*Wort*) of art inevitably calls for a response (*Antwort*), which implies the wholeness of our being" (2003, 42; Italics original).

[39] Vilhauer (2010, 79) puts this well when she writes, "Taking up the example of performance art, Gadamer explains that 'transformation into structure' occurs when the activity in which the players are involved is directed toward an audience or spectator—that is, when their presentation

presentation as play, "the unity and identity of a structure emerge" (120). Here he is describing how the work and the event which its presentation instantiates become inseparable through the work's performance. As he puts it, "Every performance is an event, but not one in any way separate from the work—the work itself is what 'takes place' (ereignet: also, comes into its own) in the event (Ereignis) of performance" (141).

Moreover, when Gadamer claims that "Artistic presentation, by its nature, exists for someone, even if there is no one there who merely listens or watches" (110), he is describing how the artwork or performance *solicits attention* from an audience in the same way that an interlocutor solicits attention from other interlocutors, or the way that a game solicits the attention of the players. For Gadamer, as Jean Grondin notes, "[I]n aesthetic experience, it is we who are captured, rather as if we were taken up by a *game*. Gadamer uses the metaphor of a game in his investigation into the ontological density of the aesthetic experience" (2003, 39; Italics original). In their role, then, as audience members, actors, players, or interlocutors, the participants in an aesthetic experience, a game, or a conversation are each governed by and co-creators of the understanding which henceforth emerges into presence in the course of the activity. The participants therefore function as conduits through which the truth of understanding is presented.[40]

The centrality that dialogism assumes in Gadamer's phenomenological hermeneutics becomes fully apparent. Gadamer's phenomenological account takes the to-and-fro of conversation and shows how that same to-and-fro exists elsewhere in experiences like games and art. Indeed, the intra-agent inter-animation permeates human interaction, irrespective of whether we recognize it or not. Players, interlocutors, and

becomes a *representation of something for someone*."
[40] For an excellent account of the analogous relation between, on the one hand, the game and its players, and, on the other hand, the work of art and its audience, see Warnke (1987, 48-72).

artists are always co-creators and co-participants, dependent on their interaction with an other. Taylor captures this feature of Gadamer's description when he writes in "To Follow a Rule," "My embodied understanding doesn't only exist in me as an individual agent, but also as the coagent of common actions" (1997, 173).

2.8 Conclusion

This account illustrates the extent to which the traditional Cartesian conception of the self-contained, theoretically isolatable, monological agent is utterly inaccurate in its depiction of everyday discursive experiences. As Gadamer says, "That being is self-presentation and that all understanding is an event, this first and last insight transcends the horizon of substance metaphysics as well as the metamorphosis of the concept of substance into the concepts of subjectivity and scientific objectivity" (2004, 478).

I find Gadamer's conception of truth as arising out of the dialogical event especially insightful, even though he does not have a place in his theory for the ontic/ontological distinction from *Being and Time* and does not really address it in *Truth and Method*. I also agree with Gadamer's argument that while no one interpretation, utterance, or truth-claim can be the objectively 'right' one, there can and will be ones that are plainly mistaken or inaccurate because of the degree to which their meaning fails to correspond to, or adequately capture, the meaning of the text, work of art, etc. In this way, Gadamer's notion of the truth-revealing event is strongly influenced by Heidegger's explication of *aletheia* in middle-period works like *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

Most importantly for my account, however, is that while Gadamer fails to identify some of the other most prominent features of interpersonal dialogism, he nevertheless identifies one of them, namely, that such dialogism involves a to-and-fro, back and forth

movement. I shall elaborate on this feature in Chapter Six.

Chapter Three: Hermans et al. on Dialogical Self Theory

3.1 Introduction

The Dutch psychologist Hubert Hermans (1992, 1993, 2010, 2012a and 2012b, 2014, 2016) et al. (especially Kempen, van Loon, and Hermans-Konopka) is rightfully considered the founder of dialogical self theory in the field of psychology. Hermans, Kempen, and van Loon authored the first published article in psychology exclusively offering an account of the dialogical self and, since then, Hermans has authored or co-authored numerous works expanding on dialogical self theory, culminating in his comprehensive study, *Dialogical Self Theory: Positioning and Counter-positioning in a Globalizing Society* (2010), co-authored with Agnieszka Hermans-Konopka. In this chapter I shall offer a critical account of the work of Hermans et al.

3.2 Hermans et al. on Spatially Situating the Dialogical Self

Since Hermans, with Kempen and Van Loon, published the first article in psychology on the dialogical self, in 1992, he has not just co-authored articles and books on the dialogical self;[41] he has also written early books devoted to the dialogical self, such as *The Dialogical Self: Meaning as Movement* (1993), which expanded significantly on his co-authored article from the year before. Hermans' thought on the dialogical self has evolved significantly over the years, and there is a marked contrast between his early

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[41] Other of Hermans' authored, co-authored, and edited works which focus on the dialogical self in different contexts include *Applications of Dialogical Self Theory: New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* (2012a), *Between Dreaming and Recognition Seeking: The Emergence of Dialogical Self Theory* (2012b), the *Handbook of Dialogical Self Theory* (2014), *The Dialogical Self in Psychotherapy: An Introduction* (2016), and too many articles to list here.

conceptions of the dialogical self in 1992 and 1993 and his more mature work in this decade. A comparative analysis between, for instance, his first book on the dialogical self, *The Dialogical Self: Meaning as Movement* (1993), and his most comprehensive (co-authored) book on the same topic, *Dialogical Self Theory: Positioning and Counter-Positioning in a Globalizing Society* (2010) would no doubt be worthy of extended study and discussion.[42] But, for my purposes here, I want to focus exclusively on this latter work, which represents his most systematic and comprehensive articulation of his work on the dialogical self.

As the title suggests, in *Dialogical Self Theory: Positioning and Counter-Positioning in a Globalizing Society,* Hermans and Hermans-Konopka frame their discussion of the dialogical self within a broader social and political context. As they argue, "Dialogical self theory…emerged at the interface of two traditions: American Pragmatism and Russian Dialogism" (2010, 1), namely in the work of Henry James and Mikhail Bakhtin. But they find additional inspiration from George Herbert Mead's notion of the "society of mind," which becomes a recurring motif in their elucidation of dialogical self theory. One can easily notice these influences in their claim, early in the book, that

> "dialogical relationships are required not only *between* individuals, groups and cultures, but also *within* the self of one and the same individual. This central message of the present book is based on the observation that many of the social processes, like dialogue and fights for dominance, that can be observed in society at large also take place within the self as a 'society of mind'" (Ibid; Italics original).

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[42] As mentioned in the previous footnote, Hermans has authored works more recent than *Dialogical Self Theory* (2010), but I am focusing on it nevertheless because it is, undoubtedly, his most systematic and comprehensive version of his thought.

On their view, the self is a microcosm of the dynamics that inhere in social and political relationships in society at large. And they devote much of the rest of the book showing why dialogical self theory is necessary for recognizing and making sense of the increasing complexity of relationships at the nexus of social and geo-political influences.

Hermans and Hermans-Konopka base their methodological procedure on the uncontroversial premise that "the self is extended in space and time" (2). Thus they devote the first chapter of their study of the dialogical self to a discussion of the ways that the self is affected spatially by globalization and localization. They devote their second chapter to a consideration of the ways that the self has evolved temporally through different historical phases. I shall discuss later the way that they understand the self temporally, but for now I shall focus on the way they conceive of the self spatially.

They argue that "[a]s a result of increasing demographic, economic, ecological, political, and military interconnectedness on a global scale, cosmopolitanism is becoming an aspect of the everyday life of people in many parts of the world" (21).[43] This is largely due to technological advances like the internet and social media, but it is also due to the way that business and education have become internationalized to an unprecedented degree. The world has indeed become a "smaller" place. We are now capable of interacting instantaneously with others halfway around the world in ways that would have taken days, weeks, or even months just decades ago. A student in Mumbai can watch a live lecture given by a professor in the United States. A person living in Vancouver can order a briefcase handmade by a local artisan in Istanbul. Students in Brazil can express their solidarity with political protesters in South Africa. This has presented obvious

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[43] See also Kwame Anthony Appiah 2006 and David T. Hansen 2011.

advantages for communication, education, commerce, and politics, etc. by fostering

"forms of cooperation" (Ibid) across disparate geo-political regions. But, as Hermans and

Hermans-Konopka are quick to note, such interconnectivity has brought disadvantages as

well. That our interactions with others are more instantaneous and numerous than ever

before means that some may experience other previously unknown groups as a threat to

their way of life. The tensions that have arisen as a result of real or perceived threats can

be seen in the realms of immigration, religion, and the economy (21-22). Thus they

identify the paradox regarding globalization's effect on the self's multiplicity:

> "Whereas globalization has the potential to increase the density and heterogeneity of positions of the self in unprecedented ways, it evokes, under certain conditions, defensive forms of localization that are driven by deeply rooted biological needs that cause a considerable reduction and restriction of positions in the repertoire of the self" (50).

In this context, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka argue that only a conception of

the self as dialogical can make sense of and adequately address the challenges posed by

such globalizing and localizing forces. Globalization, they argue, presents the self with

what they call "decentering" or "decentralizing" forces, which threaten to undermine the

unity and stability of the self. Localization, on the other hand, affects the self by

introducing what they call "centering" or "centralizing movements," which help to retain

or regain some degree of coherence and stability to the self. They claim further that the

global and the local are not mutually exclusive of one another; rather, they exist in

dialectical tension (26). And only a dialogical self, they suggest, is capable of "shifting

between [global and local] positions" (22) and thus successfully navigating the tension

therein.

3.3 *I*-Positions in the Dialogical Self

They offer three reasons in particular for why the "global-local connections require a dialogical conception of self and identity": "the increasing multiplicity of self and identity, the need for developing a dialogical capacity, and the necessity of acknowledging the alterity of the other person with whom one enters in dialogical contact" (29). By "the increasing multiplicity of self and identity," Hermans and Hermans-Konopka are referring to one of the basic premises of dialogical self theory, which Hermans, Kempen, and van Loon (1992) established in the first article on the topic: that the self is constituted "in terms of a dynamic multiplicity of *I*-positions or voices in the landscape of the mind, intertwined as this mind is with the minds of other people" (2010, 31; Italics original).

I should note here that although Hermans et al. used the terms "position" and "voice" interchangeably in their early work, and the terms are often used as such in much of dialogical self theory, in Hermans' more recent work, he and Hermans-Konopka differentiate them from one another. Although they present three arguments for why the two terms are distinguishable, the two main reasons why Hermans and Hermans-Konopka distinguish "position" from "voice" are because 1) one can be positioned as an embodied agent, developmentally, before one gets one's voice, where voice is understood as the means by which one makes a verbal utterance; and 2) one's positioning, socially, can be something of which one is unconscious, whereas one is necessarily conscious of one's voice (226-227). Thus they consider one's position to be more fundamental to the dialogical self than one's voice.

With this distinction in mind, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka describe an "*I-position*" as follows:

> "*I-position*" is the notion by which "multiplicity and unity are combined in one and the same composite term. Unity and continuity are expressed by attributing an 'I,' 'me,' or 'mine' imprint to different and even contradictory positions in the self, indicating that these positions are felt as belonging to the self in the extended sense of the term (e.g., 'I as ambitious,' 'I as anxious,' 'my father as an optimist,' 'my beloved children,' and even 'my irritating colleagues'). As differently positioned in time and space, the self functions as a multiplicity. However, as 'appropriated' to one and the same *I, me* or *mine,* unity and continuity are created in the midst of multiplicity" (9; Italics original).

I-positions, they argue, can be either "internal" or "external" (31-32). Internal *I*-positions involve the *I* identifying itself in terms of its factical situation, emotions, feelings, state of mind, etc. Thus, internal *I*-positions could be "*I* as white," "*I* as male," "*I* as optimistic," "*I* as bereaved," etc. External *I*-positions identify the relationships one has through one's self as it is extended in the social domain, e.g., "my parents," "my wife," "my pets," "my thesis," etc. Moreover, one can frequently find a combination of internal and external *I*-positions, such as "*I* as optimistic *about* my thesis" or "*I* as bereaved *for* my pets."

The specifically dialogical aspect of the self, then, is that these multiple *I*-positions can engage with one another as in a dialogue. A back and forth dialogical exchange exists between these various *I*-positions or voices within the self. These voices can represent different and possibly opposing desires or values within one's self. For instance, the *I*-position of "*I* as a gregarious lover of leisure" can emerge in tension or conflict with the *I*-position of "*I* as a serious, hardworking graduate student." Or the *I*-position of "*I* as a lover of chocolate desserts" can conflict with the *I*-position of "*I* as trying to lose weight and be healthier."

But these *I*-positions or voices can also be the appropriated and "internalized" voices of a real or imagined addressee. For instance, in weighing a decision between a desire on the one hand to spend lavishly and a desire on the other to be fiscally responsible, I may introduce the "voice" of my wife as a way of deciding which option I ought to pursue. Or, perhaps in feeling both the desire to persevere and finish my dissertation and the desire to give up because it is too difficult, I may introduce the voice of one or both of my parents as a way of altering or enriching my mind's "internal" dialogue. And my motivations for including these imagined addressees might be legion. I may be motivated to internalize my father's voice as a way of trying to talk myself out of giving up on my dissertation, knowing that if my father were here, he would surely tell me not to give up. Or I may internalize his voice in such a context because I recognize, out of respect for him, that he deserves to have a say about such a weighty decision.

But, as Hermans and Hermans-Konopka argue, "[d]ialogue refers not only to productive exchanges between the voices of individuals but also between collective voices of the groups, communities, and cultures to which the individual person belongs. Collective voices speak through the mouth of the individual person" (6). So, for instance, "*I* as a college teacher" represent and internalize many of the values and norms of other college teachers with respect to what my responsibilities are, what my expectations of my students should be, what pedagogical approach(es) I should take, and what the ultimate purpose or goal of my college teaching is or ought to be, etc. Or, "*I* as a fan of the Baltimore Orioles baseball team" represent and internalize the shared hopes, desires, triumphs, and disappointments of my fellow Orioles fans. So when I think about the expectations for the upcoming season, I may internalize the predictions and informed

judgments of expert Orioles commentators. But it is just as plausible that among the competing voices constitutive of my "inner" dialogue regarding my teaching is one which questions whether I ought to be a college teacher, or whether perhaps I ought to pursue a more selfless vocation. And among the voices of my dialogue regarding the Orioles can emerge a voice which suggests that, given the many social ills that plague society, I ought to spend less time and energy focusing on something as relatively trivial as a baseball team. Because of situations like these, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka argue that "[i]n healthy multi-voicedness there is a simultaneity of positions among which the *I* is capable of moving back and forth in flexible ways, so that question and answer, agreement and disagreement between the several positions are in line with the demands of the situation at hand" (37; Italics original).

The second reason why "global-local connections require a dialogical conception of self and identity" is because an interconnected world in which cultural differences and oppositions characterize one's social milieu in unprecedented ways requires a self which possesses a disposition towards "question and answer, agreement and disagreement and negotiation" as a characteristic feature of its everyday skillful coping (30). For example, I may slowly come to recognize my white male privilege as it operates in my current society and come to question my previously held assumptions regarding racial and gender norms. Or, I may come to experience conflict and attempt to negotiate between the advantages that capitalism affords me while coming to realize that perhaps the overall advantages of socialism may come to outweigh whatever advantages capitalism offers.

The third reason is because of the "necessity of acknowledging the alterity of the other person with whom one enters in dialogical contact" (29). Myriad works in social

and political philosophy attest to the need to see the other whom one encounters as a person, in all of her agentive capacity, and not as a mere object.[44] But recognizing the alterity of the other requires more than just seeing them as a person. It also requires a willingness, in dialogue, to take the other's point of view seriously. Moreover, as Hermans and Hermans-Konopka suggest, "innovative dialogue" arises not solely by taking the other's viewpoint seriously, but by also being "willing to revise and change [one's] initial standpoints by taking the preceding messages and utterances of the other into account (Markova, 1987)" (2010, 30-31).

Interestingly, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka claim that "[d]ialogue…assumes the emergence or creation of a 'dialogical space' in which existing positions are further developed and new and commonly constructed positions have a chance to emerge" (2010, 6). And they also endorse Hermans' earlier claim that "Every speech act opens a dialogical space…(Hermans, 2001)" (53). Two questions seem to arise: (1) what do they mean by dialogue "assum[ing] the emergence or creation of a 'dialogical space'"? And, more fundamentally, (2) what is the relationship between "dialogue" and "speech act" on the one hand and dialogical space on the other? The problem is that they do not explicitly articulate an answer to these two questions.

One possible interpretation might be that they are presenting a formulation in which dialogue is indistinguishable from the creation of a dialogical space. In such a case, their position would be that "dialogue" and any given "speech act" are, essentially, coterminous. Such a reading would yield a conceptual inconsistency, however. This is because they explicitly suggest elsewhere that every speech act does not necessarily

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[44] See also Buber 1996, Frantz Fanon 1967, Jean-Paul Sartre 1993, and Lewis R. Gordon 1997, for just a few examples.

constitute dialogue. In fact, in pointing out the constraints inherent to dialogue, they

claim that

> "There are situations where there is no dialogue or where it is not possible (e.g. in situations with large power differences between the participants) or even not required (e.g., a general who has to take a quick decision in wartime). The crucial question is not: Is the person dialogical or not? But rather: When and under which conditions is dialogue possible and can it be fostered?" (7).

Indeed, one of the propositions that they take as indispensable to dialogical self theory is

that "relations of social dominance are not alien to dialogue but belong to its intrinsic

dynamics" (31). Genuine dialogue *qua dialogical* seems impossible or at least out of

place, for instance, when police officers are interrogating a suspect, or when a defense

attorney cross-examines a testifying witness at trial. But surely, in the examples above,

we would still affirm that the detectives and the lawyer are performing speech acts—they

are just monological in nature.

A more charitable and plausible interpretation might go something like this. They

could argue, without pain of inconsistency, that each speech act *opens* a dialogical space

in the sense of *making possible* a space in which dialogical action, in the form of

dialogue, can emerge. This would mean that even when dialogue seems unlikely given

the nature of the power dynamics, bureaucratic structure, etc. of the encounter, in cases

such as the police interrogation and the attorney's cross-examination, it would still not be

impossible. Or even in cases where dialogue is possible but not desirable, such as when

the military general must issue commands that need to be followed quickly and not

questioned, the possibility remains for the soldier to refuse the monological imperative

issued by the general and attempt to engage her in dialogue. Ultimately, I think Hermans

and Hermans-Konopka should be read as arguing that the speech act "opens a dialogical

space" in the sense of creating the possibility for dialogue, but whether dialogue is established—whether the dialogical space is actually *created*—is contingent upon the actions of the agents or participants involved.

On this reading, then, the emergence of dialogue between interlocutors is always possible even if it never becomes actualized. This conclusion is problematized, however, by an additional claim that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka endorse, when they write, "Dialogue is not everywhere. It is restricted or even impossible when the self is populated by a high number of disconnected voices, resulting in a cacophony in which any meaningful exchange is impeded (Lysaker and Lysaker, 2002)" (66). The claim that "[d]ialogue…is…even impossible" is perhaps accurate when describing the "inner" dialogue of the dialogical self. An example would be when someone is beset by multiple-personality disorder, or a similar affliction. In such a case, the agent would possess various *I*-positions that would remain isolated within himself, resulting in multiple monologues. The multiple-personality patient, then, would be unable to establish dialogue between his various *I*-positions. But their claim about the potential impossibility of dialogue does not seem accurate as a description of the potential interlocution between agents. I want to suggest, rather, that there is always the potential for dialogue between interlocutors.

The conceptual ambiguity notwithstanding, the discussion above helps to show, importantly, how the self's dialogue differs from "inner speech," which is "usually described as the activity of 'silently talking to oneself'"… (7). As they argue,

> "The dialogical self is different from inner speech in at least four respects: (i) it is explicitly multi-voiced rather than mono-voiced and is engaged in interchanges between voices from different social or cultural origins; (ii) voices are not only 'private' but also 'collective,' and as such they talk through the mouth of the

individual speaker; (iii) the dialogical self is not based on any dualism between self and other: the other (individual or group) is not outside the self but conceptually included in the self; the other is an intrinsic part of a self that is extended to its social environment; (iv) the self is not only verbal but also non-verbal: there are embodied precursors of dialogue before the child is able to verbalize or use any language" (Ibid).

In addition to the three reasons for why the "global-local connections require a dialogical conception of self and identity," Hermans and Hermans-Konopka argue that the following claims are indispensable to a conception of the dialogical self:

"(i) other persons, groups, or cultures are parts of an extended self in terms of a multiplicity of contradictory voices or positions; (ii) relations of social dominance are not alien to dialogue but belong to its intrinsic dynamics; and (iii) emotions play a crucial role in closing or opening the self to global and local influences" (31).

I have already shown the significance of the first claim. But the second and third claims require elaboration. (I shall return to the third claim much later in this chapter.) The second claim—that "relations of social dominance are not alien to dialogue but belong to its intrinsic dynamics"—was actually first made, at least in the context of psychological work on dialogism, by Linell (1990). But Hermans and Hermans-Konopka endorse it as well, which is, as I shall show, problematic. According to Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, the claim is surprising because dialogue is often considered a remedy for relations in which social dominance otherwise prevails. On the common view, then, dialogue and relations of social dominance cannot occupy the same space and time; that is, they are mutually exclusive of one another. As they put it, "Usually, *dialogue* evokes an image of people sitting at a round table discussing their views and problems as perfectly equal partners. As far as there is any dominance, it is the strength of arguments

that counts" (2010, 38; Italics original). Such a case they describe as "an ideal speech situation" (Ibid).

In contrast to this picture, they argue, following Linell, that dominance relations are intrinsic to dialogue and dialogical interlocution. These dominance relations exist specifically in each "individual act-response sequence" (Ibid). The dominance relations can be identified and tracked by noting (1) who is talking, (2) how long they are talking, and (3) what they are talking about, i.e., the topic. (They note one additional feature, which they refer to as "strategic moves" where one "may have a strong impact on a conversation without needing to talk a lot," but they do not describe what this would look like.) Dominance, on this view, refers to the fact that while one person is talking, the other typically must remain silent and listen. Thus the speaker is dominant over the passive listener. And the longer the speaker speaks, the further her dominance is extended over the passive listener. More specifically, "As long as the dominant party talks, the subordinate party allows, or must allow, his or her contributions to be directed, controlled, or inhibited by the interlocutor's moves" (Ibid). Hermans and Hermans-Konopka call this "interactional dominance," and it pertains to aspects (1) and (2) noted above. Feature (3) noted above, which they call "topic dominance," refers to the fact that as long as one person is speaking, she more or less has control over the topic she wants to discuss, or at least over how she wants to discuss it. Thus they conclude that "although the topic of a meaningful conversation is under mutual control, relative dominance is not extrinsic but rather intrinsic to the dialogical process" (Ibid).

Their conclusion here raises an interesting question, I think. If the conversation really is "under mutual control," then in what sense is it meaningful to say that

dominance exists in the interaction? Or perhaps I should phrase the question differently: If the dominance relations really do exist in the ways they suggest, then in what sense is the conversation really "under mutual control"? This latter question points to a problem with their conception of the relationship between social dominance and dialogue— namely, that I can imagine manifestations of the dialogue they are describing, replete with the intrinsic dominance relations they identify, which, on my view, would not be dialogical at all. The description Hermans and Hermans-Konopka offer evokes circumstances which remind me of Taylor's example of the "compulsive talker" or "bore," who is impervious to the rhythm of dialogue, and who thus fails to act dialogically. Dialogical action—if it is truly dialogical—arises precisely because the interlocutors make a concerted effort to mitigate the deleterious effects that dominance relations may introduce into the conversation. My suggestion, then, is that if the conversation is really "under mutual control" and if it is actually dialogue—i.e., it is dialogical—then the dominance relations that Linell and Hermans and Hermans-Konopka describe will be overridden at best and negligible at worst.

