Case studies and dialogicality

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Abstract

Dialogicality is one of the dialogical approaches in human and social sciences. It postulates that the nature of the Self-Other interdependence is unique. Uniqueness of the Self-Other interdependence is strongly discernible in communication involving people with congenital deafblindness. This raises a fundamental methodological question: how to transform the unique and dynamic nature of dialogue into an empirical project that would allow general claims to be made about dialogicality? It is argued that while single cases do not allow for statistical generalisation, they allow for theoretical generalisation of research findings, as well as for generalisation of practices in professional services. Examples of theoretical generalisation of concepts such as 'dialogical learning' and 'resilience' are discussed.

Keywords

Dialogicality, ethics, Self-Other interdependence, Self-Other-Object as epistemological unit; single cases, generalisation.

Introduction

The title of this article refers to one of the fundamental problems in social sciences: how to transform the unique and dynamic nature of dialogue into an empirical project that would allow general claims to be made about dialogicality. On the one hand, the unique nature of the Self-Other dialogue demands that dialogical presuppositions are built into analytical methods in professional practices and research, and on the other hand, this demand raises fundamental methodological questions. These questions have not only a theoretical and empirical relevance for human and social sciences and professional practices, but are equally important, for policy making and for the bureaucratic procedures governing the direction of research and of social services.

Dialogical approaches

The concept of dialogue has become central to various theoretical perspectives in human and social sciences as well as in professional practices, such as, education, health services, therapies and counselling. Such perspectives often call themselves 'dialogical'. The main presupposition of dialogical perspectives is that the mind of the Self and the minds of Others are interdependent in understanding and creating meanings of social realities, as well as in interpreting the past, experiencing the present and imagining the future. Such multifaceted social realities are situated in history and culture. However, beyond general claims, dialogical approaches are widely divergent and they draw attention to distinct issues (Linell, 2009). They originate from numerous theoretical traditions, encompassing ancient Socratic and Platonic dialogues (e.g. Hart and Tejera, 1997; Williams, 1985), as well as contemporary approaches inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981; 1984), pragmatism (e.g. James, 1890/1950; 1907; Mead, 1934), hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1975; 1984; Ricoeur, 1990/1992) and sociocultural theories (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978).

Ethics as the Basis of Dialogicality

Dialogicality, to which I refer, is one of the dialogical perspectives. It derives from the 'existential dialogism' of the neo-Kantian philosophy in the nineteenth century, which was inspired by Christianity, Hegelian philosophy, and Judaism (e.g. Buber, 1923/1962; Cohen, 1907/1977). 'Existential dialogism' was conceived as a vital principle that is established and maintained through speech and communication as the determining qualities of humanity. However, one needs to go beyond 'existence' in order to explain the nature of dialogicality. The existential or ontological interdependence of the Self and Others expresses itself in their collaboration in acquiring dialogical knowledge. By 'dialogical knowledge' I mean the Self's and Other's involvement in communication, the formation of beliefs, sharing life

experiences, emotions and actions, as well as in creating the sense of social reality. The point of departure for dialogicality, therefore, is both the ontological (existential) and epistemological (dialogical knowledge-based) interdependence between the Self and Others. The central concept of dialogicality that counteracts the 'neutral' and 'objective' perspective of cognitivism and of information processing is the ethics of common sense thinking, communicating and acting. In and through daily interactions, humans makes judgements of one another, of their values, desires and actions, and they create new meanings based on such judgements. Ethics based on the Self–Other(s) interactions involves trust and distrust, taking and avoiding responsibility; it is heterogeneous and multi-voiced. Through questions and answers humans not only provide information, but they express opinions 'for' and 'against'; they diminish and expand distances between themselves and others. The unbreakable interdependence between the Self and Other is fundamental for the development of selfhood, for the acquisition of knowledge, beliefs and images (Ricoeur, 1990/1992). This is why ethical relations provide the central concept for dialogicality, and, equally importantly, for the dialogically based professional practices. Critically, due to these dialogical features, the interdependence between the Self and Others is unique; consequently, communication between them, too, is unique.

Congenital Deafblindness: the Uniqueness of Dialogical Interactions

In clarifying the basis of communication in congenital deafblindness (CDB), Rødbroe and Janssen (2006) highlight that carers and services must focus above all on the fact that they are concerned with the individual who has the disability, rather than with the disability as such: 'Recognition of his or her uniqueness is essential when deafblindness is considered' (Rødbroe and Janssen, 2006, p. 10). The authors emphasise that visual and hearing impairment is the only thing that is common to deafblind people: in everything else they are unique and therefore, in every situation, each individual experiences CDB differently, and is affected by it in different ways. Therefore, the mutual communicative involvement between the Self and Other, also, has unique qualities. The systematic use of the carers' and researchers' terminology, such as 'co-construction', 'co-creating communication', 'co-production', 'co-presence', 'co-development' and possibly some other 'co-', indicates supreme dialogical concerns. For example, Gunnar Vege (2009) considers 'co-presence' as a vital prerequisite for the mutuality of the participants' communicative connection and for the sustained joint attention. Vege's definition of co-presence does not refer to the 'spatial co-presence' but to the 'dialogical co-presence' of the Self–Other, in which they endorse each other's perspective and are mentally open to one another. He explains the importance of the participants' dialogical co-presence and warns that the participants might be physically co-present yet each could be closed in their own monological worlds.