It would be unfair if one were to ascribe to them a view that says that social dominance relations, since they are intrinsic to dialogue, cannot ever be problematic for the prospect of achieving such dialogue. They indeed recognize that relations of social dominance may negatively influence the quality of the interlocutory action, and may make dialogue unlikely. They write,

> "When one of the parties is not allowed to play a role as an active and reciprocal contributor of the interchange, dialogue is reduced to monologue because one voice is in control of the situation at the expense of the active contribution of the other to a commonly produced result" (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010, 39).

Such situations could easily emerge in cases like the ones I noted earlier, where the general must give orders, the trial lawyer must cross-examine a witness, or the detective must interrogate a suspect, although it is important to remember that dialogical action is still not impossible in such cases. And they do well to recognize that such cases do not exhaust the scenarios in which "societal institutions entail social positions that deeply influence or even inhibit the dialogical process in structural ways" (Ibid). As they note, hierarchical structures that exist between teacher and student, or senior colleague and junior colleague, may make dialogical action harder to achieve in such interactions, although such structures by no means determine from the outset what kind of action— monological or dialogical—will emerge. But it remains the case that their description of the interactional dominance and topic dominance supposedly intrinsic to the dialogical process too easily avails itself of cases that are more likely instances of monologue rather than dialogue. The main problem with their account, then, seems to be their claim that such inequities of power are *intrinsic* to dialogue.

Their talk of interactional and topical dominance can be seen easily at professional philosophy conferences, for instance. (Although, I doubt they are completely absent at professional conferences in other disciplines.) Take, for example, two participants at a professional philosophy conference engaging in a casual conversation at one of the conference's informal social gatherings. As may easily happen, the conversation turns to a philosophical topic related to the work presented at the conference that day. It is easy to see topic dominance emerge because of the conversational strategies one may employ. After Jack asks a question to Jill about the paper she presented earlier, Jack asks a very specific question about an issue seemingly relevant to Jill's paper, or so

Jack insists. After Jill provides a provisional response to Jack's question, Jack proceeds to talk at length about the issue his question raises. Or he proceeds to ask even more specific questions. It becomes clear that one of the strong motivations Jack had for shaping the topic as he did was in order to demonstrate how knowledgeable he is about the topic. He seems less motivated by an actual desire to learn what Jill thinks about the topic as he is by a desire to control the topic of conversation. This situation can be made worse if the question he initially asked was, on Jill's view, not as relevant to the topic her paper discussed as Jack insists it is. By controlling the topic at hand, a topic that Jill may not have considered because she did not think it relevant for her purposes, Jack has sought to assume a position of dominance in the conversation. It may be possible that Jack's question turns out to be more relevant than Jill initially thinks it is. But such cases do not deny the reality of the scenario I am describing here.

Interactional dominance can be evident as well in conversations in professional philosophical settings. Because professional philosophers are trained to be critical and find flaws in arguments, it is easy for philosophers, even in a more relaxed setting, to fall back into their default mode of simply picking apart one another's claims, or even casual remarks. Another strategy often employed is for one to introduce extremely specific or obscure terminology from one philosopher's corpus and rely on his command of such esoteric knowledge (even by professional philosophers' standards) to seek to gain the upper hand in a conversation. It is easy to imagine, then, that, having successfully shaped the topic of conversation to his liking, Jack begins to assail Jill with critical questions.

Consider another similar example. It is not uncommon at professional philosophy talks for an audience member to ask the speaker, after the paper has been delivered,

"Why is this interesting?" It is difficult to see what purpose such a question serves, other than to make the speaker uncomfortable and defensive. That such a question can be asked of any paper does nothing to underscore the question's legitimacy; instead, it only diminishes it. After all, it is a truism that, just like many other things in life, professional philosophers are going to have preferences for certain philosophical topics and not others. And the preferences themselves, as well as the reasons for those preferences, are going to be subjective. Indeed, the inquiring audience member either finds the paper interesting or he does not, no matter the quality of the paper, just as he either finds a painting interesting or he does not, no matter the quality of the painting. So, to ask this question of the speaker, whose paper supposedly *is itself the case* for why the topic is interesting is unfairly adversarial. If the audience member is genuinely interested in the presenter's motivations for doing work on the given topic, then he would be better off by asking a non-combative question like, "What motivated your project?"

These strategic moves, unfortunately, are prominent in professional philosophical settings. But they are, in my view, examples of unhealthy, monological interlocution. An important Gadamerian insight that I noted from Chapter Two is that someone who is consciously employing "strategic moves" lacks the proper interlocutory attitude or spirit necessary for achieving dialogue. As was shown in the Chapter Two discussion of Gadamer, trying to show how knowledgeable one is or attempting to show that one knows more about philosopher *x* or topic *y* are improper motivations for trying to achieve genuine dialogue.

That the strategic attempts at conversational dominance described above are monological in character illustrates the broader point that one's interlocutory attitude

toward language is of paramount importance for whether one instantiates dialogical action. In the scenario above, Jack specifically failed to adopt the proper attitude necessary for instantiating genuine dialogue.

Indeed, the attitude(s) implicit in one's methodological approach can prevent one from recognizing the dialogical dimension at all. Consider Bakhtin's insistence, which Hermans and Hermans-Konopka endorse, on the difference between (mono)logical and dialogical relationships. Bakhtin famously analyzes the two identical phrases "life is good" and "life is good." In Aristotelian logic, they are "one and same statement" (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010, 52). But if they are taken as two utterances expressed by "*spatially* separated people," then they can be seen as an instance of agreement, where the second is a confirmation of the first (Ibid; Italics original). Similarly, if you examine the phrases "life is good" and "life is not good" from the perspective of Aristotelian logic, then you find that one is simply the negation of the other. But if you consider them as utterances from separate interlocutors, then you find an instance of disagreement. Instances of agreement and disagreement do not necessarily indicate dialogism. But they do indicate dialogical potential, whereas the phrases, when viewed from Aristotelian logic, are intractably monological because they are abstracted out of the interlocutory context altogether.

The example above of Jack and Jill at the philosophy conference can help illuminate an additional crucial feature of dialogism that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka emphasize: namely, as I mentioned in Chapter One, that monologism and dialogism are not identifiably binary in nature. That is, it is not necessarily the case that an interaction is solely monological or solely dialogical, although it would not be hard to imagine

examples of 'pure' monologism and 'pure' dialogism. Rather, as Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, argue, correctly I think, monologism and dialogism lie at either end of a continuum, with various gradations in between. Thus it is most accurate to say that monologism and dialogism differ qualitatively by degrees. Consider again our philosophers Jack and Jill.

> "Suppose [they] are involved in an interchange and both of them (a) try to dominate the discussion; (b) are not aware of possible misunderstandings that are slipping through; (c) do not allow themselves to learn from the preceding interchange. In doing so, one or both of them move the relationship to the monological end of the continuum. On the contrary, the relationship is on the dialogical end of the continuum when the participants (a) give each other the chance to bring in their own experiences and point of view; (b) are aware of misunderstandings and able and willing to correct them; and (c) learn from each other during the interchange (e.g., they arrive at a new, shared insight or experience or are able to articulate, recognize, and even respect their differences)" (54).

Hermans and Hermans-Konopka describe here two equally plausible scenarios in which the outcome of the interaction varies greatly.

In addition to showing how monologism and dialogism are not conceptual binaries, the example of Jack and Jill helps to show the various ways that our social interactions and relationships with others can come to be marked by varying degrees of conflict, reconciliation, and agreement. Yet a central theme in Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's picture of the dialogical self is that "[p]articular relationships that emerge *between* people can also emerge *within* the self" (120; Italics original). They offer four examples of such relations within the self: "self-conflict, self-criticism, self-agreement, and self-consultancy" (121).

The emergence of self-conflict(s) is a rather pervasive phenomenon of the human condition. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka note that such self-conflict can emerge in

more mundane contexts such as trying to decide what one will eat at a restaurant and in more important contexts like deciding whether to divorce one's spouse, or whether to quit one's job in lieu of other job prospects. In the case of divorce, for instance, people can often find themselves "being of two minds" for quite some time, often resulting in behavior that one's partner finds confusing. Thus they write,

> "A man who is left by his wife may say: 'I don't understand her behavior, because some days ago she said to me that she loved me!' However, the husband is not aware of the intense and long-standing inner conflict on the part of his wife. The struggle of the voices leads to a period of instability in which the quick alternation of incompatible voices leads to very different and contradictory statements or actions. At the moment his wife says to him that she loves him, her loving voice ('I want to stay') becomes dominant and pushes conflicting voices to the background or even silences them. However, the conflicting voice can be silenced only for some time, because it cannot be 'deleted' from the self entirely" (Ibid).

As they note, at any time, the conflicting voice (e.g. "I want to leave him.") can emerge once again as the dominant voice, pushing the "loving voice" aside, perhaps once and for all.

To cite a different example, self-conflict may emerge, for instance, during the writing of one's dissertation. Given the difficulty of the project, the student may be "of two minds" about whether the project is worth finishing. There may be conflict between the voice that says, "It's too hard; I want to stop" and the voice that says "I want to keep going." Each voice will be accompanied or 'grounded' by attendant reasons such as, in the former case, "It takes too much effort; the process takes too long; the payoff may not be worth it," and, in the latter case, reasons such as "Getting the Ph.D. is worth the time and effort; it might enable me to get a teaching job; the project is inherently valuable, etc." Each voice may, at different times, become the dominant voice, but as long as they remain on relatively equal footing, the self-conflict will remain intense. The degree of

self-conflict is thus inversely proportionate to the degree to which one voice becomes the predominant one, that is, as one voice becomes the predominant one, the degree of self-conflict diminishes. Were one to abandon one's dissertation, one's family and friends may be surprised, as they were unaware of the degree of self-conflict one has experienced. Their surprise may be heightened if the student had only recently declared his commitment to finishing his dissertation. Family and friends would be all the more surprised, then, because they were unaware of the change in dominance that the self-conflicting voices have undergone.

To take perhaps an even more fundamental case of self-conflict, one might consider the impact that complex cultural milieus have on one's racial identity. (I say more fundamental because one's doctoral study or one's marriage status, though central to one's life, may still not be as foundational to one's existence as one's racial identity, given the specific implications that one's race may have in a given social or cultural context.) An especially well-known example would be W.E.B. Du Bois' conception of what he called "double consciousness," as described in *The Souls of Black Folk.* The African-American, he argued, was caught between two worlds, as it were—between how one saw oneself as a black person and how whites saw him. "Double consciousness" emerges in the black's psyche in a white anti-black society because he internalizes how racist whites view him—as less than human, as a problem to be dealt with, etc.—and this comes into inevitable conflict with how he sees himself—as a human being with life projects just like anyone else. What is especially troubling about the self-conflict created here, of course, is that it is not as easily remedied as it may be in the case of getting divorced or abandoning one's dissertation.

Self-conflict can indeed be crippling, exhausting, and potentially destructive for one's identity and selfhood. Nevertheless, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka note, interestingly, that as troubling as self-conflict can be, its complete absence (possible perhaps only in theory) may be detrimental to the self's overall health. "[R]emoving *all* conflicts from the self, if possible at all, would be at the cost of its creative potential…. [I]nternal conflicts…may be a source of productive self-reflection, self-exploration, and self-dialogue…" (2010, 121-122; Italics original). This 'benefit' of self-conflict, or at least certain kinds of self-conflict, can be seen easily in cases where people have creatively used their own inner conflict as grist for artistic purposes, such as in novels, plays, poems, music, dance, painting, etc. But reaping the benefits of self-conflict need not be the sole preserve of those with more traditionally artistic occupations like the jazz musician or poet. It may also prove beneficial for someone in less specifically artistic occupations, such as one, to take Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's example, who works as a minister and a psychotherapist. The psychotherapist is suspicious of the minister for not producing scientifically quantifiable and evidence-based results. And the minister is suspicious of the psychotherapist because the psychotherapist thinks that things such as love are quantifiable (122). In such a case, the values and identities of each respective occupation can engage in productive dialogue with one another, informing the other's approach.

The second example that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka cite, self-criticism, can be as pervasive in everyday life as self-conflict. As they suggest, "[s]elf-criticism typically results when we compare our acts with particular standards set by ourselves or others and notice that they are not reached…. When we do not reach the standards, we

tend to evaluate ourselves in a negative way" (123). Self-criticism, much like self-conflict, can be both positive and negative for one's sense of self. It is a common occurrence to encounter people who are far too frequently critical of themselves. And the damage that such self-criticism can cause can be a function not only of the frequency but also the severity that such criticism can take.

But self-criticism need not be entirely unhealthy. "Despite the apparent observation that a high-degree of self-criticism can have a detrimental influence on a person's well being and good-functioning, it is not intrinsically maladaptive" (Ibid), Hermans and Hermans-Konopka write. As they note, self-criticism can take the form of relatively minor self-evaluations and self-corrections that one can make of oneself, as when someone says, "Aw, I should have thought of that!" or "That was stupid of me. Mount Everest is the tallest mountain, of course!" But self-criticism need not be only "impulsive and momentary," as the examples above suggest. It can be more prolonged, as well, and form part of "critical self-reflection" and "critical examination" (Ibid). As they argue, correctly, "[s]uch critical examination can be part of a productive 'life review' (Butler, 1975), a process that is characterized by the progressive return to consciousness of past experiences. As part of the reflexive process, unresolved conflicts can be surveyed and perhaps reintegrated" (Ibid). One's prolonged self-reflection may focus, for example, on how one acted in past romantic relationships and on how one treated one's past romantic partners. This may result in one's feelings of guilt and anxiety about how one has acted in the past. And the possibility exists that one may dwell unhealthily on one's past. But it's also possible that one's self-criticism may enable one to recognize one's past failings and reconcile them with who one has become, e.g. as a changed person who

would never again be unfaithful to one's partner. In this way, one may come to accept

that one's past actions failed to meet one's past and current standards for action, enabling

one to recognize one's mistakes *as* mistakes and yet to move on and stop dwelling on

those mistakes which, of course, one cannot go back and change. Whether self-criticism

is healthy and productive or not depends, then, on the "intensity, frequency, emotional

quality, and the situation in which it emerges" (124).

The third example Hermans and Hermans-Konopka identify is self-agreement:

"Self-agreement can be considered as a form of positioning toward oneself in which

individuals judge and reward their own actions" (Ibid). They point out that Kenen (1986)

has noted in her empirical research three types of self-agreement: 1) self-promises, 2)

self-persuasion, and 3) self-bargaining.

> "(i) [S]*elf-promises* occur when individuals have decided to make an agreement
> with themselves about something they will or will not do (e.g., 'I just thought of
> the benefits and I just started…so I decided to get my act together and try to lose
> the weight'); (ii) *self-persuasion* arises in those cases where individuals try to
> persuade themselves but seem to articulate only what the 'persuading' side is
> saying. Although the partner in the dialogue does not verbalize its position to any
> great extent, the dialogue is articulated well enough to allow an agreement to be
> reached (e.g., 'I talked myself into it by saying, 'think how good you'll feel when
> you reach your goal and look forward to your reward''); (iii) *self-bargaining*
> occurs when two or more positions, consciously articulated by different aspects of
> the self, are appraised by each side in an effort to reach an agreement that
> different sides can live with, a process most nearly analogous to an interpersonal
> negotiation (e.g., 'I talked to myself. It was as though I was at a bargaining table
> with myself.' 'I always reason with myself…. It is always difficult—since I know
> myself only too well and would not be able to fulfill an outlandish promise. So
> my 'deal' is always made within realistic expectations and time boundaries')"
> (2010, 124-125; Italics original).

The fourth and final example of relations that can emerge within the self that

Hermans and Hermans-Konopka cite is "self-consultancy" (125). Self-consultancy can

emerge at times when one encounters an issue or problem and cannot "give an immediate

answer" (Ibid). Rather, one needs an extended period of time to think through the issue or problem and come to a decision that will significantly impact one's future. Self-consultancy, then, occurs when one needs to mull something over because the answer is not immediately apparent. Finding an appropriate answer or response in such a situation requires patience and receptivity, a willingness to listen to oneself. Thus Hermans and Hermans-Konopka claim, "In order to facilitate self-consultancy, it is necessary to slow down or even interrupt the ongoing speed of the turn-taking process. Self-consultancy and self-interrogation require some silence to give the answer a chance to emerge" (126-127). They conclude that:

> "Phenomena like self-conflict, self-criticism, self-agreement, and self-consultancy suggest a basic similarity between the relationships among people and the relationship between different parts of the self. Two or more people can be involved in a conflict, criticize each other, make an agreement with each other, or consult each other. In similar ways the self can be involved in an unresolvable conflict with itself, reply to an internal criticism, make an agreement with itself in order to correct undesirable behavior, or consult itself when faced with a difficult problem or question" (127).

I still have not considered the third claim that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka consider indispensable for understanding the dialogical self: that "emotions play a crucial role in closing or opening the self to global and local influences" (31). Specifically, they suggest, a "social psychological perspective of emotions" (41) is necessary for understanding how people respond to the impact of globalization and localization. They thus conceive of emotions in terms of positioning, where movement and space are understood in both literal and metaphorical senses: "Not only do positions have their specific affective connotation, but *emotions themselves can become ways of positioning. In that case, they become ways of placing oneself towards others or oneself, or being*

placed towards others or oneself" (257; Italics original). This can be understood in much the same way, I think, as Taylor's conception of "public space" described earlier.

But there is one issue here. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka insist on distinguishing emotions from feelings, with the former becoming the latter only when they are "lifted up to the level of awareness" (274). If this is the case, then *contra* their description above, I would suggest that one cannot place oneself based only on emotion. That is, because placing ourselves in a position requires conscious awareness, and emotions—according to Hermans and Hermans-Konopka—occur prior to such awareness, emotions cannot be ways in which we consciously place ourselves, but rather only ways in which we find ourselves placed. So one can find oneself placed in embarrassment or anger or pride, for instance, or one can find oneself overcome by a sense of deference or respect for another. But one cannot place oneself based only on emotion; to do that, one must have conscious awareness of one's emotion, that is, one must have a feeling. Only when one is conscious of one's emotion of deference, for example, can one place oneself, as Taylor claimed, in a stance of deference toward another.

There is an additional element that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka identify that Taylor does not, namely, that "emotions are conceived of as temporary *I*-positions" (264; Italics original). Unfortunately, I do not think there is good reason for Hermans and Hermans-Konopka to do so. As they put it, "Emotions not only have their own experiential quality, as *I*-positions in a dialogical self, but they also have their own *message* to tell, that is, they can *address* self and others from their own specific point of view" (269; Italics original). The problem here is that their description seems to give too

much autonomy to the role that emotion plays within the psychology of the self. But the more serious problem, which is not unrelated to the issue of autonomy, is that it seems to presuppose a clear distinction between reason and emotion, which is itself problematic for reasons that scholars such as Virginia Held (1990) have pointed out. That Hermans and Hermans-Konopka subscribe to a reason / emotion binary seems clear when they write, for instance, that "[d]ialogical voices can be reasoned or emotional" (2010, 41). They seem to overlook how reason and emotion cannot be so clearly parsed from one another.

3.4 Historically Situating the Dialogical Self

Hermans and Hermans-Konopka also situate the dialogical self within the context of the "[t]hree models of self and identity, associated with different historical phases" (4), that have predominated in Western history: the "*traditional self*, the *modern self*, and the *post-modern self*" (Ibid; Italics original). In so doing, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka offer descriptions of the self as it has been conceived in different historical phases. In tracing the development of the self, their project is somewhat similar to what Taylor offers in *Sources*. The crucial difference between the projects, of course, is that Taylor focuses at much greater length on the development of the modern self. On Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's view, the traditional self is

> "not an autonomous entity but rather an integral part of a sacred whole, which is greater than and even more valuable than its parts. Traditional worldviews consider people as living their lives on two levels: the ordinary, lower life where people satisfy their basic needs, and a higher, better kind of life which can only be achieved if one is able to realize one's proper telos or purpose in the cosmos" (84).

Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's picture of the modern self is overwhelmingly similar

to the account Taylor gives. It is what Richardson, Rogers, and McCaroll (1998) have

called the "sovereign self." Taylor's picture of the modern self, as we saw in Chapter

One, is one of unprecedented autonomy. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka refer to this

self as a "container self," with the following distinguishing characteristics: "(a) there are

strict and sharp boundaries between self and non-self; (b) the other does not belong to the

realm of the self and is located as purely 'outside'; and (c) the main attitude of the self

toward the external environment is one of control" (87-88).

The postmodern self is of course fundamentally different from the modern one.

As Hermans and Hermans-Konopka write, "The main features associated with post-

modernism, summarized by Featherstone (1995), are the following…" (2010, 91):

> "(a) a movement away from the universalistic ambitions of master-narratives with
> their emphasis on totality, system, and unity, and towards an emphasis on
> difference, otherness, local knowledge, and fragmentation; (b) a dissolution of
> symbolic hierarchies that imply canonical judgments of taste and value, towards a
> collapse of the distinction between high and popular culture; (c) a decentralization
> of the subject, whose stable sense of identity and biographical continuity give way
> to fragmentation and superficial play with an endless stream of images and
> sensations; (d) a tendency towards the aesthetization of everyday life, which was
> facilitated both by efforts within the arts to dissolve the boundaries between art
> and life (e.g., pop art, Dada, surrealism) and moves toward a consumer culture in
> which a veil of images is wiping out the distinction between appearance and
> reality" (Ibid).

Hermans and Hermans-Konopka come to see the dialogical self as a combination

and culmination of aspects of each of the three historical phases of the self. The

dialogical self is informed by the traditional self in three ways: first, that belief and faith

are important components of selfhood; second, that the self ought to recognize its

connection with nature and the environment; and third, and most important for my

purposes, that any adequate theory of the self must recognize the normative ethical dimension(s) of the human condition, wherein human beings see themselves as part of a larger cosmos with a "moral telos" (105). In this sense, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka endorse Richardson, Rogers, and McCarroll's as well as Taylor's views that human beings' sociality is ineliminably ethical, although they do not speak in terms of strong evaluations, as Taylor does.

The dialogical self is informed by the modern self most importantly in three ways: first, in acknowledging that the self has autonomy; and second, in identifying the role that narrative(s) play(s) in human existence, specifically in the sense of a life having certain projects; and third, in recognizing that the self has at least a provisional or tenuous unity. By this, I mean that the modern self is one that recognizes some relatively stable sense of a coherent self-identity.

And the dialogical self is informed by the post-modern self in three ways: first, in recognizing that the self is marked as well by heterogeneity, multiplicity, and decentralization, characteristics which post-modernism has identified as a critical response to the supposed unity and coherence taken for granted in the modern self; and second, which is closely related to the decentralization noted above, in identifying the role that alterity plays not only between selves but also within selves; and third, in acknowledging that dominance and social power play a part in the formation of the self. Post-modernism's recognition of the impact that multiplicity, alterity, and social power have on the self has proved remarkably important to the formulation of a dialogical account, specifically in the former's identification of, as I noted earlier, what Hermans

and Hermans-Konopka call "decentering" or "decentralizing movements." Indeed, as

they put it, the conception of the dialogical self that they are endorsing

> "recognizes not only the workings of decentralizing movements that lead to an
> increasing multiplicity of the self (see the post-modern model) but also of
> centralizing movements that permit an integration of the different parts of the self
> (see the modern model). The dialogical self is described as being involved in both
> decentralizing and centralizing movements. Along these lines a dialogical self is
> portrayed that functions as multi-voiced, yet being coherent and open to
> contradictions, as well as substantial (see Abbey and Falmagne, 2008; Falmagne,
> 2004)" (5).

This gives a glimpse of how centralization and decentralization function within the

dialogical self, but in order to provide a better sense of how decentering and centering

movements operate, I have to fill in some details of Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's

specific account of the positions within the dialogical self.

3.5 Additional Positions in the Dialogical Self

Central to Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's conception of the dialogical self is the

notion of *positions* 'within' the self. They speak of several different concepts: "*I-position,*

meta-position, coalition of positions, third position, composition, and the process of

depositioning" (9; Italics original). These positions must be understood within the context

of how unity and multiplicity, centering and decentering, function together within the

self. I already described earlier the role that *I-positions* play within the dialogical self. In

the notion of the "*meta-position,*" they claim that

> "the *I* is able to leave a specific position and even a variety of positions and
> observe them from the outside, as an act of self-reflection. The advantage of
> taking a meta-position, alone or together with others, is that the self attains an
> overview from which different, more specialized positions can be considered in
> their interconnections so that 'bridges of meaning' can emerge and well-thought-
> out plans can be executed" (Ibid; Italics original).

This passage shows how the *meta-positioning* that the *I* can assume functions as a centralizing force, by allowing the self to "attain an overview" of itself through self-reflection.

To illustrate how this works, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka offer an example of a tennis player. During the match, because the tennis player is immersed within the match play, she does not really have time to actively reflect on her play. There is little time and space for self-criticism or self-doubt to emerge. Indeed, were they to emerge, they would further inhibit her ability to play the match, thus all but securing her eventual defeat. Rather, it is only after the match that she has the time and space to actively reflect on her performance without it thereby inhibiting her performance. She can then engage in post-match reflection about whether her strategy worked or not, whether she needs to improve a given skill, etc. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka write,

> "As long as she is involved in self-reflection on this level, she thinks of herself in the position of tennis-player only. However, she can move to a higher level of self-reflection, where she places her position as tennis-player in the context of other positions. That is, she may begin to reflect about her future. Will she continue to invest her best efforts in tennis? Does she want to make a career? Does she go for Wimbledon or not? At this broader level of self-reflection she explores the connection between her position as a tennis player and some other significant positions, for example, as a mother, as a wife, or as a student gifted in languages" (147).

They summarize by saying,

> "[T]he *I* can move to three levels: (i) being purely engaged *in* the position; (ii) reflecting *on* this position; and (iii) taking a broader position (meta-position) from which a greater range of other positions is considered. Although the second level represents a meta-position in the restricted sense (moving *above* the position at hand while staying in touch with it), the term is usually reserved for an indication of the highest level (moving above a broader range of positions)" (Ibid; Italics original).

It is easy to imagine, briefly, how meta-positions would function in other contexts, as well, such as that of the college professor. While immersed in her teaching, the professor does not have much time to actively reflect on the job she is doing or on how well her students are participating (level 1). There is little room for self-criticism or self-doubt to emerge during class. And, similar to the tennis player, to the extent that they do, the quality of her pedagogy will suffer commensurately. It is only after class that she can reflect on and evaluate how well the discussion or lecture went (level 2). She can, for instance, reflect on what questions or strategies worked and which did not, or on what parts of the reading students struggled with the most. She can then use her evaluations to improve her pedagogical approach for next time. But she can also reflect on how her reflections and evaluations fit in with other bigger questions such as: Does she still enjoy teaching? Does she still think of herself as a good teacher? Does she have enough time to spend with her family and pursue her other passions like hiking and camping? (level 3). At this meta-position, then, she can consider how her position as professor connects with other significant positions in her life, such as wife, mother, and avid outdoorsperson. Here it is evident how meta-positions help to unify and centralize the self, offering it stability and continuity. As they put it, "Whereas *I*-positions contribute to the unity and continuity of the self by the act of appropriation, meta-positions do so by the act of self-reflection" (146; Italics original).[45]

That the self is a "dynamic multiplicity of *I* positions" makes possible another central feature of the self, what Hermans and Hermans-Konopka call a "coalition of positions" (9). Because the self functions as, what they refer to as, a "society of mind,"

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[45] For Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's list of the "specific features of meta-positions," see 2010, pp. 147-148.

where the self is a microcosm of one's society, with all the multiplicity that that entails, the multiple *I*-positions "do not work in isolation, but, as in a society, they can cooperate and support each other, leading to 'conglomerations' in the self that may dominate other positions" (Ibid; italics original). They note, for example, how "a conflict between 'I as ambitious' and 'I as enjoyer' can influence the self for some time in negative ways" (9). The college professor, for instance, might experience a tension between her professional ambition to publish prolifically to gain academic advancement and her longtime enjoyment of non-academic interests that have a predominant place in her private life, like spending time outdoors with her family. A "coalition of positions" is formed when she recognizes that a balance between her professional and private interests is necessary for her peace of mind, and serves the additional function of enabling her to get the most out of each sphere of her life: e.g., working hard at her professorial duties enables her to relax and enjoy guilt-free time with her family knowing that she has earned her time off, and her restful excursions outside of academia invigorate her with the psychological clarity her academic duties require.

Another feature of the self is what Hermans and Hermans-Konopka call the "third position:" "when there is a conflict between two positions in the self, this can be reconciled by the creation of a *third position* that has the potential of unifying the two original ones without denying or removing their differences (unity-in-multiplicity)" (10; Italics original). They cite the case study by Branco, Branco, and Madureira (2008) of Rosanne, a 25-year-old woman who identifies as lesbian, has a steady girlfriend, and who still lives at home with her parents (2010, 156). Hermans and Hermans-Konopka write that "[t]hree specific *I*-positions were particularly prominent in Rosanne's life: she as a

Catholic, as a daughter, and as a lesbian. Her internal conflict focused on the Catholic daughter *versus* the lesbian woman" (157; Italics original). While recognizing the church's stance on homosexuality, she began viewing herself as a kind of "missionary" who sought to help those struggling in the gay community, Rosanne was able to adopt a third position which provided some unity among the two otherwise contradictory positions of "*I* as Catholic" and "*I* as lesbian."

A further feature of the self that they describe is that of "composition" (10). Taking inspiration from notions of artistic composition, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka "emphasize the importance of composition…in the organized position repertoire of the self" (167). They continue by claiming that

> "Self-reflection consists of a 'subject' (the self-reflecting *I*), an 'object' (the *me* and *mine* as the object of self-reflection), and a 'project' (the way one organizes one's self across time). Our proposal is to consider the object and the project as artistic compositions of positions or as a narrative construction that is designed and redesigned over time" (Ibid; Italics mine).[46]

The phenomenon of "depositioning" (10) is the penultimate feature of the self that they consider, but I do not think it merits discussion here, as its formulation is based on so-called mystical experiences that seem to be of a dubious nature, especially given the specific examples that they cite as supposed evidence.

I would be remiss if I neglected to mention one last, additional feature of the self's positions that they discuss, the promoter position (13). As Hermans and Hermans-Konopka rightly claim, "[i]f the self consisted of a diversity of positions each showing their specific development over time, then a confusing cacophony of voices lacking any insightful organization would emerge" (228). The "promoter position" is what allows the

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[46] I shall say more about the role of narrative construction in Chapter Six.

self to integrate and order the multiplicitous positions of the self so as to give it direction with respect to its goals and projects.

3.6 The Nine Features of Good Dialogue

As my discussion of Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's theory of the dialogical self has shown, they conceive of the dialogical encounter as something necessary for and beneficial to a healthy individual and society. In their view, dialogue is not something that one automatically knows how to do; rather, it is something that must be learned, a skill that must be cultivated and practiced. Dialogue, then, is not identical to every form of communication. After all, monologue is a communicative act, but it fails to be dialogue. With this in mind, I want to close this chapter by briefly discussing what Hermans and Hermans-Konopka call the nine "features of good dialogue" (10). They are as follows:

> "[G]ood dialogue, as a learning experience, *innovates* the self; it has a certain *bandwidth* referring to the range of positions allowed to enter the dialogue; it acknowledges the unavoidable role of *misunderstandings*; it develops in a *dialogical space*; it recognizes and incorporates the *alterity* not only of the other person but also of other positions in the self; it recognizes the importance of societal *power* differences as reflected in the relative dominance of positions in the self; it recognizes the existence of different "*speech genres*" and their role in misunderstanding and deception; it can be deepened by the participation in a broader *field of awareness*; and it profits from "*speaking silence*" (10-11; Italics original).

First, on their account, good dialogue is innovative because the participants are able and willing to take into account the perspectives of their interlocutory partner, and to "adapt, revise, and develop" (175) their own perspective(s) in light of their partner's perspectives, where such perspectives, of course, can be expressed through verbal and

nonverbal means. As such, good dialogue can function as a creative experience shared by people involved in a "common project" (Ibid).

Second, that good dialogue needs to have a sufficiently wide bandwidth simply means that its participants must be open and receptive to a relatively large variety of perspectives or positions that can be taken into consideration. For instance, I may be accustomed to talking with my colleague about philosophical, professional, or academic matters. But on a particular day, he may introduce into the conversation an incredibly intimate detail about his childhood or his marriage. In order for the dialogue to be successful, then, it is necessary that I am receptive to this unprecedented kind of subject matter and degree of intimacy.

Third, that successful dialogue involves the recognition of the role of misunderstandings means that dialogical partners must realize that misunderstanding is not anathema to dialogue but rather an inevitable part of it. This just amounts to the realization that "epistemological uncertainty" (179) is always present in any dialogical exchange, even in those cases where each partner seems assured of mutual understanding and agreement. Indeed, one can never know indubitably that they understand the other in the exact same way that the other intends to be understood.

Fourth, good dialogue must also occur in a dialogical space. This is straightforward enough: it just means that interlocutors require a common public space in which they can express themselves in relative comfort and without undue interference.

Fifth, that good dialogue requires a respect for alterity is clear enough as well after having considered what has been said up to this point in this chapter. Dialogical partners must respect both the alterity of one another and of the various other positions or

perspectives within themselves that they may harbor. Any good dialogue requires, then, a mutual respect for the otherness of the other.

Sixth, good dialogue also has to involve recognition of the power dynamics that inhere in the dialogical exchange. A teacher and a student in a dialogical encounter ought to be aware of the differences in social power that each embodies relative to that encounter. And each should express themselves in ways appropriate to the specific roles they inhabit at that time. But the teacher, as the dominant figure in the exchange, has to be especially mindful of the boundaries within which their encounter ought to remain, and she must not abuse or exploit the power she has over her student.

Seventh, of further significance is the necessity of understanding different speech genres operative at any given moment in a dialogical encounter. As Bakhtin conceived of it, a "speech genre" refers to "a particular style, thematic content, and compositional structure of communication" (187). Speech genres can vary according to class, occupation, geographical region, or the specific relationship extant between interlocutors (e.g. whether the people involved are strangers, acquaintances, colleagues, friends, lovers, or family members, etc.). Good dialogue requires dialogical partners' willingness to speak within the same speech genre, or ability to recognize when they are speaking in different genres so that they may come to speak within the same genre. This may involve either partner explicitly identifying the specific way in which they are using a given term.

The penultimate feature of good dialogue is that the dialogical partners participate in a "broader field of awareness." "Closely associated with the receptive attitude," they argue, "is the increasing permeability of the boundaries of the self, resulting in an open self that is more willing to accept the alterity of the other parties than when participants

are experiencing themselves as separated from them" (189). According to Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, participating in a broader field of awareness can help unify the self and, subsequently, facilitate greater access to new positions in the other and in oneself.

And lastly, and related to the field of awareness identified above, good dialogue requires the acceptance of silence. This is to be understood in a fundamentally different way than how we ordinarily experience silence: as an awkward absence of words that should be filled as soon as possible. Silence as an integral part of good dialogue involves an approach where one sees silence as a space in which one can be fully present and attendant to the experience at hand. I shall say more about this in Chapter Six.

3.7 Conclusion

The account Hermans et al offer is especially helpful in showing how psychological dialogism is made manifest in both 1) the interplay of *I*-perspectives within the self, and 2) the dialogue we can have with real or imagined interlocutors. And I endorse Hermans et al's claim that dialogism and monologism are situated at opposite ends of a spectrum. Lastly, their account's identification of the various positions within the dialogical self and their enumeration of the features of good dialogue make it illuminative for philosophical considerations of interpersonal dialogism. The fifth and ninth features they describe above are ones which I shall endorse as well in the account I give later.

While their account is admirable, there nevertheless remain two general problems with it, aside from their description of the sixth feature, which I have already argued against above. First, it ascribes to some features of good dialogue an importance which is not merited; and second, it still fails to recognize some of the most prominent features of good dialogue, features which I shall identify in the final chapter.

The first feature, for instance, that good dialogue be innovative and creative does not seem among one of its more important features, as their explicit identification of it suggests. Aside from the obvious problem of how one would determine what would constitute a conversation's having been innovative or creative, I would suggest that interactions may be strongly dialogical and still lack innovation or creativity. An exchange's creativity or innovation hardly seems like one of its more important aspects because dialogue can be rather mundane and still be good.

Also, while it bears keeping in mind that misunderstanding is an inevitable part of dialogue (the third feature), this hardly seems like one of the more notable features of good dialogue. It seems plausible to think, for instance, that good dialogue can emerge without any misunderstanding at all. And the second, seventh, and eighth features described above can be addressed sufficiently by the notion that each interlocutor be sufficiently receptive to one another. This is to say nothing of the fact that, in regards to the seventh feature, many examples of good dialogue would not require any of the interlocutors to be mindful of the role that speech genres may play. And the fourth feature they identify above is just too obvious to merit the special attention they give it.

It is clear that Hermans et al have done important work not just in offering a comprehensive account of the intricacies of the dialogical self but in recognizing the self as dialogical in the first place. While I have identified and discussed a few points of disagreement I have with them, I am largely sympathetic to their account, and it is deserving of greater attention by contemporary philosophers of dialogism.

Chapter Four: Dialogue as the "*Conditio Humana*": Dmitri Nikulin's Theory of the Dialogical[47]

4.1 Introduction

Dmitri Nikulin is the leading contemporary philosopher who has devoted books to the topic of dialogue and the dialogical self. His *On Dialogue* (2005) is to my knowledge the first work devoted exclusively to dialogue by a professional philosopher in the twenty-first century. And his later work, *Dialogue and Dialectic* (2010), draws from his earlier account of dialogue and elaborates on the relatively brief comparative analysis of dialogue and dialectic that he offered in *On Dialogue.* In this chapter, I want to evaluate the account of dialogue he offers over the course of the two books, while devoting more discussion to his first book, as it is a more comprehensive account. It will become evident, as Nikulin admits in *On Dialogue*, that his account of dialogue is largely a response to and elaboration upon Bakhtin's well-known theory of dialogism, which I discussed in Chapter Two. Here, I offer a critical evaluation of his account of dialogue and argue that it is most problematic for three reasons: first, because it fails to recognize the proper relationship between dialogue and agency; second, because its elucidation of the necessary and sufficient conditions for dialogue contains conceptual inconsistencies; and third, because its conception of the relation between dialogue and personhood is susceptible to potentially disastrous ethical implications.

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[47] Nikulin uses this phrase in *On Dialogue*, p. viii.

4.2 Transcending the Literary: Approaching Dialogue via Philosophical

Anthropology and Ontology

Early in *On Dialogue,* Nikulin rightly notes that the idea of dialogue is frequently

invoked in "contemporary philosophical and public debates" (2005, vii), but in such

debates what dialogue *is* specifically is hardly ever worked out. It is too often used

indiscriminately and rarely defined, its true nature left vague and its parameters

amorphous. Offering an explanation of this unfortunate conceptual ambiguity, Nikulin

cites a by-now familiar (given the thinkers I have looked at in previous chapters)

criticism of the modern Cartesian-inspired epistemology, with its sharp subject / object

dichotomy: "The reason for dialogue's being misunderstood in and by contemporary

philosophy is, perhaps, due to the monologicality of modernity that results from its

monosubjectivity, i.e., from a single, sole consciousness as the ultimate source of

meaning and reference" (2005, vii). He reiterates the basic problem with the Cartesian

paradigm again in *Dialogue and Dialectic*:

> "In a sense, monologue is a genuine expression of the Cartesian single-voiced and
> solitary consciousness that does not need the other or the voice of another, except
> perhaps for the infinite and unique voice, which the finite monoconsciousness
> either establishes within itself from the certainty of its own consciousness or,
> disappointed and incapable of overcoming its own solitude, altogether rejects.
> Monologue does not address anyone; it does not expect an answer and thus does
> not presuppose the other to respond and ask questions, because the monological
> consciousness itself decides when and which question to ask and what the
> appropriate answer will be" (2010, 82).

Indeed, Nikulin takes a rather strong position on the phenomenon of monologue, which

remains consistent over the course of *On Dialogue* and *Dialogue and Dialectic,* namely,

that monologue is impossible.[48] This is because any utterance, Nikulin claims, is an address in so far as it seeks a reply. And in so far as it seeks a reply, it is a dialogue, at least potentially.

Regarding the Cartesian paradigm (but not necessarily the status of monologue), Nikulin agrees with thinkers such as Bakhtin, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Hermans et al. whom I have discussed so far. Indeed, as Nikulin himself notes early in *On Dialogue,* his account of dialogue is strongly influenced by Bakhtin insofar as it is largely a response to the latter's account. Referring to the central difference between his account and Bakhtin's, Nikulin accurately notes that "although Bakhtin conceives of dialogue as that which unveils the human as something unique in its being with others, his consideration is primarily a theory of the *literary* dialogue, one which comes out of the interpretation of literature" (2005, viii; Italics original).

The account of dialogue that Nikulin offers, by contrast, can be understood as a philosophical anthropology and ontology (ix). Notwithstanding this difference, and Bakhtin's literary leanings, Nikulin rightly claims that Bakhtin nevertheless recognizes (as I showed in Chapter Two) the foundational role that dialogue, as a manifestation of dialogism, plays in human beings' lived experience and articulations of personhood: "For Bakhtin, dialogicality, the very capacity for dialogue, turns out to be the most profound expression of a person's individuality, and at the same time of her communality in her

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[48] As Nikulin puts it, "In a strict sense, monologue is simply impossible. As a speech of one single subject, monologue needs to be uttered. As uttered, monologue is always *addressed*. As addressed, monologue is addressed to the other, even if this other is the other of and within oneself. As addressed to the other, monologue presupposes a reply, because without a reply monologue is neither meaningful nor can it be uttered. But a reply makes the monologue a dialogue, at least potentially. Thus, it is as though the monologue asks for permission to be excused from the presupposed other, who in turn renders the monologue into a dialogue that has forgotten itself" (2005, 193; Italics original).

communication with others, which is indispensable for being human (or being-human)" (34). Nikulin argues, rightly, I think, that dialogue should not be understood "solely as a linguistic phenomenon" (viii), and not just as a form of communication. "Rather, dialogue is considered to be that which is important primarily for an understanding of the human being qua person, of the human in relation to being, and of being as it is present in the human" (Ibid). Dialogue, then, for Nikulin, is not just an aspect of the human condition—it *is* the human condition (Ibid).

4.3 The "Polyphonic Interaction of Voices"

Nikulin devotes the first part of *On Dialogue* to an examination of initial accounts of dialogue in the West, tracing its origins back before Socrates.[49] But because my aim in this chapter is to elucidate and evaluate Nikulin's own account, I will leave aside any dis-

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[49] Some passages that are especially illuminating for how Nikulin understands these origins are the following: "[T]he whole literary genre (*eidoys syggraphēs*), which is a genre of dialogue as speech or discussion involving questions and answers. Initially, dialogue was taken simply as a conversation between two or more persons (Latin *sermo*), each reaching for and needing the other" (2005, 1; Italics original); "A new meaning of dialogue, namely dialogue as a way of life—of philosophical life—where the theoretical is intertwined with the practical in the activity of conversation, is brought about by Socrates, who is a walking and living embodiment of dialogue" (3); "Socrates discovers dialogue as an *elenchic* genre, which is apt for the consideration of a subject matter from various perspectives, as well as for proofs and refutations" (Ibid; Italics original), where "the Socratic elenchus" is "the refutation of a proposed claim by demonstrating the viability of its opposite" (14); "For Plato, dialogue primarily appears as a *logos* of a particular kind—a written imitation of oral conversation—without which, and outside of which, humans cannot exist qua persons and cannot express any aspect of themselves…which Plato characterizes in the *Sophist* as being the soul's silent conversation, *dialogos*, with herself in herself" (Plato. *Soph.* 263 e, *entos tes psykhes pros hayten dialogos aney phones*. Cp. *Theaet.* 189 e; 15, Italics original); "However, the manifesto of modern philosophy, Descartes' *Meditations*, which presents the new finite subjectivity as that which perceives itself in solitude, which attends primarily to itself and not to the other, as alone and existing only vis-à-vis the infinite and divine subjectivity, is consciously written as an anti-dialogue" (16; Italics original); and "Because of this, even occasionally *using* dialogue to present their views, modern philosophers rarely *reflect* on the meaning and notion of dialogue as such within a systematic context" (17; Italics original).

cussion of the historical examination he offers. Instead, I want to look at the major

concepts in Nikulin's account of dialogue and dialogism, the first of which is *voice.*

Drawing on Bakhtin's claim that every human being capable of dialogue is a "pure

voice," Nikulin argues that "[e]very voice that speaks is meant to be heard, and every

voice that is heard is meant to be responded to, and thus every voice craves dialogue"

(39). Echoing Bakhtin, Nikulin claims that "A single, separate and isolated voice is

impossible, because the voice needs to be directed toward, and heard by, the other" (40).

Nikulin is identifying an implicit demand for reciprocity that all human agents have in

dialogical encounters. This means that the presence of any voice implies a plurality of

other voices, or what Nikulin calls a "community of voices" (Ibid).

That Nikulin writes of "every voice that *speaks*" and "every voice that is *heard*"

suggests that he means by "voice" only those verbal utterances perceptible by auditory

function. But instead, Nikulin takes "voice" to designate not only verbal utterances but

also nonverbal ones, as well as all manner of gestures. So it is important to keep in mind

that "speech" and "voice" should be understood broadly to represent what are commonly

referred to as speech *acts*. Thus the deaf nonverbal person, for example, has the same

demand to speak and be heard as anyone else because they can communicate through

gestures (39).

In speaking of a plurality of other voices, Nikulin is borrowing Bakhtin's notion

of "polyphony." Nikulin writes,

> "The appropriate musical metaphor that adequately represents the structure of
> interaction among a plurality of independent, yet not isolated, personal voices,
> voices which are capable of being uttered in each other's presence, is that of
> polyphony. A simple musicological definition of polyphony states that it is a
> texture in which two or more melodies or themes are played or sung
> simultaneously by different voices, which enter the polyphonic texture at various

moments in time. Furthermore, polyphony can be either imitative, as when the themes repeat or are similar to each other, or nonimitative, as when the themes are essentially different and irreducible to each other. Polyphony is thus primarily defined by a simultaneously present and consecutively uttered plurality of unmerged voices.

The key feature of polyphony (which, however, Bakhtin uses only as a loose metaphor in order to characterize vocal dialogic interaction, rather, that is, than in any strict musical sense) is the independence and plurality of voices" (46-47).

The reason why personal voices are independent, yet not isolated, is that a voice cannot exist and be uttered meaningfully without the presence of an *other*. "A monological discourse is thus utterly impossible; even in the absence of another voice, the other is still implied, for the voice always presupposes an addressee, another voice, which itself in turn addresses another voice," (47) Nikulin argues.

I agree with Nikulin that any given voice implies the existence of other voices, but, *contra* Nikulin (and, by extension, Bakhtin), I want to suggest that it does not follow from the presence of polyphony that there is no such thing as monological discourse. This is because, as I have attempted to show in previous chapters, agents can fail to actualize dialogical discourse by failing to meet the necessary criteria for genuinely dialogical encounters. Polyphony shows that dialogism is an inextricable feature of our psychological life. This is what I refer to as psychological dialogism. For instance, when we think to ourselves or perhaps "talk" to ourselves, we are not engaging in a monologue or soliloquy; we are engaging in a dialogue with ourselves, or we are thinking about something by including the imagined perspectives of imagined interlocutors' voices. This means that when it comes to our psychological life, monological discourse is impossible because of polyphony. But when it comes to our face-to-face discursive activity,

monological discourse is a very real possibility, and, I would suggest, a very likely one, as well.

I want to be careful here not to seem like I am drawing a sharp distinction between the mind and body, because that is a distinction that dialogical realities undermine, and one that I have sought to reject in previous chapters. Rather, when I talk of psychological life, I am referring to those aspects of our agency which may not involve the physical face-to-face encounter that interpersonal agency necessarily involves, such as cases of solitary reflection. Nikulin would likely reply to my suggestion with the claim that because polyphony occurs just as much in the physical face-to-face encounter as it does in the solitary encounter with oneself, that monological discourse is impossible is just as true for the face-to-face encounter as it is for the solitary one. Indeed, his claim that "since polyphonic vocal interaction can be heard everywhere and is not absent from any point within dialogue, there is therefore no single or unique center of dialogical communication" (49) suggests just such a prospective reply. But, again, as I have shown earlier, just because polyphony occurs in face-to-face encounters does not mean that dialogism has been actualized, for there may be other necessary features of dialogism that have not been realized by the agents involved.

Nikulin claims that there are two indispensable aspects that "constitute the polyphonic interaction of voices: independence and non-isolation" (55). Nikulin argues that independence does not mean that the person comes to the dialogical encounter already established and finalized as what he calls an "atomic" self, constituted by a "preestablished essence" representable "through a finite number of definite predicates" (Ibid). Independence, then, does not imply isolation. An isolated self is a theoretical

abstraction, much like Descartes' *Cogito*. It is a self for whom the existence of others remains in doubt. But if, as I have shown in earlier chapters, a self requires the existence of other selves, then only a non-isolated self can be a self at all, independent yet always anticipative of other selves. Thus independence and non-isolation are not at all incompatible.

4.4 Nikulin on the *Eidema*

Notwithstanding the creative potential one has when utilizing one's expressive voice, as Nikulin argues, it remains remarkable just how much "sameness, constancy, and coherency" (69) one characteristically has in one's voice or dialogical interaction. This consistency is what enables others in interlocutory spaces to recognize and identify one as the person one is. This aspect becomes, arguably, the most central idea in Nikulin's philosophy of dialogue and dialogism. As Nikulin notes, this is what Bakhtin calls the person's "nucleus" and "*personal idea*" (70; Italics original). In order to distinguish this from its various historical meanings, Nikulin calls it the "*eidema*" (Ibid; Italics original).

According to Nikulin, "one's personal voice appears in the unity of its expressive and communicative aspects" (Ibid). And one's "eidema" serves as the conceptual mechanism which establishes such a unity. In a characteristically obscure passage, Nikulin says,

> "[T]he expressive and the communicative pertain to individual otherness and sameness as they are simultaneously yet differently present through the voice. As communicative, the voice meets the other within a whole plurality of different individual and independent voices, which is a meeting that is implied in the act of utterance and communication. As expressive, the voice inevitably refers to and presents the other, doing so both to and within itself, for the voice is the person's 'core.' A person present qua voice thus confronts the expressive other in itself ('within') and confronts the communicative other in the other(s) ('without'), to whom one is intimately linked, yet whom one perceives as indissoluble and as the 'dearest of strangers.' Such an expressive other within oneself, not a *gegeben* but

an *aufgegeben,* is the 'personal idea' or *eidema*, which is present only in communication with others…. Hence, one's *eidema* may be understood as the other both of and within oneself; it is the *personal other* that expresses one's sameness and does not shape an already prepared, already found content but rather permits the content to be found and seen as if for the first time, and thus as individuated in dialogical communication with the other person" (70-71; Italics original).

In this long passage, Nikulin's description is hardly clear, but it seems that the "expressive other in itself" refers to the condition the person always finds herself in as an agent who can never exhaust (herself through), and always create anew, her expressive acts, while the "communicative other in the other(s)" refers to the condition the person always finds herself in as an agent encountering other agents in interlocutory space. Nikulin's description suggests that one's *eidema* seems to be what grounds and makes compatible one's spatio-temporal, self-same yet unfinalizable nature, while allocating room for the inexhaustibility and ever-renewability of one's expressive acts. This is because the self is never coincident with or identical to itself. Further, he says that the *eidema* is the "expressive other within oneself," so it might seem that the *eidema* is constituted much more by the expressive rather than the communicative aspects of the person's voice. But he is also quick to note that the "expressive other" is "present only in communication with others."[50] So it is clear that the successful expression of one's personal voice is just as dependent on the communicative aspect as it is on the expressive aspect (i.e., one's expressive capacity and articulation). Indeed, as he argues, "[O]ne's *eidema*…cannot be established in the absence of the other" (72; Italics original).

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[50] Indeed, Nikulin writes elsewhere: "It makes no sense to speak about an independent, preexistent *eidema* before an act of dialogical communication" (2005, 87; Italics original).

Nikulin seems to be suggesting, moreover, that one's *eidema* serves as the core of one's personal identity, especially as that identity is articulated and recognized and responded to within dialogical communication with other polyphonic voices. This interpretation seems corroborated by his rather bold claim that "personal identity" should not be "understood…biographically, socially, linguistically, etc., but rather as that which is provided by one's *eidema* in an effort to 'spell oneself out' in one's exchanges with the others…" (71; Italics original). One's *eidema*, then, is one's identity as it is "disclosed through ever renewable acts of personal communication" (Ibid).

It is also important to note one's *eidema* is not identical to one's "personal other." This is evident in two places: first, from the above passage where Nikulin says that "one's *eidema*…is the *personal other* that expresses one's sameness and does not shape an already prepared, already found content but rather permits the content to be found and seen as if for the first time…" (70-71; Italics original); and second, from *Dialogue and Dialectic* when he says:

> "[D]ialogue also presupposes an other who is irreducible to either the other person or to the other of the world. This is the *personal other*, the other of oneself. Such an other is often depicted in literature as the subject of address when one talks to oneself as the other, as in Marcus Aurelius' *Ad se ipsum*" (2010, 74; Italics original).

This passage shows how the "personal other" is just a part of one's *eidema,* as the latter notion is more comprehensive than the former. (Rather remarkably, Nikulin drops all mention of the term *eidema* from the later *Dialogue and Dialectic*, and yet retains both the notion of the "personal other" and the components constitutive of the *eidema*, although in *Dialogue and Dialectic* he couches them in a different context, namely, in a discussion of what makes a conversation a dialogue.)

Based on the description of the *eidema* offered thus far, it becomes clear that the very notion is rather amorphous. Nikulin himself emphasizes how "It is difficult to present the *eidema* in terms of traditional metaphysical notions" (2005, 74; Italics original). This is because one's *eidema* is not a fixed entity with finite, determinate attributes capable of identification and, ultimately, of definition. "[I]t can hardly be defined in terms of 'what' it is" because 1) it "is present within an unfinalizable human interaction" and 2) "it is not exhausted in any particular act of personal vocal expression" (Ibid). Nikulin argues that the *eidema* is a "simplex," or "simple whole" (Ibid), which is one of the only positive identifications he makes about the *eidema*. Indeed, he says much more about what the *eidema* is *not* rather than what it is. For instance, he writes:

> Still, in every person, the simplex of the *eidema* is always only partially present to the communicative and expressive act, because the fullness of one's *eidema* is not that of a thing; the *eidema* is neither a thing nor a given. Nor is the *eidema* a construction (social, historical, mental, psychological, circumstantial, etc.). The *eidema* appears in its simplexity only when a person, as an *aufgegeben* or a task to be accomplished, attempts to fulfill herself communicatively with the others by expressing herself as an ever new and concrete partial realization of the unthematized fullness of her *eidema*" (74-75; Italics original).

In comparing the *eidema* to traditional ideas in the history of Western metaphysics, he says further that the *eidema* is neither a constitutive nor a regulative idea, in the Kantian sense (77); it "is neither an efficient nor a final cause that would predetermine how one acts, how one discloses oneself, or what one says in a conversation" (Ibid), as Aristotle might understand it; and, again, as has been shown above, it is not a "Cartesian thinking substance" (78). It is not an essence, and it is not a subject or "*I* in any sense" either (Ibid; Italics original).[51] And returning to Kant, Nikulin says that

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[51] Nikulin takes great pains as well to explain how the *eidema* differs from the Platonic idea: "As such, the *eidema* differs from the Platonic idea in at least four respects. First, an *eidema* can be

"it is neither a temporal psychological association nor a complex synthetic unity of perceptions (for it is not a subject in any way); it is neither a transcendental subject nor a function of any subject (for there is no need to recognize anything substantial in the human being as that which precedes a dialogical act)" (Ibid; Italics original).

Unfortunately, Nikulin provides an even more unequivocal characterization of what the *eidema* is *not* when he says,

> "Thus, the *eidema* is primarily characterized negatively, in what it is not; it is not a substance, not a subject, not an attribute, not a relation, not a function, not an I, not a cause, not a notion; it has no univocally defined essence, and it is distinct from anything given or preconceived within a person. Thus, not being directly accessible, the *eidema* cannot, properly or strictly, be logically defined, i.e., it cannot be presented as a subject that is univocally described by its attributes. As such, the *eidema* should be taken as *not directly accessible* in the fullest sense; and thus it is not accessible in thought or through any direct communication, nor is it described, intuited, revealed, etc." (80; Italics original).

That Nikulin's description rejects the formulations that are historically associated with substance ontologies seems unproblematic. But it is somewhat surprising to find Nikulin go so far as to explicitly deny that the *eidema* is even a "notion," which is perhaps the

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said to be the 'idea' of a person only insofar as it is a unique frame for the possible ways in which one's realization may occur in dialogical interaction with others, but by itself it is nothing apart from or beyond such interaction. Because of this, there cannot be an *eidema* of a physical thing or of a number, as is the idea for Plato, nor, as was said, can it be the idea of a whole group of people.

Second, as has also been argued, unlike the Platonic idea, the *eidema* cannot be taken as existing in its own noetic or intelligible realm. Nothing can be said about the separate existence of an *eidema* insofar as it is only in its appearance in and through dialogical interaction; and, reciprocally, such interaction is possible only because of the *eidemata*" (2005, 84-85; Italics original).... "Furthermore, third, the Platonic idea, or *eidos*, insofar as it is being, can thus be thought (or contemplated) by a person who is especially trained to do so. On the contrary, as has already been pointed out, an *eidema* cannot be thought in its concreteness, for it is new each time and is only partially represented by a voice, and thus as a unique whole it can only be represented negatively.

And fourth, ideas for Plato are present only in their mutual coexistence and communication, *koinōnia*, along with each of the others within the noetic sphere. Every idea is actually present, being connected with every other idea of which there should be a finite number" (85; Italics original).

most generic, noncommittal philosophical expression that the English language has to offer. In fact, Nikulin claims that one cannot even say that the *eidema is*, if one means by that that it exists and is conceivable by itself (75) because it "only exists in a constantly renewable act of human communication" (Ibid)—thus the traditional substance ontology's inability to even identify, much less understand, the role the *eidema* plays in human dialogical interaction. "It is due to the presence and disclosure of the *eidema* as the self that one can be with others, can converse with them and can come to a realization of oneself (79; Italics original)," Nikulin argues. So it is only because of the *eidema* that the self can communicate and express itself with others and yet the *eidema* can be actualized and manifested only through the person and with other persons in dialogical interaction. Because of the mutually reinforcing character of the relation between the *eidema* and the self in dialogical exchange, Nikulin maintains that the *eidema* in no way precedes the person either ontologically or temporally in such exchange (Ibid).

Similarly to Bakhtin, Gadamer, and Heidegger, Nikulin describes the *eidema* in a way that suggests his endorsement of an event ontology. Nikulin writes,

> "Every person expresses a unique *eidema*, which, despite its uniqueness, also bears a certain universality insofar as it is that which allows a person to be this particular person in an always renewable and vocal dialogical expression— revelation—of herself, both to herself and to the other in the other's presence. Because of this, even when one is lonely one can never be alone" (75; Italics original).

His description of the *eidema* as a revelatory condition for the voice's actualization of it (e.g. "whereas the *eidema* neither immediately discloses itself to, nor directly communicates with, other *eidemata*, but rather always discloses and communicates through the mediation of voice" (80; Italics original)) suggests a conception which takes

the dialogical encounter as an event, in a way at least somewhat similar to the philosophers whose accounts I have described in previous chapters. (It is also interesting to note that he seems to hold a view similar to Heidegger regarding the fact that a human being can never be entirely isolated from and bereft of sociality.) Indeed, the only term he *does* use to describe the *eidema* is as a condition: "The *eidema* is thus a condition (although not transcendental in the Kantian sense) for the possibility of being a person, or of personal being" (81; Italics original). But whether one takes this description of it as a "condition…for the possibility of being a person…" or prefers to think of it as a revelatory condition, it remains the case, admittedly, that either formulation seems vague. When one considers all of Nikulin's descriptions of the *eidema*, it seems reasonable to conclude that one may still come away having little to no knowledge of what precisely it is. Nikulin's account of the *eidema* seems to border on the unintelligible. And it does not help the reader when Nikulin admits that his description of the *eidema* "is, in a way, a nondescription" (82). I cannot help but be reminded of Taoism's famously evasive notion of the "way," or of Heidegger's notion of the "clearing," both of which seem to be characterized best by saying what they are not.

It is interesting to note that Nikulin does not shy away from the "nondescriptive" or negatively descriptive character of the *eidema.* In fact, he incorporates its nondescript-ive character into his account. He says,

> "An 'irrepresentative' description, then, is a negative description, or a description of that which something is not whereby the description cancels or suspends itself. In this regard, one may mention at least two different yet closely connected modes of such negative 'irrepresentation': one is the *via negativa*, by which an entity is negatively referred to as 'not this' and 'not that,' i.e., as not having the qualities and properties that are ascribable to an otherwise known finite and finalized object. At the same time, a description *via negativa* neither strips that which is

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'irrepresentable' of its properties (which, positively, it does not have), nor annihilates it (because, positively, it is not)" (82-83; Italics original).

The second type of "negative description," he claims, "is *katakhrēsis*, which is a deliberate misuse, *abusio*, of a word in order to refer to that which for some reason is not, or which cannot be named or said" (83; Italics original).[52] Given this distinction between the two modes of "irrepresentative description," Nikulin's account of the *eidema* can be characterized as a "description *via negativa*." Notwithstanding Nikulin's attempt to show how his negative description does not collapse into nothingness or unintelligibility, it seems reasonable perhaps to wonder why Nikulin feels the need to identify the *eidema* as the fundamental "condition" of dialogical encounter. The *eidema,* for all that it is not, seems little more than an unsubstantiated philosophical creation developed for the sole purpose of holding the rest of his claims together. Perhaps this is why Nikulin inexplicably drops any mention of the term *eidema* in *Dialogue and Dialectic*.

4.5 A Critique of Nikulin's Conception of Dialogue

Having examined what Nikulin considers the foundational condition of dialogue, I want to consider Nikulin's descriptions of what dialogue is and is not. As has been shown in his conceptions of the *eidema* and the voice, respectively, Nikulin rejects any traditional talk of an isolated subject standing over and against an external world of other objects and persons. So, unsurprisingly, Nikulin rejects any conception of dialogue which is based on a theoretically isolatable subject whose identity and expressive content precede the dialogical interaction with an other: "First of all, dialogue is not to be taken as the

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[52] Nikulin says further, "*katakhrēsis* is the transference, according to some sort of proper characteristic (*to oikeion*), of that which has a name to that which does not have a name, thereby inevitably misusing the term. An example of rhetorical *katakhrēsis* would be to use 'eye' for 'vine' (when the latter remains unnamed within a given context)" (2005, 83; Italics original).

manifestation of a subject who is an independent individual attempting to establish

himself by conveying something of himself as an autonomous and atomic entity to the

equally atomic other" (141).

Secondly, for Nikulin, dialogue's purpose, *contra* Habermas, is not for the

interlocutors to reach consensus about a given issue.

> "The reason for this is that dialogue does not have an end in consensus; rather, it essentially presupposes dissensus of a certain kind (allosensus; see chapter 8) whereby every interlocutor retains his position and attempts to clarify (and possibly modify) it for himself, *and*, at the same time, for the other, thus also clarifying the other's position for himself *and* for the other" (142; Italics original).

It seems uncontroversial for Nikulin to note that dialogue "presupposes dissensus" if that

is to be understood as describing the fact that no two (or more) people are likely to ever

be in complete agreement about every aspect of the topic they are discussing, but of

course this is contingent upon 1) what criteria are invoked for determining what counts as

"complete agreement" and 2) what aspects are considered sufficiently relevant to the

topic under consideration. But Nikulin's claim that dissensus is "inescapable" points to a

deeper aspect about dialogue, namely its "ineradicably diaphonic character" (220).[53]

Because dialogue is diaphonic and unfinalizable, consensus is not guaranteed; and it

occurs, if at all, only accidentally.

This is in sharp contrast to Gadamer's view, which, as I showed in Chapter Two,

conceives of shared understanding primarily as agreement. I don't agree with Nikulin that

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[53] Nikulin's longer comment about this is as follows: "However, because of the ineradicably diaphonic character of dialogue, dialogical interaction does not imply a consensus but rather a profound and inescapable dissensus. Being diaphonic and unfinalizable, dialogue neither necessarily provides nor guarantees a synthetic, definite, uniform, and abstract agreement; and thus, unlike dialectic, dialogue does not always (only sometimes and rather accidentally) reach a consensus" (2005, 220).

consensus occurs only accidentally, if at all. But I am inclined to agree with him, *contra* Gadamer, that shared understanding is quite different from agreement. After all, a shared understanding of an issue does not necessarily involve agreement about that issue. After much dialogical interaction, for example, interlocutors may come away with a shared understanding of how they disagree about an issue, and such an outcome is not without value. Indeed, that interlocutors come away with a shared understanding of how they disagree about an issue may be in fact the best possible outcome for the livelihood of dialogue.

If consensus is that in which dialogical interaction culminates, then consensus marks the end of the dialogue. As Nikulin puts it, "consensus is impoverished; it is a *sui generis* condition for the impossibility of dialogue. Consensus cancels the very possibility of any continuation of the unfinalizable dialogical exchange" (221; Italics original). (He reiterates this claim later in *Dialogue and Dialectic*.)[54] Nikulin seems to provide an answer to an underlying question: Which is more important: the continuation of dialogue for dialogue's sake, or that dialogue eventually culminates in consensus? Nikulin clearly favors the former—dialogue for dialogue's sake. Favoring dialogue for dialogue's sake is, perhaps, not as banal as it might at first appear. This is indeed the case for Nikulin. He shares Gadamer's view that dialogue does not have a *telos* toward which it is directed. For Nikulin, dialogue is its own reward, in so far as dialogue offers the possibility for

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[54] In *Dialogue and Dialectic,* Nikulin says, "A certain kind of disagreement constitutes the life of dialogue, whereas complete agreement means the death of dialogue and thus also the end of being, if to be is to be in dialogue. In dialogue, relations with the other are not smooth; dialogue implies a disagreement that nevertheless allows for interaction and reciprocal recognition of the other, including one's personal other. This reciprocity between interlocutors allows them to mutually support each other in an ongoing dialogical effort to realize and reciprocally understand the other person and the other of oneself" (2010, 81).

human beings to present or express themselves in all of their humanity, yet never finally

or exhaustively. Nikulin addresses this when he writes,

> "*[D]ialogue's main intention* is not that of winning an argument for the sake of
> establishing oneself or one's own ego—as if one's subjectivity were only
> achieved once it has been imposed upon the other—but rather it *is to provide the
> chance for opening up a conversational clearing whereby that which every
> interlocutor already has may appear even though he did not yet have the chance
> to present it, either to himself or to others, or thus to realize it*.
>   Correspondingly, dialogue is not a sophistic exercise, whose main purpose
> is to teach one how to be strong and efficient in speech" (142; Italics mine).

Nikulin's view that dialogue lacks a *telos* is underscored by his additional claim

that interlocutors in dialogue lack autonomy.

> "Now, what is autonomy for a person who is involved in dialogical interaction
> with others? Since in dialogue every person unfinalizably, i.e., meaningfully yet
> desperately, tries to put forth and express her personal other, *there can hardly be a
> proper autonomy of the person insofar as she always tries to elucidate that which
> is not herself as, in fact, her I, i.e., that which does not belong to her subjectivity*
> (see Chapter 4) and which she thus cannot handle according to her will or desire,
> and which she cannot change in any way" (228; Italics mine).

Thus, even if there were, hypothetically, a *telos* to dialogue, the interlocutors, lacking

autonomy in the dialogical encounter, would not have the means by which to actualize

that *telos*. Nikulin claims, then, that interlocutors in dialogue lack autonomy because of

the role the *eidema* plays, that is, that one's effort to express oneself will always involve

trying to express that part which is "other both of and within oneself" (70-71).

I want to suggest that Nikulin seems to ascribe too much power to the *eidema* and

too little agentive power to the interlocutors themselves. He makes a rather bold claim,

for example, regarding the interlocutors' agency when, in describing his contention with

Taylor's view, he says: "Furthermore, dialogue must imply a mutual and potentially

reciprocal inter-action, as precisely an inter-action, between the speakers and 'locutors,'

who thus become 'interlocutors.' However, *such interaction is not a sharing of agency, or even a mode of it*, contra Charles Taylor's contention" (143; Italics mine). What could Nikulin mean by saying that the "mutual and potentially reciprocal interaction" is not "even a mode of" agency? What then does he mean by "agency"? Dialogue, at its most basic level, must presuppose some degree of human agency. His claims on this point seem tantamount to the view that interlocutors do not have any control over their actions in dialogue. But this possibility seems to conflict with his claims elsewhere such as the following: "a person must be *wholly* involved in dialogue, with all of her (dialogical) being, *mit dem ganzen Wesen*, to use Buber's phrase" (157; Italics original), and "Dialogue is an exchange of rejoinders between the multiple and independent voices of real others, of persons who are *striving* toward the expression or the revealing of their *eidemata* qua personal other…." (154-155; First italics mine), and lastly

> "To be in dialogue is, first and foremost, *to communicate with* the other; it is *to be with* the other and *to attend to* the other, and it is to return back to oneself only through the other without ever having left oneself; it is to return to the unfinalizable yet definite realization of oneself in and from one's personal other" (242; Italics mine).

What does it mean for a person to be "wholly involved in dialogue" if that excludes agentive activity? Second, how is "*striving* toward the expression or the revealing of…*eidemata*" non-agentive? And third, how are "communicat[ing] with," "being with," and "attend[ing] to" the other non-agentive? I am not sure what possible answer Nikulin can give to these questions.

His claims seem to conflict as well with the fact that he distinguishes between truly dialogical interactions—i.e., dialogues—and what he calls "non-dialogical

conversation[s] (156)," a distinction he maintains in *Dialogue and Dialectic*.[55] A "non-dialogical conversation" is "[a]n exchange of rejoinders *that simply conveys information*" (Ibid; Italics mine). Because he says elsewhere that "[d]ialogue [too] is an exchange of rejoinders…" (154), it seems that the relevant difference here is that "non-dialogical conversation[s]" are simply "information-conveying." In order to distinguish between these different types of encounters, he must ascribe some degree of volition to the interlocutors involved, because surely part of what makes a "non-dialogical conversation" fail to be a dialogue is the action of the interlocutors, e.g., failing to present themselves in a sufficiently revelatory way, etc.[56] For instance, he identifies, rightly I think, that benevolence is paramount for an interlocutory encounter to be dialogical. I cite him at length here because, in emphasizing the importance of benevolence on the part of the interlocutors, the passage offers strong evidence for why dialogue has to be a "mode" of agency, even though Nikulin claims otherwise.

> "Dialogical partners need to exercise their goodwill in order to make dialogue possible, i.e., to be capable of being and remaining in dialogue, for otherwise, if a person is determined to reject the other, e.g., in an effort to establish one's alleged superiority or honor, then dialogue becomes impossible. Benevolence as goodwill can be taken, then, as the readiness to listen to the other, to be mutually with the other and recognize him in reciprocity even when allosensually disagreeing with him, and thus not to neglect oneself.
>   Benevolence in dialogue is implied in mutuality and even more so in reciprocity. Indeed, the other cannot be present as an interlocutor unless one does not already implicitly accept him in his as of yet not spelled-out being in dialogue. One already is with the other in mutuality, and benevolence is a kind of presentiment of the dialogical involvement, an acceptance of the other even if the other is not yet recognized in reciprocity. Benevolence can be taken, then, as a *sui*

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[55] See especially Nikulin 2010, 74 where he talks about the "four components [that] turn conversation into dialogue." For example, he says there that "It is my claim here that the following four components turn conversation into dialogue: personal other, voice, unfinalizability, and allosensus…" (Ibid).

[56] Indeed, Nikulin insists on the revelation or disclosure of being that occurs in dialogue: "[D]ialogue allows for the person to realize and disclose herself in her *eidema* within dialogue but not to construct herself, i.e., not to produce herself for the first time" (2005, 232; Italics original).

generis precondition of and for dialogue in mutual relation with the other, which, once recognized, becomes reciprocal" (252; Italics original).

Undoubtedly, part of the reason why Nikulin denies that dialogue is a mode of agency is his insistence that interlocutors in dialogue inevitably find themselves swept up and carried along by the relational dynamics of the event of dialogue. This is why he claims that "neither the notion of autonomy nor that of heteronomy properly characterizes a person's relation(s) to herself and to the others in dialogue" (228). This is also, I suspect, why he thinks consensus occurs only accidentally, if at all.

Unsurprisingly, given his denial of dialogue as a mode of agency, he says that

"[T]he agreement to be in dialogue cannot be chosen, first, insofar as it is allosensual and thus excludes the chance of ever arriving at a finalizing agreement, and second, because being (as dialogical being) is and thus cannot be chosen; for to choose something is to notice and to thematize it as that which is desired, whereas once one is (allosensually and unfinalizably) in dialogue, one is *already* in it, such that any realization, reflection, or understanding of it always occurs (too) late" (223; Italics original).

The strength of this description about how one's "agreement to be in dialogue cannot be chosen" is that it is at least consistent with his view that dialogue is not a mode of agency. But its rather obvious weakness is that this description seems more a philosopher's creative fiction than a phenomenologically accurate depiction of lived experience. He suggests that dialogue's allosensual nature precludes one from "ever arriving at a finalizing agreement." But why must an agreement to be in dialogue be "finalizing"? What prevents an interlocutor from tentatively or provisionally agreeing to be in dialogue until s/he sees how the dialogue unfolds? And regarding his second reason—that "to choose something is to notice and to thematize it as that which is desired" (Ibid)—one may plausibly ask why an agreement to be in dialogue has to

involve any kind of thematization. Additionally, it is unclear precisely what he means by thematizing something. Presumably, he means that to thematize something is to make it explicit to oneself. His subsequent description that because one finds oneself already in dialogue, "any realization, reflection, or understanding of it always occurs (too) late" (Ibid) seems to support my interpretation that to thematize must mean to make explicit. But why cannot one's agreement to be in dialogue be tacit? That one may agree tacitly to be in dialogue surely seems true to how many people engage in dialogue. That one need not thematize (one's agreement) in order to agree to be in dialogue throws doubt on his claim that one does not choose to be in dialogue. Nothing prevents one's agreement to be in dialogue, then, from being provisional and tacit, and not finalizing and explicit, and yet still being chosen as such.

In addition to the problem with his claim that dialogue is not a mode of agency, there is one more issue of inconsistency in Nikulin's account. This deals with his account of the necessary and sufficient conditions of dialogue:

> "Are there necessary and sufficient conditions for dialogue? To be sure, there should be a plurality of interlocutors. Yet beyond this there seem to be no necessary or sufficient conditions for dialogue: it can originate in the most unexpected of situations and circumstances. The event of being *in* dialogue is not conditioned; it is a wonder" (2005, 258; Italics original).

There are three problems with this account. The first problem is as follows. Nikulin claims that "a plurality of interlocutors" is the sole necessary and sufficient condition for an interlocutory encounter to be dialogue. He also insists on distinguishing between dialogue and "non-dialogical conversations." But if "non-dialogical conversations" have a "plurality of interlocutors," that is, if they have met the sole necessary and sufficient condition for being dialogue, then how do they not count as instances of dialogue?

Nikulin's answer, presumably, would be that dialogue involves more than a mere "exchange of rejoinders that simply conveys information" (156), as "non-dialogical conversations" do. But if this is the case, then he needs to account for it by identifying more than the one necessary condition of a "plurality of interlocutors" of dialogue.

The second problem is more straightforward. Again, Nikulin's claim is that "a plurality of interlocutors" is a necessary and sufficient condition for dialogue. But, as I noted above, he makes the following claim as well: "*Dialogical partners need to exercise their goodwill in order to make dialogue possible*, i.e., to be capable of being and remaining in dialogue, for otherwise, if a person is determined to reject the other, e.g., in an effort to establish one's alleged superiority or honor, then dialogue becomes impossible" (252; Italics mine). This passage indicates that "goodwill," or what he elsewhere refers to as "benevolence," is a necessary condition for dialogue, which poses a contradiction to his claim that "a plurality of interlocutors" is a necessary and sufficient condition for dialogue.

And the third problem is that Nikulin strongly suggests that assuming relations of equality among the interlocutors is a necessary condition for dialogue.

> "Dialogue not only allows for equality but is furthermore not even possible without presupposing the equality of the interlocutors. Every participant in a dialogue is equal to the other participants, i.e., not through a leveling within the social but as a person who has a voice and who is capable of being engaged with the other in an expression of her personal *eidema*" (170; Italics original).

Again, this contradicts his claim that "a plurality of interlocutors" is a necessary and sufficient condition for dialogue. I should note that here I have only identified this claim—that dialogue presupposes the equality of the interlocutors—to show that it contradicts his claim that "a plurality of interlocutors" is a necessary and sufficient

condition for dialogue. But of course I should ask whether his claim about interlocutory equality is even true. It is clear that he remains steadfast in his view on this: as he says in *Dialogue and Dialectic*, "From what has been said about the personal other, it is evident that dialogue implies *equality* among interlocutors and their voices. Everyone is equal with everyone in dialogue qua dialogical partner. Therefore, a proper dialogical discussion suspends and cancels social and other inequalities" (2010, 81; Italics original).

By arguing that "dialogical discussion suspends and cancels social and other inequalities," Nikulin seems to have in mind something similar to Robert Solomon's account of how the private dimension of romantic love suspends the public dimension that otherwise affects the people involved. As Solomon says,

> "The equality that is demanded by love begins with this refusal to be measured by any 'external' standards. Social power, wealth, public acclaim or popularity, physical strength and attractiveness are all rendered irrelevant to the mutual evaluation that takes place in love. They all disappear in favor of the very different concerns of intimacy and private virtue" (2006, 290).

So Nikulin may be saying that, similar to Solomon's account of the private dimension of romantic intimacy, true dialogue requires that the interlocutors see each other as equals, even if this likely involves one of them consciously suspending the social authority they may ordinarily have in public life. It would likely be more difficult, I think, for interlocutors to suspend the power dynamics of the public dimension than it would be for romantic partners, if for no other reason than that the interlocutors' activity takes place and remains in the public dimension, whereas the romantic partners' intimacy often occurs in the private dimension and is thus shielded to some extent from the pervasive power dynamics of the public dimension. Nevertheless, I think it is certainly possible for

interlocutors to allow themselves to be stripped of socially unequal roles in much the same way that "two people in bed are stripped of all public roles and power" (291).

At the very least, then, there seem to be five necessary conditions for dialogue in Nikulin's account, even though he claims there is only one: 1) a plurality of interlocutors, 2) some degree of revelation, that is, something more than the mere conveyance of information, 3) benevolence, and 4) equality. And my list here omits perhaps the most important condition, what has to be the fifth necessary condition, and what he considers the fundamental condition of dialogue—the *eidema*.

4.6 Conclusion

To conclude, I want to identify a couple more issues with Nikulin's account of dialogue.

First, he says

> "A person does not properly exist before or outside of dialogue, or before being exposed to the other, just as music does not exist outside of being performed or attended and listened to. Before dialogue, a person is only a set of capacities that frame the person's *eidema*, which, as was argued, does not exist a priori (see chapter 4). Because of this, the 'real' or 'authentic' person exists only by being present in dialogical interaction with the other and as a dialogical partner, doing so fully but not finalizably" (2005, 158; Italics original).

His first claim here that "a person does not properly exist before or outside of dialogue" seems odd given that he acknowledges the existence of non-dialogical conversations. This leads to the question: What does it mean to say that people involved in non-dialogical conversations do not "properly exist"? Given this first claim, coupled with his claim that the "'real' or 'authentic' person exists only by being present in dialogical interaction," he clearly intends the qualifiers "properly," "real," and "authentic" to designate the more robust kind of revelatory interaction that he describes elsewhere.

As I shall make clear in the next chapter, I agree with Nikulin's view that human beings' being in dialogue is necessarily a richer or 'better' kind of being than that exercised outside of dialogue in so far as the former involves the actualization of capacities that the latter does not. As Nikulin himself puts it later in *Dialogue and Dialectic*, "dialogue is the most engaging and dignified activity proper to humans" (2010, 82). Instead, my objection has to do with his language—namely, that a human being does not "properly exist" outside of dialogue. It is inappropriate to say that a human being does not exist outside of dialogue, no matter how strong a qualifier one uses.[57] It is good, then, to see that Nikulin reformulates his view on this in *Dialogue and Dialectic*: "[T]o *be*, and not just to exist, is to be with the other, or *to be in dialogue*, the precondition of which is the personal other that is always fully present in dialogue but is never ultimately expressed in a finalized way (75; Italics original)." By distinguishing between *being* and *existing*, this formulation recognizes the person's existing outside of dialogue. Nevertheless, when he makes claims like "Whoever chooses to stop dialogical conversation with others by an act of voluntary self-suspension *chooses not to be*, because to be is to be in dialogue" (155; Italics mine), Nikulin needs to make explicit that he is not saying that a human being, outside of dialogue, does not exist at all as a person. This is because such an ontological claim would open itself to potentially disastrous ethical implications, such as objectification and dehumanization.

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[57] Nikulin also formulates this idea in the following way: "Although one has to be in order to dialogize, still one is not and cannot be *before* the act of dialogue. To be is to be *already* in dialogue or it is to *already* be, even if being in dialogue is not yet noticed as such or is not yet reflexively thematized before the act of the dialogical exchange, which is when, first, the dialogical partners become aware of being with and to each other, and second, when it becomes possible to reflect on being in a joint dialogical effort" (2005, 255; Italics original).

The second (additional) issue with Nikulin's theory deals with the following claim he makes: "Thus, there is nothing that can be understood in the person *before* and *outside* the act of dialogue; and to understand a person (oneself and the other) is to understand that person in an action which is primarily dialogical, i.e., in mutual and expressive interaction" (2005, 159; Italics original). Again, Nikulin's devaluation of pre- or non-dialogical interaction is clear in this passage. The problem, though, is that his claim simply does not accurately portray lived experience. One way his claim can be understood is by saying that "nothing can be understood in the person" in non-dialogical conversations. But this clearly seems false. Aspects of the human person can be understood, for instance, when the conversation is merely an "exchange of rejoinders that simply conveys information" (156). Nikulin no doubt has a different criterion (or set of criteria) in mind for *understanding the person*, but he is not clear about what that is.

Nevertheless, Nikulin's account is very informative for my account, as well. For instance, I generally agree with his view that dialogue is the human condition, as well as with his suggestion that the "voice" demands reciprocity from, and implies, a "community of voices" (2005, 40). I also agree with Nikulin's claim that human beings' being in dialogue is necessarily a richer or 'better' kind of being than that exercised outside of dialogue in so far as the former involves the actualization of capacities that the latter does not. But with regard to my account, the most important insight Nikulin develops is the notion of the unfinalizability and open-endedness of interpersonal dialogism, which is one of the most prominent features of such dialogism.

Chapter Five: Dialogical Dasein: Heidegger on "Being-with," "Discourse," and "Solicitude"

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I want to talk about the importance of Heidegger's early work in *Being and Time* for providing the concepts that are needed to formulate a conception of the dialogical self. Even though Heidegger does not provide such a conception himself, his notions of Dasein's "Being-with" (*Mitsein*), "discourse" (*Rede*), and "solicitude" (*Fursorge*) lay the groundwork for the development of a conception of dialogism. There are at least three advantages to proposing that Heidegger does this in *Being and Time*. First, this paradigm offers an alternative, and more perspicuous, vocabulary for describing the discursive nature of Dasein's Being-in-the-world as a Being-with others. Second, it provides a better way of recognizing and understanding the normative dimensions of "solicitude." And third, it helps to underscore the ineliminable sociality of Dasein's understanding of itself and of others, such that its identity remains social even in the seemingly individualizing initial moment of becoming authentic.

5.2 A Brief Sketch of Dasein's Being-in-the-World

In order to put his contributions in their proper context, I should sketch briefly some of the basic features of his project in *Being and Time*. As is well known, Heidegger

explicitly rejects the Cartesian metaphysical view of the self as a "thinking substance" (*res cogitans*), which exists separately, and is utterly distinct, from a supposedly independently existing external world of objects.[58] For Heidegger, the Cartesian self-world distinction neglects the fact that the human self always finds itself already immersed within a world, not as a self-enclosed 'ego' standing over and against an 'external' world of extended objects whose 'true objective' nature the 'ego' is burdened with trying to access through an act of pure cogitation. (Thus Descartes's strenuous attempts to prove (metaphysically) how the self as 'subject' can ever obtain (epistemologically) indubitable knowledge of both itself and of the 'external' world of 'objects' from which it is supposedly cut off.) As Heidegger says, Descartes "takes the Being of 'Dasein' (to whose basic constitution Being-in-the-world belongs) in the very same way as he takes the Being of the *res extensa*—namely, as substance" (2008, 131; Italics original). Heidegger, then, rejects any notion of a "self" whose basic constitution is one of "thinking" or "consciousness." Thus Heidegger, in his description of the *incorrect* traditional Western metaphysical picture of the "self," writes, "The question of the 'who' answers itself in terms of the 'I' itself, the 'subject,' the 'Self'" (2008, 150). For Heidegger, there is no 'pure' "I" or "ego" lying 'behind' the "self's" outwardly manifested actions.

In Heidegger's view, Descartes's metaphysical picture of the self-world relation means that he cannot offer an accurate description of how human beings encounter

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[58] See Guignon's descriptions of these issues in *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, especially Chapter Three, pp. 85-145.

situations in their everyday lives (Guignon 1983, 85). Guignon puts this clearly when he describes Dilthey's view, which was so influential for Heidegger, saying the

> "dualistic oppositions [of self and world] are derivative from and parasitic on a more original kind of experience in which we exist as a 'self-world' unity. In our most familiar experiences, we are not aware of an 'I' or 'self' distinct from what is experienced. The subject-object opposition of traditional epistemology is... a high-level theoretical abstraction with no relevance to understanding concrete life" (1999, 203).

And for Heidegger, because any adequate picture of human beings must begin by looking at how they live in their everyday world (i.e., their everyday "dealings") (Heidegger 2008, 95), Descartes's account cannot be correct. *Contra* Descartes, Heidegger claims that "Dasein itself—and this means also its Being-in-the-world—gets its ontological understanding of itself in the first instance from those entities which it itself is *not* but which it encounters 'within' its world, and from the Being which they possess" (85; Italics original). As will become clear, Heidegger ascribes paramount importance to Dasein's kind of Being as being "always already" situated within a contextual world of relations. Because it is important to recognize the full extent to which Heidegger's view of Dasein as primarily relational and contextually situated emerges from his views regarding traditional epistemology, especially in its Cartesian form, I shall turn now to a basic sketch of some of the more fundamental features of his ontological project in *Being and Time.*

It is well known that Heidegger took the "question of Being" (2) to be the most important—that is, most fundamental—question of all. He devoted his entire philosophical corpus to trying to answer the question: what is Being? The task of answering this question fell to what he called "fundamental ontology" (34). Ontology is

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the study of Being in general. Specifically, one can ask, "What is it to be rather than not

be? The necessity of accounting for this question is seen, as Heidegger pointed out, when

we ask ourselves: Why is there something—*anything*—rather than nothing? Human

beings can ask such ontological questions. Ontological investigation takes into its

purview, then, the Being of "entities" ("*das Seiende*"). The ontic is a kind of investigation

which studies properties and relations of particular "entities." As Guignon puts it, the

term "entities," for Heidegger, "refers to anything of which we can say that 'it is' in any

sense.... Symphonies, landscapes, thoughts, numbers, people, love, historical events: all

of these *are* in some sense" (2006, 93; Italics original).

For Heidegger, Being has a specific relation to entities. Namely, Being is the

condition for the possibility of there being anything at all like entities, and of their being

at all like the kind of entities they are. Being, Heidegger says, is "that which determines

entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood..." (2008, 25-

26). In his view, Being "determines" entities in that it defines their basic make-up, and it

does so in a twofold sense: by both "*that* they are" (traditionally called 'existence') and

"*what* they are" (traditionally called 'essence' (Guignon 2006, 93; Italics original)." As

Richard Polt describes it, "Being is what allows us to encounter every entity" (1999, 41).

Any inquiry into the question of Being, then, is one which seeks to find out what it is to

be an 'X' for any particular type of X." One could, for instance, inquire into the Being of

a particular chair—in so far as it exemplifies "chairness"—just as readily as one could

inquire into the Being of Winnie the Pooh, the honey-loving bear, or Macbeth, the

tortured Prince. These entities form one of the two distinct kinds: nonhuman entities;

Macbeth is, after all, a fictional character.[59] The other distinct kind of entities is that of

human beings, what Heidegger refers to as "Dasein" (literally "being-there," or, more

straightforwardly "being-here") (Dahlstrom 2013, 87).

Dasein is fundamentally distinctive from nonhuman entities in its ability to ask

about the nature of its own Being. As Heidegger says, "Dasein is ontically distinctive in

that it *is* ontological" (2008, 32; Italics original); that is, "Dasein, in its Being, has a

relationship towards that Being—a relationship which itself is one of Being" (Ibid). In

Heidegger's view, "Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities.

Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an

issue for it" (Ibid; Italics original). This means that in its everyday living the question—

or meaning—of Dasein's Being arises for it. That for Dasein the meaning of its Being

arises, or is an issue, for it is to say that its Being is something about which it cares. This

feature of Dasein is what Heidegger calls "existence," and he takes over this term from

the original Latin "*ex-sistere*," meaning "standing out." Heidegger, in fact, conceives of

such care as an ontological structure of Dasein: "[T]he Being of Dasein itself is to be

made visible as *care*" (83-84; Italics original).[60] But entities such as chairs and cats, for

instance, do not have the question of the quality of their Being show up for them as

something about which they should care.

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[59] Such nonhuman entities constitute a "what," and Heidegger uses the term "Reality" to designate them.

[60] Heidegger uses the word "Care" ("*Sorge*") as a technical term throughout *Being and Time.* For my purposes here, however, I shall not offer a detailed discussion of it. See *Being and Time,* Division I, Chapter VI, titled "Care as the Being of Dasein," p. 225. To give a sense of the paramountcy which Heidegger gives it, I cite the following remarks: "Care, as a primordial structural totality, lies 'before' ['*vor*'] every factical 'attitude and 'situation' of Dasein, and it does so existentially *a priori...*" (2008 238; Italics original). And: "Being-in-the-world is essentially care" (237).

Moreover, Heidegger says that "Dasein has turned out to be, more than any other entity, the one which must first be interrogated ontologically. But the roots of the existential analytic, on its part, are ultimately *existentiell*, that is, *ontical*" (Ibid; Italics original). The "existential" / "existentiell" distinction, for Heidegger, emerges in reference to kinds of understanding which Dasein exhibits. "Existential" understanding is a worked-out understanding "of the essential structures of Dasein" (Guignon 1983, 68). "Existentiell" understanding pertains to the "characteristics of a unique individual" (Ibid). It refers to an individual's understanding of how she is to live her life, which roles she should take up, etc. "Existential" understanding is revealed through ontological investigation, where the fundamental structure of Dasein's Being becomes illuminated for me. Yet I can access understanding of these possible ways for me to be through ontical investigation and without having undertaken (the more primordial) ontological investigation.

Heidegger's use of the term Dasein is intended to indicate, among other things, the "situatedness" ("*Befindlichkeit*") of human beings. Heidegger ascribes paramount importance to human beings' "situatedness" to underscore the fact that we, as individual Dasein, are "always already" situated within a particular historical, cultural, socio-economic, etc. context in the world. (This is why Dasein should be understood more as "being-*here*" than as "being-there.") His distinctive use of the double adverb "always already" is meant to highlight the fact that we are "thrown" into a world not of our own choosing. We are born in a particular time period, to particular parents, in a particular cultural, religious, etc. milieu. That is, we simply *find ourselves* in a given context 'prior' to our explicitly recognizing it as such. But becoming aware of my "facticity"—e.g. that I

am a white, middle-class male, born in Maryland, that I have one brother, etc.—enables

me to understand myself in certain ways which themselves shape my "existentiell"

understanding of the "factical" possible ways for me to be (i.e., the roles I can assume,

etc.)—e.g. that I can assume the role of a supportive, or estranged, brother, that I can

choose to own up to, or reject, the commitment I have made as a professional academic-

in-training, and that I can choose to accept that I am over thirty-years-old, or flee from

that fact by acting out in adolescent ways.

According to Heidegger, what enables me to become aware of my facticity by

way of "interpretation" is the "existential" characteristic of my Being as Dasein that he

calls "understanding:" "As understanding, Dasein projects its Being upon possibilities"

(2008, 188). And "Interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter

does not arise from the former" (Ibid). "Interpretation" is "the working-out of

possibilities projected in understanding" (188-189).

In a very real sense, then, Dasein *is* "understanding," to the extent that, as a

particular case of Dasein, I instantiate, in my "interpretations," various modes of "taking

a stand" with regard to my life. As he puts it, "*Understanding is the existential Being of

Dasein's own potentiality-for-Being; and it is so in such a way that this Being discloses

in itself what its Being is capable of*" (182; Italics original).

That we are always already enmeshed within a complex totality of

involvements—that we can never step out, so to speak, from the world in which we

live—makes up a distinctive feature of Dasein's Being; namely, that Dasein's

understanding of itself must be conceived primarily through its *relations* to itself, other

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Dasein, and the nonhuman entities Dasein encounters in its "Being-in-the-world." He employs the hyphenation to emphasize that he conceives "the compound expression 'Being-in-the-world' as 'a *unitary* phenomenon'" (78; Italics original). Heidegger claims that such "relationality" is an ontological feature of Dasein—Dasein's kind of Being *is* Being-in-the-world—which he describes with the terms "Being-in"[61] and "Being-with." He says explicitly that "*'Being-in' is thus the formal existential expression for the Being of Dasein, which has Being-in-the-world as its essential state.* 'Being alongside' the world in the sense of being absorbed in the world...is an *existentiale* founded upon Being-in" (80-81; Italics original). It is important to note, however, that "being alongside" is a misleading translation, and should be translated as "being always already in," "being amidst," or "being at home with" the world.

My discussion above of the picture of Dasein's "Being-in-the-world" which Heidegger offers elucidates the full extent to which, in our everyday "concernful absorption" (101) in our "dealings" in the world, we experience ourselves and the world not as Descartes's picture would suggest, but rather as selves "always already" enmeshed within a world of involvements. As Guignon explains, Heidegger's "description focuses not on the situations in which we are passive spectators, but rather on the contexts in which we are active and engaged in the world" (1983, 86). Guignon notes further that "In the picture that takes shape in Heidegger's description of Being-in-the-world, there is no

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[61] "Being-in" as an "existential" of Dasein should not be understood as a "Being-in-something" in the sense that we would mean it when we say that "water is 'in' the glass," as such a "Being-in-something" is proper only to the kind of Being of entities, not Dasein (2008, 79). Such a notion of "insideness" as that designated in the expression "the water is in the glass" applies strictly to things "present-at-hand" (82), where the "water" and the "glass" are entities or things (79). They "have the same kind of Being—that of Being-present-at-hand—as Things occurring 'within' the world (Ibid). Simply, only those 'things' which Descartes called "substances" have the kind of Being of "present-at-hand." See also Dreyfus (1990, esp. Chapter Three) and Blattner 2006, 42.

longer any way to draw a distinction between a subject and a set of objects that are to be known" (Ibid).

Contrary to the traditional picture, the "who" of Dasein is in Heidegger's view by definition non-isolatable. This is because

"From the world [Dasein] takes its possibilities, and it does so first in accordance with the way things have been interpreted by the 'they.' This interpretation has already restricted the possible options of choice to what lies within the range of the familiar, the attainable, the respectable—that which is fitting and proper" (Heidegger 2008, 239).

Heidegger uses the term "the 'they'" ("*Das Man*") to invoke those instances in which we refer to "what one *typically* does" when "one" is acting appropriately or properly, that is, in accordance with the norms and expectations of one's society. When, for instance, I offer a purportedly justificatory explanation for prohibiting, say, "jaywalking," I might say, "One does not do that," in order to convey the sense of impropriety such an act would evince.

Thus Heidegger uses the "they" to refer to all of us in general and each of us in particular as those who explicitly and implicitly sustain the norms for what is typically expected of us. The "they" is thus the sustainer and purveyor of general opinion. The "they" is the 'ground,' so to speak, on which the intelligibility of our social relations, values, beliefs, goals, possibilities, etc. rests. As a complex web of meanings, the "they" lets our enactment of our "existentiell" possibilities have the meaning they do. In this sense, the "they" is of indispensable importance to Dasein's understanding of others and of itself (as being inextricably bound up in relation to others). We now see the full extent to which Heidegger claims the "they" bears on the "self" such that the self can at no time

ever disentangle itself from the "they," and stand, at it were, over and against it as an isolated individual self. In Heidegger's view, we are always already *both* the "they-self" and the "authentic self," where the "they" and the "authentic self" are "existentialia" (i.e., ontological characteristics) of Dasein, not "existentiell" modes of being. This leads him to say, "For the most part *I myself* am not the 'who' of Dasein; the they-self is its 'who'" (312; Italics original). And, moreover, that "The Self...is proximally and for the most part inauthentic, the they-self" (225).

I described earlier how, in Heidegger's view, we are "thrown" into a world not of our own choosing. Because as everyday Dasein, we find ourselves always already "thrown" into a particular context pregnant with possibilities for us to take up, as our "ownmost potentiality-for-Being" allows, we cannot ever 'catch up' and 'get behind' ourselves as everyday Dasein, whose Being is "Being-in-the-world," such that we can view it *sub specie aeternitatis.* Heidegger captures this feature well when he says, "In no case is a Dasein, untouched and unseduced by this way in which things have been interpreted, set before the open country of a 'world-in-itself' so that it just beholds what it encounters" (213). Heidegger says further, "Dasein constantly lags behind its possibilities. It is never existent *before* its basis, but only *from it* and *as this basis.* Thus 'Being-a-basis' means *never* to have power over one's ownmost Being from the ground up" (330; Italics original). Heidegger is pointing to the fact that, as "thrown" "Being-in-the-world," we as individual Dasein find ourselves in a current of everyday life beginning from our birth, and, if we choose to, we can let ourselves remain *entirely* adrift and follow this current, which is comprised of the norms, routines, and conventions of public life. The qualifier "if we choose to" suggests, however, that there is a sense in which we

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can choose *not* to remain adrift. And this is indeed the case, according to Heidegger. Such a case involves our choosing *definitively* (but not unalterably) to take a stand regarding our lives.

But there is another sense in which we cannot ever *not be adrift* to some extent precisely because we are always already "thrown" into a world. Even if we choose to take a definitive stand of "anticipatory resoluteness" with regard to ourselves and our lives, such taking a stand does not mean that we have stepped out of the current in which we find ourselves. We cannot ever step out of the current and gain an irrevocably solid footing. As Dasein, the extent to which we let ourselves remain adrift is up to us. It is important to note, however, that the notion of "choosing" which I identified above must be understood whereby if we choose to remain adrift, then our choosing to do so is in fact a manner of choosing *not to choose.*

This mode of being (noncontingently) adrift is what Heidegger calls "falling" ("*verfallen*") (210). As Heidegger says, "Being-in-the-world is always fallen" (225). That is, "Falling is a definite existential characteristic of Dasein itself" (220). As Polt puts it, "falling is necessarily our normal, everyday mode of existing" (1999, 76). Therefore we cannot *not* be in a state of "falling." Having described "thrownness" above, it is now evident how, as Polt notes, "falling is so pervasive because it is a direct result of thrownness" (Ibid).[62] Of falling, Heidegger says that, "This 'absorption in...' has mostly the character of Being-lost in the publicness of the 'they'" (2008, 220).

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[62] Heidegger in fact places these two features together, as he titles § 38 "Falling and Thrownness." See *Being and Time,* p. 219.

For example, that I spend my weekdays working as a graduate student means that I assume the role of "graduate student," with all of the expectations and responsibilities that that entails. But the particular *manner* in which I take up such a role depends on *how I understand myself as* the kind of person who has such a role. Insofar as I am still a student, I could adopt the expectation "one" has of "students" by spending my time away from schoolwork by, say, drinking a lot of alcohol as a way of 'cutting loose' from the weight and pressure of my weekday responsibilities. While at the bar, I can engage in the kind of routine conversations "one" has at a bar, the 'chit-chat' (i.e., what Heidegger calls "idle talk")[63] that is expected in such social settings. I can therefore quite readily let myself drift along with the routines of everyday life as such routines are established and understood in the specific social and historical milieu in which I live. In this way, I live my life according to how "one" in my situation lives "one's" life.

Heidegger's description of "thrownness" and "falling" is meant to identify how each of us, as a particular case of Dasein in our everyday modes of "Being-in-the-world," lets the "they"—of which we are a part—with its superficial ways of being and doing, obscure from us the insight that the "existentiell" possibilities of our everyday "Being-in-the-world" *are in fact possibilities* for living in a way radically different from how we have lived heretofore.[64] One of the consequences, then, of letting ourselves remain adrift and be overtaken by, or delivered over to, the "they" is that we let ourselves overlook our possibilities *as possibilities* (306). That we overlook our possibilities *as possibilities* amounts to a leveling out of the contours of our individual "ownmost potentiality-for-

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[63] See *Being and Time,* p. 211 for the beginning of § 35, entitled "Idle Talk."

[64] It obscures from us also the fundamental structure of Dasein. This can be addressed only through fundamental ontology—the kind which Heidegger undertakes.

Being" of which our "existentiell" possibilities are a manifestation. In other words, our

failure to see our possibilities as the possibilities they are for allowing us to take a stand

toward ourselves and our lives means that we cover up and snuff out—although never

altogether such that we cannot alter our course—that which is most distinctive about us

as particular cases of Dasein.[65]

That we can never not be in the states of "thrownness" and "fallenness" is what

informs his claim that, even in becoming "authentic Being-one's-Self" (313) (as an

"existentiell" mode), one is still a placeholder in the "they" (as an "existential"). That is,

although we can be more or less authentic, all of us inexorably are, as an "existentiell"

mode, part "they-self." I described earlier an example of the way in which I can let

myself remain adrift in the "they." And I noted how such a "remaining adrift" involved

my choosing not to choose. Such a way of being is, in that case, one of disowning my

choices and, ultimately, my responsibility. I noted, further, how the particular way in

which I take up my role as a graduate student—as one among other contemporaneous

roles I have—depends on how I see and understand myself with regard to my life as a

whole.

This helps illustrate how, for Heidegger, in becoming authentic, the change one

makes is not in the "*what*" but in the "*how*." For instance, my becoming "authentic

Being-one's-Self" (Ibid) is not just a matter of substituting for my old set of actions a

completely new set, such that I forego going out to the bar and drinking each weekend,

although it may involve that. Rather, the change in becoming authentic would lie in my

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[65] Heidegger cautions, however, that such "falling" "does not express any negative evaluation" as if "we were to ascribe to it the sense of a bad and deplorable ontical property of which, perhaps, more advanced stages of human culture might be able to rid themselves" (2008, 220).

changing the *particular way* in which I undertake those actions, such that my attitude toward them, and my understanding of their significance, takes on a radically different meaning. This is what Heidegger means when he says, "Authentic Being-one's-Self takes the definite form of an existentiell modification of the 'they'" (312). But he is careful to note that, just because I may become authentic, it is just as possible for me to become less and less authentic, possibly to such an extent that I drift back entirely into the "publicness of the they" (220) and into inauthenticity.

It has frequently been argued that Heidegger does not regard Dasein's "existential" "falling" as deserving of moral disapprobation (or, for that matter, of the "anticipatory resoluteness" of authenticity as deserving of moral approbation). On this view, his use of the notion of "inauthenticity" is especially confusing at first glance, for the terms "authentic" and "inauthentic" for us in English typically have a moral or ethical connotation insofar as they reflect a value judgment. But upon considering that the German words Heidegger uses for "authentic," "*eigentlich,*" and "inauthentic," "*Uneigenlichkeit,*" are derived from "*eigen*" meaning "own," then we get a better sense of how his notion of authenticity should be understood; namely, as Guignon suggests, as "enownment."[66] Nevertheless, as Mark Wrathall has noted, "It is implausible to deny that authenticity is at least sometimes used in an evaluative sense. Taylor Carman suggests…that Heidegger actually has two distinct notions running side by side—a descriptive and a normative sense of 'authentic.'"[67]

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[66] See "Achieving Personhood," p. 14, for Guignon's claims regarding this. Specifically, he notes that "authenticity" should be understood as connoting that which is "most proper." See also Braver 2012, p. 44, for a similar account.
[67] See Wrathall 2014, p. 154, n. 7. Wrathall is referring to Carman 2013, p. 271.

5.3 Laying the Groundwork for Dialogism: Heidegger on "Being-with,"

"Discourse," and "Solicitude"

I now want to consider how Heidegger lays the groundwork for recognizing the

importance of dialogical conceptions, beginning with his conception of "Being-with." In

Paragraph 26, he writes:

> "According to the analysis which we have now completed, Being with Others
> belongs to the Being of Dasein, which is an issue for Dasein in its very Being.
> Thus as Being-with, Dasein 'is' essentially for the sake of Others…. Even if the
> particular factical Dasein does *not* turn to Others, and supposes that it has no need
> of them or manages to get along without them, it *is* in the way of Being-with"
> (2008, 160; Italics original).

This passage describes how Dasein's Being-with others is an ontological, non-contingent

feature of its existence. As Heidegger's description above, along with those he offers of

the They, emphasizes, as individual Dasein, we cannot, as it were, escape *being-with*

others. The social world is so pervasive, then, that it is only in theoretical abstraction

from our everyday lives that we can consider ourselves as an isolatable individual, and

even when doing so, it is always already from a standpoint situated in a social world of

others. As Charles Taylor puts it, "One is a self only among other selves. A self can never

be described without reference to those who surround it" (1989, 35). This is what Taylor

refers to as the "transcendental condition of interlocution" (38-39). He describes this

view when he writes in *Sources of the Self:*

> "The close connection between identity and interlocution also emerges in the
> place of *names* in human life. My name is what I am 'called.' A human being *has*
> to have a name, because he or she has to be *called*, i.e., addressed. Being called
> into conversation is a precondition of developing a human identity, and so my
> name is (usually) given me by my earliest interlocutors" (525, endnote 13; Italics
> original).

Our sociality is so comprehensive, though, that, as Heidegger points out, even when we are alone, we are not somehow removed from the condition—or the way or manner—of "Being-with" others. Thus Heidegger asserts, "Being-with is an existential characteristic of Dasein even when factically no other is present-at-hand or perceived" (2008, 156). He describes this further by saying, "Being missing and 'Being away' [*Das fehlen und 'Fortsein'*] are modes of Dasein-with, and are possible only because Dasein as Being-with lets the Dasein of Others be encountered in its world" (157). Thus, William Blattner accurately claims,

> "Even…if one is a hermit or recluse, having retreated to a cabin in the hills of Idaho to get away from everyone, others matter to one, in this case, as being despicable or to be avoided. Being a recluse is an anti-social way of understanding oneself and one's relations to others. Being anti-social is a 'privative' way of being social; it is a stance on the significance of what others pursue" (2006, 67).[68]

Heidegger's descriptions of "thrownness," "falling," "Being-with," the "they," and "discourse," among other central notions in *Being and Time*, show how we are born into a language community of interlocutors—a "we"—and we develop our identity as an "I" only by virtue of, not separate from, the shared practices, evaluations, and articulations of social interaction.[69] Blattner calls Heidegger's position here "ontological communitarianism" to underscore how Heidegger wants to avoid any notion of an ethical or political communitarianism (68). Echoing Heidegger, Taylor argues that "There is no way we could be inducted into personhood except by being initiated into a language"

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[68] See also Theodore R. Schatzki (2007) in Dreyfus and Wrathall (2007). Schatzki's discussion is thematically similar to mine, but our respective interpretations differ significantly.
[69] As Taylor succinctly puts it, "[W]e are aware of the world through a 'we' before we are through an 'I'" (1985d, 40).

(1989, 35), or as Heidegger refers to it, "discourse," which is the condition for the possibility of "language."

Discourse, for Heidegger, does not refer to speech as verbal utterance. Rather, as Polt suggests, "Heidegger describes discourse (rather vaguely) as the articulation and expression of" the world's intelligibility…. "Discourse makes it possible for me to share my situation with others in language" (1999, 74). Thus Heidegger claims that "As an existential state in which Dasein is disclosed, discourse is constitutive for Dasein's existence. *Hearing* and *keeping silent* [*Schweigen*] are possibilities belonging to discursive speech" (2008, 204). Indeed, Heidegger's differentiation of "communication"—in which, in one form, interlocutors merely "make assertions" or "giv[e] information" (205)—from discourse shows he is aware of the necessity of making qualitative distinctions among different types of linguistic phenomena.[70]

Discourse in general and language in particular (as Heidegger distinguishes them) play an indispensable role, then, in the formation of human identity. In sharing "webs of interlocution" (1989, 36), Taylor claims, I articulate my identity as "an answer to the question of who I am through a definition of where I am speaking from and to whom" (Ibid). My identity comes to be constituted through my interaction with others, by what "stances" I take towards them, and how I respond to the stances they assume towards me. As Taylor notes, "[O]ur identity is never simply defined in terms of our individual properties. If I really identify myself with my deferential attitude toward wiser people

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[70] For Heidegger, the understanding we have of others is not a matter, strictly speaking, of knowledge as propositional or predicative knowledge: "[T]he understanding of Others…like any understanding, is not an acquaintance derived from knowledge about them, but a primordially existential kind of Being, which, more than anything else, makes such knowledge and acquaintance possible" (2008, 161).

like you, then this conversational stance becomes a constituent of my identity" (1997, 173).

If the picture I have drawn of Heidegger so far is accurate, then his descriptions of the ontological features of Dasein's Being-with others illustrate how human beings, in their everyday discursive comportment with one another, are *mutually solicitous* of one another, irrespective of the attitudinal stance they may actually adopt. That is, human beings, as discursive agents amongst fellow interlocutors, find themselves perpetually *called upon* and *addressed* by others and themselves. We find ourselves situated within human discourse in such a way that we are always already both addressers and addressees. (This particular aspect of solicitousness is one which came to feature so centrally for Levinas and one which he captured so powerfully.) I think this is precisely what Heidegger has in mind when he says that, "As a Being-in-the-world with Others, a Being which understands, *Dasein is 'in thrall' to Dasein-with and to itself*; and in this thralldom it 'belongs' to these" (2008, 206; Italics mine). The solicitous pull we feel from others—our sense of being called upon or addressed by others—is coeval with the outward-directed anticipation we have, noncontingently, toward others—our sense of calling upon others. The pull we feel from others would not arise, then, without the anticipatory outward-looking orientation we have as one of our ontological features.

The ontological feature of outward-looking anticipation is precisely what Heidegger is describing when he says both that "Dasein 'is' essentially *for the sake of Others*" (160; Italics mine). That this outward-looking other-directedness is an essential feature of ourselves as particular cases of Dasein means that it is an ineluctable feature of

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our sociality, "it *is* in the way of Being-with," that is, it is our very mode of Being-in-the-world. Even though this other-directedness is an ontological feature of our existence, as Heidegger emphasizes, this does not preclude our ontically choosing to ignore or remain impervious to the pull or call of others. Indeed, as Heidegger insists in his description of everyday inauthentic "falling," our normal mode of going about our daily lives is precisely this (ontic) avoidance of the pull or call of others.

Heidegger captures the different modes of our discursive comportment in his conception of "solicitude." The normative dimension we find in Heidegger's notion of authenticity is present as well in both "solicitude" and "care" (*Sorge*), with the latter forming the basis from which Heidegger derives his conception of the former. Blattner offers a clear description of these notions: "Simply in so far as Dasein is being-in-the-world, it is also being-with, and simply in so far as its own life matters to it, the lives of others matter to it…. Heidegger calls this mattering 'care,' and others' mattering to me he calls 'solicitude' (*Fursorge,* literally 'caring-for'). It is important to bear in mind that just as 'care' does not refer to a specific emotional state, such as worry or devotion, neither does 'solicitude.' 'Solicitude' is just a technical term for the way others matter to us simply in so far as we lead our own lives" (Blattner 2006, 67).

Consider the following two passages, the second of which is especially illuminating for my purposes. Heidegger writes: "[T]hose entities towards which Dasein as Being-with comports itself do not have the kind of Being which belongs to equipment ready-to-hand; they are themselves Dasein. These entities are not objects of concern, but rather of *solicitude*" (2008, 157; Italics original). And

> "[W]e understand the expression 'solicitude' in a way which corresponds to our use of 'concern' as a term for an *existentiale.* For example, 'welfare work' ["*Fursorge*"], as a factical social arrangement, is grounded in Dasein's state of Being as Being-with. Its factical urgency gets its motivation in that Dasein maintains itself proximally and for the most part in the deficient modes of solicitude. *Being for, against, or without one another, passing one another by, not 'mattering' to one another—these are possible ways of solicitude.* And it is precisely these last-named deficient and Indifferent modes that characterize everyday, average Being-with-one-another" (158; Italics mine).

These passages show that Heidegger understands "solicitude" as an ontological structure of Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Further, that Heidegger speaks here of "deficient"—and elsewhere of "positive"—modes of "solicitude" illustrates how he tacitly holds a normative conception of solicitude. In identifying the deficient and positive modes of solicitude, Heidegger clearly seems to be offering a description of the ways that individual Dasein can fail or succeed as discursive selves or agents, although he of course omits any talk of "agents" *per se.* That is, he seems to suggest that we can be better or worse at comporting ourselves discursively with others, we can be more or less attuned to others. As he says, "solicitude is guided by *considerateness* and *forbearance.* Like solicitude, these can range through their respective deficient and Indifferent modes up to the point of *inconsiderateness* or the perfunctoriness for which indifference leads the way" (159; Italics original). Thus, for Heidegger, solicitude marks one's modes of "opening oneself up [*Sichoffenbaren*] or closing oneself off" (161). Only through solicitude can the "disclosure of the Other" arise at all (Ibid).[71]

The deficient modes of solicitude—"passing one another by" and "not 'mattering' to one another"—describe, I think, the way that we can fail to heed and appropriately

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[71] Further evidence of this is gleaned in Heidegger's phrase that "the explicit disclosure of the Other in solicitude grows only out of one's primarily Being with him in each case" (2008, 161).

respond to the solicitous pull of others by closing ourselves off from and making ourselves unavailable to others. These deficient modes thus account for the ways that we can be impervious to the call of others' addresses to us.

The "positive modes" of solicitude have "two extreme possibilities": "leap[ing] in" for the other and "leap[ing] ahead" of the other (158). Solicitude, as Heidegger writes,

> "can, as it were, take away 'care' from the Other and put itself in his position in concern: it can *leap in* for him. This kind of solicitude takes over for the Other that with which he is to concern himself. The Other is thus thrown out of his own position; he steps back so that afterwards, when the matter has been attended to, he can either take it over as something finished and at his disposal, or disburden himself of it completely" (Ibid; Italics original).

Heidegger continues to say,

> "In contrast to this, there is also the possibility of a kind of solicitude which does not so much leap in for the Other as *leap ahead* of him [*ihm vorausspringt*] in his existentiell potentiality-for- Being, not in order to take away his 'care' but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time" (158-159; Italics original).

Only in the positive mode of solicitude as "leap[ing] ahead" of the other does "Dasein discove[r] the world in its own way and brin[g] it close" (Ibid) authentically.

5.4 Conclusion

My aim here has been to show how, although Heidegger does not offer a conception of the dialogical himself in *Being and Time*, his conceptions of "Being-with," "discourse," and "solicitude" nevertheless clear the obstacles for being able to recognize the importance of a dialogical conception of agency. As I shall show in the next chapter,

Heidegger does especially well to recognize one of the six most prominent features of

dialogism that I will identify—namely, "solicitude."

Chapter Six: Interpersonal Dialogism as a Prominent Feature of Ethical Agency

6.1 Introduction

Now that I have shown how Heidegger's critiques of the traditional conception of the self have laid the groundwork for recognizing the dialogical self, I will present my conception of the six most prominent features of the dialogical self soon, which shows, in part, how interpersonal dialogism should be a prominent feature of ethical agency. I will then suggest that, and show how, empathy is an example of a dialogically-constituted ethical virtue. But I first want to discuss Charles Taylor's work on dialogism, as my conception draws significantly from his.

6.2 Taylor on the Dialogical Self in Public Space

Taylor is, arguably, the first contemporary philosopher to explicitly endorse a conception of the self as dialogical as early as *Sources of the Self* (1989) and again with his essay "The Dialogical Self" (1991), presented as an address to the American Anthropological Association, in 1989. Since those writings, Taylor has maintained his view that any accurate conception of the self requires recognizing its dialogical features.

I first want to present a basic picture of Taylor's conception of language, as its focus on the shared aspect of interlocution will help inform how dialogical conceptions of the self attempt to offer an account of the language of the self. Central to Taylor's conception of language is what he calls its "constitutive dimension" (1985b, 270). "Language," he writes, "does not only serve to describe or represent things. Rather there

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are some phenomena, central to human life, which are partly constituted by language"
(Ibid). Taylor does not deny that language functions in part to enable us to make explicit
articulations about the world, ourselves, and others. But, in his view, there are two
additional "things that get done in language: ...putting things in public space, thereby
constituting public space; and making the discriminations which are foundational to
human concerns, and hence opening us to these concerns" (263). These latter two
features indicate the "constitutive dimension of language" (270). Each of these latter two
features is equally important for Taylor: 1) language's constitution of public space is, as
we will see, a precondition for human identity, and 2) language's discrimination-making
feature plays a central role in Taylor's notion of moral ontology. For now, I shall focus
on the first of these latter two features—language's constitution of public space. (I shall
discuss the second of these features later in this chapter.) It is important to note that for
Taylor language includes more than just linguistic or verbal utterances; it also involves
non-verbal expressions and articulations of the kind we find in body language and
gesture.

Taylor offers a good example of the way that embodied language sets up "public
space" (259). Imagine, he says, that you and I are strangers traveling on a train in a
country where the weather is incredibly hot and the "atmosphere...stifling." He continues,

> "I turn to you and say: 'Whew, it's hot.' This does not tell you anything you did
> not know; neither that it is hot, nor that I suffer from the heat. Both these facts
> were plain to you before.... What the expression has done here is to create a
> rapport between us, the kind of thing which comes about when we do what we
> call striking up a conversation. Previously I knew that you were hot, and you
> knew that I was hot, and I knew that you must know that I knew that, etc.: up to
> about any level that you care to chase it. But now it is out there as a fact between
> *us* that it is stifling in here" (Ibid; Italics original).

Language, in this example, has created a "public space" in the sense of having established a "common vantage point from which we survey the world together" (Ibid). This is a different picture from one which describes the encounter as one of mere communication, where person A transmits to person B a fact about his inner states, beliefs, etc., where such facts are atomistic bits of information. For the example shows that, in having struck up a conversation, we become co-participants in viewing the atmosphere as stiflingly hot. The weather becomes a fact for *us,* not one that just happens to obtain for each of us in our individual, self-contained experience. So the feelings we may express about the weather in the course of the conversation become public and the meaning they have is irreducibly shared. As Guignon describes this, "[O]ur feelings and aspirations gain their point and significance from the role they play in the 'public space' of dialogical interchange with others" (1999, 219).

That human beings create "public space" through language is not a contingent feature of human existence. As Taylor repeatedly argues, a shared language and "public space," or "space of interlocution" (1989, 31),[72] play constitutive roles with respect to our self-interpretations and self-articulations. Taylor claims in *Sources of the Self* that "There is no way we could be inducted into personhood except by being initiated into a language" (35). Taylor's claim captures the fact that we are born into a language community of interlocutors—a "we"—and we develop our identity as an "I" only by virtue of, not separate from, the shared practices, evaluations, and articulations of social interaction. "[W]e are aware of the world through a 'we' before we are through an 'I'" (1985e, 40), he writes.

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[72] See all of Chapter Two: "The Self in Moral Space," in Taylor (1989) for a remarkable elucidation of this issue.

Indeed, as Taylor argues, following Heidegger, the social world is so pervasive that it is only in theoretical abstraction from our everyday lives that we can consider ourselves as an isolatable individual, and even when doing so, it is always already from a standpoint situated in a social world of others. As Taylor puts it, "One is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it" (1989, 35).

Language plays an indispensable role, then, in the formation of human identity. In sharing "webs of interlocution" (36), I articulate my identity as "an answer to the question of who I am through a definition of where I am speaking from and to whom" (Ibid). My identity comes to be constituted through my interaction with others, by what "stances" I take towards them, and how I respond to the stances they assume towards me. As he asserts, "[O]ur identity is never simply defined in terms of our individual properties. If I really identify myself with my deferential attitude toward wiser people like you, then this conversational stance becomes a constituent of my identity" (1997, 173). Taylor, here, identifies one of the most prominent features of dialogism—that it must be understood in terms of spatial metaphors—which I will discuss later. Indeed, Taylor's frequent invocation of the term "stances," in its literal and metaphorical meanings, is meant to illustrate the connection between the latter two functions of language noted earlier, that is, between the "public space" we inhabit and the discrimination-making feature reflective of his notion of moral ontology.

For Taylor, we are each of us a "self in moral space" (1989, 25) in two distinct but mutually supportive senses. The first, building on Heidegger's insight from Chapter Five, what we might call the "thin" sense, refers to the way that we can feel solicited,

'pulled,' or 'called' by others. This is another one of the most prominent features of dialogism, which I will discuss later. The second, what we might call the "thick" sense, forms what is one of the most important conceptions in Taylor's thought, that of a moral ontology. This is, broadly, the view that moral concerns have an undeniably ontological status for human beings. I shall elaborate on this later.

In "The Dialogical Self" Taylor suggests that to act dialogically is to act as an "integrated, nonindividual agent" (1991, 311). This means that I act dialogically when I share my agency with other human beings who themselves are participating coextensively by sharing their agency. He contrasts this dialogism with what he refers to as "monological" modes of action and selfhood, where monological means "of a single agent" (1997, 171). It will help to consider an example he uses to illustrate monological action: two soccer players attempting to successfully complete a pass between one another. In such a case, Taylor explains, I attempt to "coordinat[e] my action with yours, as for instance when I run to the spot on the field where I know you are going to pass the ball" (1991, 310). This is an example of monological action because the players's relationship is constituted by mere *coordination,* in which the players act as two separate, individual agents. In contrast, Taylor cites two cases he thinks exemplify dialogical action: first, cases in which two people are "sawing a log with a two-handed saw," and second, instances of couples dancing. As he writes, "A very important feature of human action is rhythming, cadence. Every apt, coordinated gesture has a certain flow" (Ibid). Taylor is describing how the activity of dancing requires the agents's actuating their respective individual movement(s) synchronously with their partner's; that is, the very endeavor entails two people acting as though they were one person, two individuals

integrating themselves into a single, "nonindividual" agent. It is evident that central to Taylor's conception of dialogical action is the issue of the *quality of action* which the agents instantiate, and that there are better and worse types of action which one can undertake.

Toward the end of "The Dialogical Self" Taylor says, "Much of our understanding of self, society, and world is carried in practices that consist in dialogical action" (1991, 311). So why does he not say *all*? This is because, on Taylor's view, while the self's identity is constitutively dialogical and thus possesses the capacity for dialogical action, it may, in fact, not always actualize or realize such action. That is, in one scenario, the dialogical self may actualize dialogical action, but, in another scenario, it may act *as if it were* a monological self, and thereby act monologically, regardless of its dialogical constitution. So the emphasis of his words should fall on the "practices that consist in dialogical action," and it is true that not all "practices...consist in dialogical action," for often dialogical selves fail to act dialogically.

This helps illuminate a problem with Taylor's soccer player example. His claim is that the players, in merely coordinating their actions, fail to act dialogically. But Taylor makes it sound like the players' coordination is a non-contingent feature. In such a view, then, regardless of the quality of the player's action, the only possible outcome would be monological action. But Taylor's description does not offer an adequate account of why that has to be the case, especially when he also says that dialogical action can "come to be outside the situation of the face-to-face encounter," in for example, a "political or religious movement, whose members may be widely scattered but who are animated together by a sense of common purpose..." (Ibid). It is unclear what prevents the players,

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given the appropriate attitudinal stance, from establishing dialogical action. Toward this end, Taylor's example of the "compulsive talker," "impervious" to the "common rhythm" (310) of dialogical relation, is much more fitting, because it illustrates how the dialogical self can fail, thereby acting in a monological way. But this is a relatively minor issue.

Indeed, there is really only one significant problem with Taylor's conception of dialogism. Namely, he should have emphasized attunement, and not rhythm, in his conception, even though what he means by rhythm *is really* attunement. As I showed earlier, Taylor argues that the central criterion for dialogical action is that the interlocutors establish and maintain a rhythm toward one another. His paradigmatic examples are instances where the action cannot come off successfully without each interlocutor establishing and maintaining such rhythm, such as two people sawing with a two-handed saw and people doing a formal dance. But a conversation can have interlocutory rhythm and still be non-dialogical; and what seems like an awkward (non-rhythmical) encounter can be dialogical because each interlocutor is attuned to the dynamics of the exchange. I shall describe later how Taylor's mistake here gives rise to a problematic implication, namely, that of failing to recognize the importance that silence can play in a dialogical encounter.

6.3 Taylor's Moral Ontology

I want to return now to consider how the second of the two features indicative of the "constitutive dimension of language" (270)—language's discrimination-making feature—plays a central role in Taylor's notion of moral ontology.

requires recognizing how human action is different from "mere physical movement"

(559). Guignon offers an important passage regarding this second aspect, and I want to quote it at length.

> "The first and most characteristic feature of action is that it is directed toward realizing projected outcomes that constitute the agent's goals in acting. Because it is goal directed, action has a unity of intention, and this makes it possible to see the flow of events constituting the action as cumulative and as having a point, two essential features of any narrative. It is also characteristic of action that the circumstances and turns of events that characterize the context of action must be grasped in terms of how such factors count or matter for the agent—that, for example, adversities for this person are experienced as overwhelming blows rather than as temporary setbacks. Finally, because human action generally involves interaction with others, and because action takes place against a backdrop of standards and conventions accepted by a social group, seeing an occurrence as an action usually presupposes a grasp of the evaluative significance things have for people: actions present themselves as proper or improper, honorable or shameful, ordinary or shocking" (559-560).

Indeed, many philosophers throughout Western history, especially agency theorists and ethicists, from Plato and Aristotle to Taylor and Korsgaard, have pointed out the teleological nature of action that Guignon describes in his passage above.

Guignon's last claim here that "action takes place against a backdrop of standards and conventions accepted by a social group" whereby things can have "evaluative significance" is especially important. Understanding actions "as proper or improper, honorable or shameful, ordinary or shocking" requires recognizing the presence and normative legitimacy of ethical or moral standards. While many moral philosophers have offered accounts that attempt to show the normative legitimacy of moral standards, Taylor's account in *Sources of the Self* of what he calls "moral ontology" (1989, 8) is especially cogent.[73]

Unsurprisingly, both Taylor's and Guignon's endorsement of a moral ontology

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[73] See Guignon (1999) and Nicholas H. Smith (2002) for excellent accounts of this. See also Fergus Kerr's "The Self and the Good: Taylor's Moral Ontology" in Abbey (2004).

involves rejecting what the former refers to as "modern scientific naturalism."[74] Taylor

attacks naturalism directly, while Guignon criticizes it indirectly through his rejection of

the perspective of "constructionism." Guignon writes,

> "Constructionists maintain that there is an unbridgeable gap between our
> meaning-laden stories on the one hand and prenarrativized reality on the other.
> But it seems that they can draw this sharp distinction between story and fact only
> because they assume from the outset that reality as it is in itself—the flow of
> actual life—cannot possibly consist of anything other than inherently meaningless
> events that only retrospectively come to be emplotted and endowed with
> meaning" (1998, 566).

Guignon suggests further that "the source of this assumption that reality in itself must be

a meaningless series of events" emerges from "one of the core beliefs of naturalism: the

belief that reality at its most basic level consists of nothing but brute physical stuff in

mechanistic causal interactions" (Ibid).

In his critique of naturalism, Taylor shows how what he calls "moral intuitions"

(1989, 4) have an undeniably ontological status.[75] In describing the place or status which

these intuitions occupy in everyday modes of life, he identifies two facets which our

moral reactions have:

> "On the one side, they are almost like instincts, comparable to our love of sweet
> things, or our aversion to nauseous substances, or our fear of falling; on the other,
> they seem to involve claims, implicit or explicit, about the nature and status of
> human beings. From this second side, a moral reaction is an assent to, an
> affirmation of, a given ontology of the human" (5).

Taylor claims that these two facets of our moral reactions are indispensable for

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[74] See especially Chapter One of Taylor 1989.

[75] Other philosophers have offered similar accounts of Taylor's notion of "strong evaluation."
See Schechtman 1996, pp. 83-84, Somogy Varga 2012, pp. 95-97, for examples. Nicholas H.
Smith offers the most comprehensive examination of Taylor's account of "strong evaluation" and
the broader "moral ontology" in which it is situated, in his excellent work, *Charles Taylor:
Meaning, Morals and Modernity*.

formulating an accurate account of human personhood and agency such that any attempt to articulate them without recognizing the validity of both facets is inherently flawed.

Yet "modern scientific naturalism," Taylor argues, recognizes the validity of the first facet—where our moral reactions operate "almost like instincts," or like "'gut' feelings" (7)—while attempting to deny the validity of the second—where our moral reactions are expressions, implicit or explicit, of ontological accounts. Scientific naturalism thereby conflates the two facets of our moral reactions, but it does this most frequently by claiming specifically that all moral reactions we exhibit are functions of sociobiological responses. In this way, the modern naturalist consciousness thinks that attempts to recognize moral claims as intrinsic to the very nature of human beings are necessarily chimerical, illusions invented as a way of denying what is the 'cold,' 'hard' reality of the human condition—that there are no intrinsically binding moral obligations, that there is nothing that is intrinsically 'right' and 'wrong.' The conflation of the two facets of our moral reactions is thus actually a reduction of the second—ontological accounts—into the first—scientific naturalism. This is why Taylor refers to this phenomenon as the "naturalist reduction."

I noted above how Taylor grounds his opposition to the "naturalist deduction" on the claim that it is fundamentally incoherent to assert that an accurate articulation of the human condition, and the constitutive features of human personhood, identity, and agency delineated therein, is possible without the inclusion of ontological accounts.

In *Sources*, Taylor calls these ontological accounts "frameworks" (27), which is precisely what Guignon is referring to when he talks about how "action takes place against a backdrop of standards and conventions accepted by a social group" whereby

things can have "evaluative significance" (1998, 560). A "framework incorporates a crucial set of qualitative distinctions. To think, feel, judge within such a framework is to function with the sense that some action, or mode of life, or mode of feeling is incomparably higher than the others which are more readily available to us" (Taylor 1989, 19). The term 'higher' carries here the same qualitatively descriptive significance extant in commonly used qualifiers like 'fuller,' 'purer,' 'more admirable,' or in instances where we differentiate between demands which make 'absolute' as opposed to 'merely relative' claims on us (20).

Taylor introduces the terms "strong evaluation" and "weak evaluation" to capture the difference in the kinds of judgments with which agents are faced. Questions of "strong evaluation…involve discriminations of right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower, which are not rendered valid by our own desires, inclinations, or choices, but rather stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged" (4). For Taylor, then, questions of "strong evaluation" deal with the quality of the agent's motivation for action, whereas questions of "weak evaluation" deal with the agent's consideration of the outcomes of action.

In "What is Human Agency?" (1985c), Taylor illustrates his point by giving the example of deciding between two vacation spots (17). He substantiates his claim by arguing as follows: Suppose I am deciding which vacation I want to take. I can vacation in the north or in the south. I decide to vacation in the south, but my decision to do so is based on the outcome, i.e., the degree of enjoyment I will experience at that vacation spot, and not because of a judgment that the vacation in the south is somehow of intrinsically greater worth than that in the north. As Taylor claims, "the favored

alternative is not selected because of the worth of the underlying motivation. There is 'nothing to choose' between the motivations here" (Ibid).

The validity of Taylor's claim here is shown easily by how strange it would seem for me to offer as an explanation of my decision: "Well, after extensive and rigorous reflection, I thought it was just 'better' or somehow more 'right' to vacation in the south." This is because in such an explanation, I have granted to the terms 'better' and 'right' a specifically moral significance. In such an instance, the descriptors 'better' and 'right' accrue the kind of moral significance, or bearing on my sense of self, or identity, as a responsible human subject, such that were I to have chosen the other alternative—vacationing in the north—I would have been compromising, in a definitive way, my integrity, or my sense of who I am as a 'good' person.

But Taylor adds a caveat. Namely, that just because it is correct to say that "there is 'nothing to choose' between the motivations here" does not mean that the alternatives themselves—the respective vacation spots—are somehow homogeneous. There may in fact be, and no doubt are, distinguishing characteristics of each vacation spot. Each of the two vacation spots has something unique to offer, distinct from the other: one is in the north, one in the south, one promises the beauty of open, untracked wilderness, the other "lush tropical land," one offers exhilaration, the other relaxation. Thus, the alternatives are distinct with respect to each other, and these distinguishing features are qualitative in so far as they deal with the desirability of the given vacation spot.

But just because the alternatives involve to some degree qualitative distinctions does not mean necessarily that they are questions of "strong evaluation." This is because Taylor's formulation insists that all questions of "strong evaluation" deal with choosing

between alternatives that entail qualitative distinctions, but not all choices made between alternatives that involve qualitative distinctions fall within the realm of "strong evaluation." The presence of qualitative distinctions among the "desirability characterizations" (Ibid) of alternatives is not a sufficient condition for determining the degree of evaluation—strong or weak—constituted by such alternatives, because in order for the question to belong to "strong evaluation," the second condition must be met: that the desirability of the chosen alternative be one pertaining to its qualitative worth, and not just its prospective utilitarian advantageousness, what Taylor calls alternatively its 'calculated' or quantitative worth.

I noted above how, for Taylor, questions of "weak evaluation" differ fundamentally from questions of "strong evaluation" in that they deal with outcomes, and not, as we have seen with questions of "strong evaluation," with the quality of motivation. But as we have also seen with our example of the two vacation spots, and the different characteristics thereof, questions of "weak evaluation" may involve qualitative distinctions as well. And though it is true that questions of "weak evaluation" may involve to some degree qualitative distinctions, they are nevertheless comprised principally by the presence of quantitative distinctions.

For Taylor, quantitative distinctions are relegated to a relatively weak conceptual position, designating only the absence of consideration of a desire's qualitative worth in that desire's being chosen as the favored alternative. As such, quantitative distinctions serve more as a categorical placeholder by which to understand the contrastive conception of qualitative distinctions. And in our vacation scenario, we are of course dealing with questions of "weak evaluation." This is because the basic motivation for

deciding to vacation in the south is because it offered the opportunity to relax, swim in the ocean, get a suntan, and so on. It was not, as I noted above, because after extensive and rigorous introspection, I thought it was 'better' or more 'right' to vacation in the south.

6.4 My Conception of Interpersonal Dialogism: The Six Most Prominent Features

I now want to briefly discuss the conception of the dialogical that I endorse by drawing from the accounts I have examined thus far. I want to suggest that the six most prominent features of interpersonal dialogism are the following: 1) it requires the participation of at least one interlocutor (Bakhtin); 2); it entails address and responsiveness, specifically, in that it involves a kind of solicitous 'pull' or sense of being called by others (Heidegger and Taylor); 3) it involves a to-and-fro movement (Gadamer); 4) it is inherently unfinalizable or open-ended (Bakhtin and Nikulin); 5) it recognizes the role that silence can play in any interlocutory exchange (Hermans et al); and lastly, 6) it has a normative dimension, in that it plays a significant role in ethical agency (Taylor). My description of each feature shall remain relatively brief, as I shall leave a more developed picture of the features for a later work.

I now want to turn to a consideration of the first, most prominent feature of interpersonal dialogism, namely, that it requires the participation of at least one interlocutor. This is a pretty straightforward aspect of interpersonal dialogism and thus does not require much elaboration, so my discussion of it will remain brief. I am indebted to Bakhtin for identifying this feature of interpersonal dialogism in his discussion of the distinction between dialogism and dialectic (see pg. 25). Bakhtin showed how one of the most significant differences between the two phenomena is that dialogism requires the

presence of at least one human being while dialectic does not. This is because dialectic occurs at the abstract level of theoretical systems, while dialogism occurs at the concrete level of phenomenological practice. Dialectic is composed of the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, and these are purely theoretical concepts. They lack the anima that is required for dialogical relations. The dialectical thus lacks the expressive dimension that dialogical relations have.

It is an open question whether or to what extent some higher functioning nonhuman animals possess the capacity for dialogism and dialogue, but it is undoubtedly the case that they *are* phenomena in which human beings participate. And without the presence and participation of at least one human being, *qua* interlocutor, there would be no agent with whom someone or something could be in dialogue in the first place. In other words, dialogue cannot get off the ground, so to speak, as a human phenomenon without the presence of at least one human being to serve as its driving force, or its reason for being. Dialogism requires the participation of at least one human being, then, because it requires an expressive, embodied, and animate agent. In this way, dialogism necessarily involves discursive activity while dialectic does not.

The second, most prominent feature of dialogism it entails address and responsiveness, specifically, in that it involves a kind of solicitous 'pull' or sense of being called by others. As I have shown, Heidegger developed this insight with his conception of "solicitude" and Taylor elaborated upon it by describing just how important *address* is to our ordinary, everyday discursive engagement with others and the world, made manifest in shared "space[s] of interlocution" (1989, 31). Human beings are undoubtedly social in nature and, as Heidegger, Taylor, and others have shown, come to constitute

their identity only through their relations with others, even if the particular place a human being chooses to occupy is chosen for its absence of others (e.g. the hermit or recluse). Even in our early developmental stages—as developmental psychology has clearly shown—we crave social interaction, and this basic outward-directed orientation continues, to varying degrees, for the rest of our lives. So we find ourselves pulled towards others in a general sense, but we also can find ourselves pulled towards others or an other in a more specific way, such as being invited into a conversation by an other's question or similar type of provocation.

That we find ourselves, always metaphorically and sometimes literally, called by others does not mean, of course, that we necessarily heed the call, or that if we do, that we do so with the appropriate degree of ethical sensitivity and receptivity. But, as has been suggested by the various thinkers I have examined throughout this essay, the way or manner in which we do respond to the other's call contributes, to a not insignificant extent, to whether we can justifiably claim that we have acted ethically in any given circumstance.

If, for example, I deliberately ignore the handshake of an acquaintance, my action may be justifiably considered rude. Of course whether my act is actually rude depends on the specific context in which the handshake is offered. If I refuse to shake my acquaintance's hand because I have just found out that he has slept with my wife or hit my child, or harmed me or a loved one in some similar way, then my refusal to shake his hand may be an ethically justifiable—or even admirable—response, and would thereby not merit the pejorative ascription of rudeness.

Or consider the solicitous pull we might feel from a homeless person asking for

change. In such a case, I might find myself drawn in by the person's sullen, downtrodden countenance, and his searching, desperate eyes. I might consider his whole embodied figure, and not just his face, as a plea for my attention and prospective empathy. The situation that emerges from the encounter raises ethical considerations about how I ought to respond, and whether, more specifically, my response should include giving him money. The encounter raises further questions about whether I am *obligated* to give him money or some other form of assistance, or whether such assistance would instead be supererogatory.

We can experience the solicitous pull from objects just as we can from persons, although many people may find it more difficult to feel this pull from the former than the latter. An example of this might be my interaction with artwork in a museum. I might come to feel drawn toward a particular piece of artwork, like John Singer Sargent's *Ramon Subercaseaux in a Gondola* (1880). I may come to engage in a dialogue with the artwork such that the artwork reciprocates my interest by "speaking" to me. I may, for example, come to "place myself" imaginatively in the gondola with Ramon Subercaseaux. Or consider the power of Pablo Picasso's *La dona del floc de cabells* (1903), Gordon Parks' photos of Muhammad Ali, or Frida Kahlo's many self-portraits. But of course the artwork need not depict a human face for me to feel such a pull. It could happen just as easily when viewing one of Mark Rothko's paintings or Kara Walker's cut-paper silhouettes.

Just as we can feel solicited by objects just as much as we can by people, so too can we come to engage in a to and fro movement with objects just as we can with people. I mentioned above how I can be drawn in by a piece of art, such as Picasso's painting.

Once drawn in by this piece of art, I may engage in a kind of to-and-fro "movement" with it. Movement in this sense is purely metaphorical, but extant nonetheless. And if I let myself, I can come to participate in a kind of dialogue with the painting by engaging in such a to and fro.

That dialogism prominently involves this to and fro movement is, as I showed in Chapter Two, an insight that Gadamer captured especially well. In my discussion there of Gadamer's notion of play, I gave an example of people playing catch. For all of its convenience, such an example could be misleading, because it can give the impression that the notion of play should be taken only in the more literal sense of *athletic* play and that the to and fro movement Gadamer identifies and describes occurs strictly or even primarily in the athletic sense. But this is not the case, for as I also showed in my discussion, Gadamer's notion of play is broad and encompasses all manner of action.

So I could just as easily take conversation as an example of to and fro movement. This to and fro movement occurs any time one initiates a discursive expression toward an other whereby the other responds or replies with a discursive expression of his or her own. I use the term "discursive expression" to capture types of expression that are broader and more inclusive than what we might refer to as "verbal" or "linguistic utterances." So discursive expressions may just involve an exchange of non-verbal head-nods in the hallway, or an exchange of knowing winks at a cocktail party. This leaves open the possibility, then, for people having conversations without ever uttering a word at all, although most conversations that many people have do of course involve words.

That interpersonal dialogism is inherently unfinalizable or open-ended is an aspect that both Bakhtin and Nikulin recognized explicitly. But I shall specifically use

Nikulin's account here because it is a bit more perspicuous than Bakhtin's. Nikulin's

identification of the importance of the unfinalizability of interpersonal dialogism emerges

in his broader discussion of the "polyphonic interaction of voices" (2005, 55) (see p. 87).

Nikulin rightfully argues that the "polyphonic interaction of voices" (Ibid) one finds in

interpersonal dialogism has as one of its determining modes the notion of

"unfinalizability." He writes,

> "A person qua free voice is not finalizable, or, to use Bakhtin's term, is
> 'unfinalizable'…. "The unfinalizability of a person means that, in principle, she
> can never exhaust the various relations she has with either herself (expressively)
> or with others (communicatively). Although each person is the 'self-same person,'
> a person nevertheless does not coincide with herself and is thus other to
> herself…" (56).

Unfinalizability, Nikulin maintains, is different from something's (or, in this case,

someone's) being unfinished. A person who is, *ex hypothesi*, unfinished is merely in the

state of being unfinished while retaining the possibility of yet becoming finished. But a

person as unfinalizable is one who, in principle, cannot ever be finished or finalized. And

this is the case for the dialogical person's expressive voice: "A person cannot be present

in what and who she is merely through a finite number of attributes. There is always

something that remains unthematized about a person, not only from the perspective of

others, but even from that of herself" (59). That the dialogical person cannot be fully

thematized in any single expressive act means, further, that a "person appears as both

other and another, i.e., as different, both to herself and to the others, while at the same

time maintaining herself in sameness particularly through her voice" (58).

That one's personal voice is never finalizable suggests that no expressive act can

ever be complete. But Nikulin argues against such a conclusion. As he claims, one's

personal voice is "unfinalizable yet not unfinished, and thus it is complete. Un-finalizability and completeness not only do not exclude each other—they are complementary" (57). The idea of completeness here refers to the notion that one's expressive act is always *instantiated*, and as such, it is decisive and recognizable as an act expressive of oneself and one's voice. But while one's expressive act is complete, one's "expressive capacities" (Ibid) remain open and unfinalizable. One can always act anew and in a relatively unprecedented way. And the uniqueness and identifiability of a person's voice is recognizable not just in longer narratives but also in much shorter speech acts, like the expression of a single word.

One of the most important contributions by Hermans et al is that they have identified, in their discussion of the nine features of good dialogue (see section 3.6), how crucial silence can be in an interlocutory exchange. As I have suggested from the outset, every (potentially dialogical or monological) encounter presents us with the choice of how to respond to the other. While, as we saw in Chapter Two, Gadamer already identified how genuine conversation requires the interlocutors' willingness to let go of their respective wills to control, Jerome A. Miller (1988) elaborates on this idea and offers a rich description of what such a choice involves. In his remarkable book, *The Way of Suffering: A Geography of Crisis,* Miller writes:

> "We might think, for example, of the silence, brief but agitated with embarrassment, which supervenes upon the initial exchange of pleasantries between new acquaintances. After muttering a last cliché, an unnerving gap opens up between us; all words and thoughts seem suddenly and irretrievably to desert me, leaving me exposed and defenseless. The longer this moment lasts, and the more paralyzed I feel by it, the more desperate and determined I am to fill this silence, whatever the cost. The dread of this silence and its humiliation can lead me to say the most humiliating things. In vignettes as trivial as this, we are able to recognize how desperately we squirm when we suffer even the slightest loss of control. When silence threatens the easy flow of conversation, my response is to

use the weapon of speech to defend myself in any way I can from the dreadful Otherness of the Other which the silence allows to emerge" (18).

Consider, for instance, the smooth talker. In having sharpened his technique of saying charming things, he has imposed on the conversational proceedings his own kind of will to control. His efforts to be charming—to embody and exude charm—are symptomatic of his attempt to control how the interaction with his interlocutor proceeds. Part of his charm comes from his ability to remain calm and cool in the face of his encounter with the other. And this requires that he remain in control of the conversational encounter so that he can thwart any threat that an unprecedented and unpredictable future, embodied by the other, might pose to him. For the duration of the encounter, he must remain vigilant of and suppress any prospective awkwardness that may arise. And his employment of smooth talk enables him to do this. But in his unwillingness to be susceptible to the other, he misses out on the possibilities that the unprecedented future might present. And, ironically, as Miller notes, he becomes dominated by his own will to control. He has effectively closed himself off to others. Thus, even though he is efficient at maintaining the rhythm supposedly indicative of dialogism, his actions are in fact monological in nature. And this is a possibility that Taylor's account does not recognize.

The alternative to the attitude that operates in the will to control can be found, to take one example, in instances of silence. Miller describes this as follows.

> "But let us suppose that there are, in fact, however infrequently, conversations where I risk being *defenseless*. On these rare occasions I allow the silence to occur, and I allow to emerge, from within that silence, my address to the Other and his address to me. Such an experience has a dramatic character because of the vulnerability involved in such unplanned exposure of my self to danger. That the drama is completed in the unrehearsed, unforeseen *mutuality* of real conversation seems miraculous" (22; Italics original).

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This will to receptivity is nothing short of transformative:

> "We need to emphasize that such receptivity results from a decision of the will to open myself to the Other as I see him approaching me; and in deciding to be available to the Other, I am also deciding to alter in a fundamental way the kind of person I am myself. Though I may not be conscious of doing so, I am radically changing my attitude toward the whole of what-is; for in opening my self to this one Other, I am really opening my self to Otherness as such. Implicitly, I am initiating a whole new way of life" (23).

Miller is describing the transformative power of the will to receptivity as a willingness to let the unprecedented play of possibilities emerge from what the interlocutors experience perhaps as an awkward silence. I noted in previous chapters the necessary conditions for dialogical action. As we can see here, the initial silence Miller describes as well as the genuine conversation that ensues are representative examples of dialogical action.

There are some additional instances of when silence, though perhaps not experienced as awkward, indicates the fulfillment of dialogism—when silence is likely an, or perhaps even the most, appropriate dialogical response. Consider the case of when a loved one tells you they have been raped, or committed a horrific crime, etc. Or consider the times when we are confronted with an experience that words cannot accurately capture. We might find it odd, for instance, for someone who, having just finished walking through the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., immediately begins discoursing in great detail about the horror he just witnessed. This is because we might feel instead that dumbfounded silence is a more appropriate response in that it more accurately captures the profundity of the experience, that which cannot be adequately captured in words. That it may be more *ethically* appropriate to remain silent in the face of the horrific illustrates one of the senses in which a confrontation with the

horrific *compels* us to be silent, at least in our initial encounter with it.[76] But the second

sense in which we are compelled to be silent by our confrontation with the horrific is in

being rendered speechless by it. The greater the horror, perhaps the less able one is to

verbalize one's response to that horror. In this way, one's scream may function,

somewhat paradoxically, as the vocalization of one's inability to give voice to one's

immediate experience.

The sixth and last most prominent feature of interpersonal dialogism is its

normative dimension—that is, that it plays a crucial role in ethical agency. My account

here is no doubt indebted to Charles Taylor's work on moral ontology, which I described

earlier in this chapter. As we recall, Taylor's notion of moral ontology, briefly put, refers

to the view that human beings have as part of their constitution an orientation to the good,

in the sense that we are beings to whom things matter, that we value things, that we are

concerned as well with the quality or worth of those values, and that such concerns are a

precondition for our having any sense of self at all. The self is one of "strong evaluation"

which is grounded in and informed by a strong set of moral commitments which

constitute, in part, the shape or trajectory of the self's life and its projects.

6.5 Empathy as a Paradigmatic Example of a Dialogically-Constituted Moral Virtue
As I have suggested, recognizing the role that interpersonal dialogism plays as a feature

of the human self helps to account for the other-oriented nature of ethical life. Moral

ontology, then, ought to include a place for the role that interpersonal dialogism plays in

the self's ethical orientation toward others and itself. For my purposes here, I am going to

assume that any plausible moral theory would recognize virtues such as respect, care, and

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[76] See Richard J. Bernstein's excellent book, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation.*
Malden: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2002.

empathy as eminently desirable, although this is no doubt arguable. Because even a cursory discussion of these three virtues would take more space than I can allot it here, I shall focus briefly on only one of them, namely, empathy. I have chosen to focus on empathy primarily because it is perhaps the virtue that most clearly exemplifies dialogical features.

I want to suggest that empathy becomes possible only if we come to recognize another person's experience as situated within a context that is meaningful to them. And this presupposes both that 1) we are already 'pulled' toward them dialogically, and that 2) we find ourselves in at least a potentially dialogical event. Consider again my earlier example of visiting the Holocaust Museum. Unless one is unfortunately a Neo-Nazi or someone of a similar disposition, the museum exhibits are likely to elicit an empathic response from many visitors. The reason why empathy is one of the likeliest responses is precisely because of the dialogical aspects of human being.

Given the findings of a large body of empirical psychological literature, that empathy exists as a moral phenomenon is beyond dispute.[77] Yet there are a perhaps surprising number of criticisms directed at the notion that empathy is a productive feature of morality—surprising because, for most people, it seems almost platitudinal to consider empathy a personal and social virtue. It is well known that David Hume and Adam Smith are among empathy's more famous proponents, and it no doubt continues to be defended by contemporary philosophers.[78] But over the last few decades, there has been a growing body of literature extolling the problematic aspects of empathy. On this score, I will

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[77] See Martin L. Hoffman 2000 for his citation of the many experiments comprising the body of empirical research proving empathy's existence.

[78] See especially Stephen Darwall 1998 and Michael Slote 2010. As Darwall points out, Hume and Smith, of course, used the term "sympathy," not "empathy." For a good discussion of Hume's and Smith's differing conceptions of "sympathy," see Darwall 1998, pp. 264-69.

consider in what follows two of the more relevant critical accounts of empathy, by Alexis

Shotwell (2011)[79] and Jesse Prinz (2011), respectively.

Here I want to focus exclusively on the role that empathy can play as a

"prosocial" (Hoffman 2000, 29), or socially beneficial, moral phenomenon. More

specifically, I shall address and argue against the following claims: first, that empathy is

an undesirable moral emotion because it lacks concern as a constitutive feature; second,

that empathy, as a moral phenomenon, is inherently narcissistic; and third, that empathy

is problematic because of its susceptibility to various kinds of bias.

To get a better handle on what notion of empathy should be used, I want to begin

by offering what I think is perhaps the most straightforward account of empathy, so that

the subsequent caveats presented in other accounts can become more salient and

meaningful. Hoffman considers empathy a biologically based moral phenomenon and

situates it within a framework of "emotional and motivational development" (3). He

broadly defines empathy within his heuristic of the "five types of moral encounters or

dilemmas:" (Ibid) "innocent bystander, transgressor, virtual transgressor, multiple moral

claimants, and caring versus justice" (3-4).

Empathy, he says, is "defined as an affective response more appropriate to

another's situation than one's own" (4; bolded in original). He claims further that "The

key requirement of an empathic response according to my definition is the involvement

of psychological processes that make a person have feelings that are more congruent with

another's situation than with his own situation" (30). This other-directedness of empathy

is clearly articulated by Hoffman's observation that they are "empathy-arousing

processes as long as the observer attends to the victim and the feelings evoked in the

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[79] See especially Chapter Five, "Enacting Solidarity," pp. 98-124.

observer fit the victim's situation rather than the observer's" (48). On Hoffman's definition, therefore, we can think of empathy as a kind of fellow feeling, or feeling-with another.

In offering one of the more prominent accounts criticizing the role of empathy, Jesse Prinz focuses on its moral epistemological dimensions: namely whether empathy is a "component, a necessary cause, a reliable epistemic guide, a foundation for justification, or the motivating force behind our moral judgments" (2011, 214). Prinz ultimately rejects empathy's usefulness on each of these scores, but it is not necessary for my concerns here to explicate all of his reasons for doing so. For now, it is important only to see how his conception of empathy, in its exclusion of concern as a constitutive feature, is, I think, overly narrow.

Prinz concedes that concern for others is necessary, but he distinguishes such concern from empathy. On his view, one can express empathy for another without expressing concern for their well-being. As he says, "When we see a drug addict take another hit, she may exhibit a euphoric response. Empathy might induce joy in this case, but concern makes us worry about the addict's well-being" (230). Prinz is correct to suggest that "empathy might induce joy in this case" because if we, empathically, try to enter into the other's perspective, then we would be remiss not to experience, psychologically at least, their physiologically altered state. That is, our empathic response to the drug addict's high would require attempting to recognize the euphoria they experience, and to not recognize it as such would indicate a failure in our empathic response. Prinz's point seems to be that, in such cases, our empathic response may not warrant the moral outcome we might like it to. Rather than maintaining some degree of

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moral condemnation for the destructive behavior of drug use, our empathic response would yield complicity with it.

Prinz's contention seems to show Hoffman's definition of empathy as problematically broad. In pointing out the potentially morally undesirable consequences of empathy in such cases, Prinz seems to have shown how Hoffman's formulation of empathy does not warrant his claim that it is "prosocial." But, ironically, it is precisely the ambiguity in Hoffman's definition that exonerates him from Prinz's criticism on this score. This ambiguity lies specifically in Hoffman's description of empathy as a process in which one is more attuned to another's situation than to one's own. Another's situation avails itself to a variety of critical moral stances *vis a vis* the victim,[80] and need not demand complicity with the victim's first-person standpoint. Just because the drug user may feel euphoria in his drug abuse does not mean that our empathic response to him requires that our predominant emotion be one of euphoria and, therefore in some sense, one of moral complicity.

Stephen Darwall, in offering an account which differs slightly from but ultimately coincides with Hoffman's, foresees Prinz's contention with Hoffman. In Darwall's formulation, what he calls "projective empathy" is "a projection into the other's standpoint" (1998, 270). "Attention," he continues, "is focused, not on the other, but on her situation as we imagine she sees it, or as we think she should see it" (Ibid). This, he notes, is much different from sympathy. As he puts it, "Sympathy for a person and her plight is felt as from the third-person perspective of one-caring, whereas empathy

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[80] My use of the term "victim," in this case especially, can be seen as question begging in so far as it is the point under consideration whether or to what extent the person empathized with should be evaluated in such moral terms as victimhood. But I retain use of the word nevertheless for stylistic convenience and to avoid the awkwardness of referring to the empathized-with as such.

involves something like a sharing of the other's mental states, frequently, as from her standpoint. This is different from caring about her, even imaginatively" (264).

Foreseeing Prinz's contention with Hoffman, Darwall correctly points out, "the person we are empathizing with may hate herself, feel she is worthless, and want nothing more than the misery she believes she so richly deserves" (Ibid). Thus there may be quite a difference between what she thinks is best for her, and what our sympathetic concern might view as best for her, so that were we to try to empathically adopt her first-person standpoint, our empathy may yield morally undesirable emotions like unwarranted self-hatred, whereas our sympathetic concern would not. In trying to formulate a form of empathy that includes sympathetic concern, Darwall introduces the notion of "proto-sympathetic empathy," which "brings the other's relation to his situation into view in a way that can engage sympathy on his behalf" (271). "Proto-sympathetic empathy," on Darwall's view, adds to "projective empathy" a dimension that can legitimately elicit sympathetic concern from the empathizer. "Proto-sympathetic empathy is informed by projective empathy, but goes beyond it in not being felt entirely as from the other's standpoint" (Ibid).

As Darwall demonstrates, asking one to "imagine what someone would feel if he were to lose his only child" is different from asking one to "imagine what it would be like for that person to feel that way" (270). The first instance demands that we "identify what feelings the situation would apparently warrant" when viewed from the victim's standpoint. But the second instance demands that we try to recognize what it would be like for someone "*conscious* of his feelings, their phenomenological textures, and relevance for his life" (Ibid; Italics original). This difference is especially apparent in the

example Darwall gives of someone who has lost a child: they "might be so consumed by the loss that [they are] unable even to think about what living with it is like for him" (271). Such a case shows that complying with the first request above would yield only a "simulation" of the parent's feelings; but it would lack the kind of experience requested in the second case, which involves considering what such a situation must be like for him. Darwall himself is right to point out, though, that Hoffman accounts for this difference in his distinction between "empathic distress" and "sympathetic distress," and in his further insistence that moral maturation involves a "qualitative transformation of empathic into sympathetic distress," with the latter lacking the egocentrically motivated aspect present in the former. Thus, in this transformation, the empathizer wants to help because they are genuinely concerned about the victim and "not just to relieve their own empathic distress" (Hoffman 2000, 88).

In chapter five from *Knowing Otherwise*, titled "Enacting Solidarity," Alexis Shotwell offers three criticisms of empathy. As I noted at the outset, I shall focus on her narcissism charge, as her other two criticisms would require lengthy treatment unsuitable here. She situates her criticism of empathy specifically within antiracist movements for social justice. And in invoking Sandra Lee Bartky's use of Scheler's account of sympathy, Shotwell uncritically adopts Bartky's reading of Scheler. According to Bartky, Scheler's use of *Mitgefuhl* is translatable as "sympathy," or "fellow-feeling," or "feeling-with" (Shotwell 2011, 109). But empathy, Bartky points out, is, for Scheler, different from sympathy. As Shotwell claims, "Empathy, for Scheler, requires us to consider how we would feel were we in the place of the person we're empathizing with. It is, in effect,

a way of imagining ourselves in the other's place, and it thus re-centers our own egoistic concerns" (Ibid).

Shotwell is correct that empathy involves, among other things, "imagining ourselves in the other's place," but it does not follow from this that such imagining yields "egoistic concerns." It is surely possible that my empathic response may be less than genuine and become perverted, either consciously or surreptitiously, by my desire to aggrandize my empathic attributes. But it is certainly possible for me to attempt to enter into another's situation and understand it from their standpoint. The fact that I can never actually see the world through another's eyes does not mean that my attempts to do so are inherently egoistic. Whether my efforts are egoistic is a function not of phenomeno-logical and physiological realities—that I can embody only my body and no one else's—but rather of the motivations I have in undertaking such efforts. Yet in her uncritical invocation of Bartky's use of Scheler, Shotwell seems to endorse a conception of empathy that problematically conflates, on the one hand, the possible motivations of the empathizer, and, on the other, the possible consequences that may emerge from the empathizer's empathic response. Put simply, she overlooks the teleological or purposive dimension of empathy.

Additionally, Shotwell echoes Bartky's claim that the "feeling-with" of sympathy entails a "kind of distance between people who are attempting to act in solidarity with each other" (Ibid), which empathy problematically lacks. This strikes me as an additional red herring. Consider when Shotwell quotes Bartky as claiming that such critical distance helps to "act against the temptation on the part of the advantaged one to believe that her oppressor's guilt can be overcome through heroic acts of ego-identification" (2002, 80;

2011, 109). Here the critical distance of sympathetic "feeling-with" is, supposedly, to act

as a corrective to the problem of the empathizer's becoming too self-deluded in their

empathic capacities. But it is unclear, and Shotwell neglects to explain, both 1) how

sympathy's "feeling-with" is supposed to accomplish this, and 2) how such a corrective

can be accomplished exclusively by sympathy rather than empathy. Moreover, she, rather

strangely, seems to praise sympathy's prospective effects for contradictory reasons. After

endorsing the benefit critical distance offers to the empathizer-victim relationship, on the

one hand, she seems to tout sympathy's ability to draw the relation between empathizer

and victim closer, on the other. She says, "At the same time, the act of imagination draws

the felt-with into a closer relation than can mere cognitive understanding" (2011, 110).

She subsequently explicates her endorsement of a "shift" in the "kind of

understanding of another's circumstance" which is not merely "conceptual" and

"propositional," but, more importantly, "affective" and, as it were, phenomenologically

sensitive (Ibid). While I am sympathetic to her endorsement of a shift to a more

comprehensive form of relating to others, her formulation fails to prove her point. She

writes, "This kind of understanding of another's circumstance—this kind of sympathy—

might be the grounds for responsible solidarity. Still affective, but refusing the conflation

of self encoded in the notion of empathy, this sort of political feeling-with is central to

solidarity" (Ibid). Here she claims that the "conflation of self" is one of empathy's

liabilities, but as Daryl Koehn (1998) and others have pointed out, and indeed as Shotwell

herself recognizes implicitly elsewhere, such conflation is, in practice, impossible, even

in the most successful cases of empathic response. As Koehn puts it, "In fact, since there

never is unmediated access to the other, empathizing cannot mean simply receiving the

other on her terms. Whatever we take to be 'her' terms will still be our version of what those terms are" (1998, 60). That is, in interacting empathically with the other, we can never wholly place ourselves firmly within the other's situation and see it from their standpoint. Thus quite irrespective of the question of the desirability of such conflation is its ontological impossibility.

What Shotwell has in mind, perhaps, in her conflation claim is the danger the empathizer may run in possibly wallowing in his own empathic distress over the victim's distress, a form of what Hoffman calls "egoistic drift," (2000 56, 205) which is part of "empathic over-arousal" (198). Egoistic drift occurs when

> "the observer is overwhelmed by the empathic connection with the victim, and the empathic connection is then severed, ironically, because the empathic affect resonates so effectively with the observer's own needs; and his focus, which was initially on the victim, shifts toward himself. Ruminating about his painful past, he becomes lost in egoistic concerns and the image of the victim that initiated the role-taking process slips out of focus and fades away..." (56).

Empathic over-arousal, for its part, occurs when the "observer's empathic distress becomes so painful and intolerable that it is transformed into an intense feeling of personal distress, which may move the person out of the empathic mode entirely" (198). But, as we have already seen, Hoffman points out the problematic aspect of empathic distress, distinguishing it from, and thus offering as a desirable alternative, sympathetic distress.

A final place where Shotwell is unsuccessful in attempting to show how sympathy is a better alternative to empathy is in her description of the affective and phenomeno-logically sensitive kind of understanding she advocates: "For something to come alive for me is for it to engage me holistically, engaging and transforming my whole corporeal

sensorium, my feelings, my prejudices, my ways of being in the world" (2011, 110). It is difficult to see here how her description differs from that of "proto-sympathetic empathy" offered by Darwall.

Prinz finds empathy detrimental to moral life, in part, because it is "easily manipulated," as in cases of "similarity bias," wherein we are more likely to feel empathy—and the empathy we feel will be greater—for people similar to ourselves (2011, 227). But this potential pitfall of empathy has not gone unnoticed by empathy's proponents. Hoffman, for instance, points out and discusses what Prinz notes: that empathy's susceptibility to "similarity bias," or what Hoffman calls "familiarity bias," (2000, 206) has been proven empirically. Indeed, Hoffman writes, "there is also evidence that most people empathize to a greater degree...with victims who are family members, members of their primary group, close friends, and people whose personal needs and concerns are similar to their own" (197).

Such "similarity bias" can be especially harmful to enacting solidarity in social justice movements when the bias runs along, say, racial lines. As Prinz points out, "Using brain imaging, Xu et al. (2009) showed that Caucasians were more empathetic to the pain of other Caucasians than to ethnically Chinese participants—and conversely. Deficiencies in Caucasian empathy have also been observed in response to South Asians and individuals of African descent (Gutsell and Inzlicht 2010)" (2011, 227). And empathy's susceptibility to racial bias no doubt contributes to Shotwell's rejection of it. But, of course, such issues are potential and thus contingent, not inherent, problems with empathy. Moreover, empathy itself may function as a catalyst for cultivating within oneself a less biased and prejudicial outlook toward others. As Koehn says, "Empathy

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allows someone else's experience and perspective to become a part of our moral baseline and therefore can function to help us overcome prejudices and misconceptions" (1998, 57).

Nevertheless, the charge of empathy's inherent partiality takes two additional related yet distinct forms: first, the charge Prinz levels against it—that it is inherently local, and second, what Hoffman identifies—that it can be biased towards the "here-and-now." It is true that they are overwhelmingly similar, but they should remain distinguished from one another. For whereas "here-and-now" bias is in some sense local, not all "localized" bias is a function of the "here-and-now." "Here-and-now" bias is in some sense local because it involves empathic bias "in favor of victims in the immediate situation" (2000, 209), and thus pertains to a confined set of individuals and not to a broad, generalized, or more abstract group elsewhere. But "localized" bias need not be confined to the "here-and-now," since one can imagine scenarios in which one fixates one's empathic response impartially on a small group of individuals far removed from oneself like, say, a small subset of famine victims halfway across the world.

But, in a manner similar to the similarity bias charge, that empathy is local and is susceptible to "here-and-now" bias are features which are contingent and not inherent to it. And it may be just as likely that one's empathic response toward an individual, whether immediate or removed, may facilitate one's empathy for others, as happens "when one empathizes with an individual and then realizes he is an exemplar of a group or category of people who share his plight" (85). Hoffman rightly suggests that "empathic distress and empathic anger aroused in relation to particular victims may activate a general caring principle that transcends the particular victims" (226; Bold in original).

Hoffman is well aware of the potential pitfalls of empathic bias, and this informs his claim that empathy is a necessary though insufficient condition for healthy moral agency. He argues, additionally, that the healthy moral agent must be not only empathetic but also possessive of recognition of and respect for the moral principles of caring and justice, which, he suggests, serve to stabilize and guide one's empathic responses, thereby diminishing the chances of one's falling prey to empathic bias. Indeed, I share Hoffman's claim that empathy is a necessary but insufficient condition for healthy moral agency. Again, I have not attempted to offer anything like a comprehensive account of a proper moral ontology. I have discussed empathy as a moral virtue only to show it as an example of how moral ontology ought to include a place for interpersonal dialogism.

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Appendix A: Permissions

Brad, yes of course you have permission to use your article as a chapter in your dissertation. Good luck in the defense. Usually if they let you get this far, things go well. At Chapel Hill where I went, if you got the date for the oral defense it meant you would not be flushed.

John Pauley

From: Bradley Warfield [mailto:bradley.warfield@gmail.com]   **Sent:** Wednesday, September 21, 2016 3:58 PM   **To:** John Pauley <john.pauley@simpson.edu>   **Subject:** Request for permission to use my article in my dissertation

Dear John,

I published an article in *Janus Head* earlier this year. It's in Vol. 15, Issue 1, and it's called Dialogical Dasein: Heidegger on "Being-with," "Discourse," and "Solicitude." I am writing to request the journal's permission to use this article as a chapter in my dissertation. I am set to defend my dissertation on Friday, Oct. 21. I need the journal's permission in order to be able to include the chapter in my dissertation.

Thank you for your time.

All the best,
Brad

--
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