The uniqueness and mutuality of the Self-Other communication is expressed with a particular force in the communication of people with CDB because it is tactile communication. In contrast to oral and sign communication, which belong to socially shared symbolic systems, meanings based on tactile communication are unique to each Self-Other dyad. Nevertheless, while being highly idiosyncratic, tactile communication appears to convey some elements of meanings belonging to socially shared symbolic systems (Souriau, 2015). One can suggest that particular emotional and bodily experiences have historically evolved from the commonly shared physical and biological experiences (e.g. expressions of pain or laughter) and become transformed into symbolic expressions. One can further assume that the unique tactile gestures of people with CDB develop from their capacities to use such tactile and motor-bodily experiences. In using them they co-construct, together with their carers, symbols and concepts in and through replaying gestures and transforming events in which these symbols and concepts were used previously (Souriau, 2013; 2015; Souriau, Rødbroe, and Janssen, 2008).

Rødbroe and Janssen (2006) discuss the unique tactile communication of Kirsten, who is totally deaf and totally blind, and of her carer. This case clearly shows the multiple resources of tactile gestures. The authors observe that after negotiation over a long time, the carer understands that Kirsten does not want to make a pancake or tea, but 'hot chocolate' which is made from chocolate broken into pieces and is cooked in hot milk. Comprehension of gestures is facilitated by the fact that Kirsten moves in her familiar environment and the carer understands, from the former experience, Kirsten's idiosyncratic gestures like a 'saucepan' and 'breaking the chocolate'. In this case, the mutual understanding of Kirsten's and the carer's gestures (the Self-Other) mediates comprehension of the Object: BREAK CHOCOLATE/COOK MILK (Rødbroe and Janssen, 2006, pp. 75-76). As Nafstad (2015, p. 34) maintains, the triangular relationship between the Ego-Alter-Object 'co-produces and co-creates knowledge about objects, and therefore co-creates objects as social realities'. Co-production and co-creation of knowledge is possible because of the 'dialogical co-presence' of both partners.

Another vital feature of the uniqueness in communication is derived from the capacity of the individual to utilise past experiences, previous dialogues and interactions, and to transform them into narratives about the present. This has led Jacques Souriau (2013) to maintain that each single conversation is part of a 'hyper-dialogue', i.e. a part of the conversations that take place throughout the whole life, recalling memories of the past, co-constructing present experiences and imagining the future. This historical perspective of dialogicality enables humans to be aware of continuities and changes over time and to construct their selfhood (Ricoeur, 1990/1992; Souriau, 2013). Franck Berteau (2010) depicts the ways in which gestures are constantly reorganized and adapted to new situations as the topic of conversation develops and changes. He shows that ongoing

reframing of dialogical thinking is an essential feature of communication involving people with CDB. For example, he observes how the expression 'mum' in a conversation is reframed in another conversation into 'family moving house' in which 'mum' becomes part of the moving event. Berteau suggests that the ongoing reframing forms a necessary part in the construction of a living hyper-dialogue.

These examples draw attention to the complex nature of the uniqueness in the Self-Other dialogical interactions. Uniqueness expresses itself in heterogeneous relations (e.g. Self-group, family-culture), heterogeneous voices (e.g. Self-inner Other; Self-external Other), as well as in diverse forms of dialogical thinking, communicating and acting. Both the professional and the person with CDB bring into the co-constructive process their personal as well as socially shared experiences and transform these into gestures adapted to the current dialogue. This complex nature of uniqueness in the Self-Other communication unavoidably brings into focus the methodological questions concerning empirical studies of dialogicality.

The problem of designing dialogical methods

The problem of designing dialogical methods goes hand in hand with the theoretical issues of dialogicality (e.g. Märtsin, Wagoner et al., 2011). Michèle Grossen (2010, p. 2) puts forward this question clearly: 'to what extent is it possible to develop analytical tools that are fully coherent with dialogical assumptions?' In reflecting on this difficult question, she refers to a number of issues that make this option 'not only undesirable but also impossible'. This is due to the fact that while dialogical approaches are holistic and dynamic, analytical procedures go against the complexity of interactions in larger contexts and their multivoicedness. Any analysis presupposes breaking down the data into elements, whether by coding or postulating dependent and independent variables. Such procedures eliminate the dynamic nature of the data and turn them into static and inflexible items. Grossen's concern with the problem of dialogical methods is shared by many researchers who make numerous attempts to find solutions to this problem. The most common proposals to this problem involve devising methods that would eliminate at least some weaknesses of traditional and static empirical methods and that would cope, to some extent, with the complexities and heterogeneities of the dialogical mind. Some of these proposals attempt to create methods that would be more dynamic than the traditional ones (e.g. Leiman, 2012). Others suggest methods based on categorization and qualities of responsive dialogues and on the micro-analysis of topical episodes (Seikkula, 2011; Seikkula, Laitila and Rober, 2012). Still others furnish reviews of existing methods (e.g. Salgado, Cunha and Bento, 2013), and provide extensive reviews of possible methods. All the same, most authors are critical of the limitations of proposed methods and in particular, of their static nature.

One Does Not Test the Unquestioned Givens

The presupposition that one can develop dialogical methods by overcoming flaws of the current empirical methods contradicts the fundamental presupposition that the Self-Other forms a unique and unbreakable relationship. If one adopts this presupposition as a point of departure, one cannot develop dialogical methods by improving traditional empirical methods based on an epistemology that considers the Self and Other(s) as independent entities. The Ego-Alter is an irreducible ethical and *ontological* unit and the Ego-Alter-Object is an irreducible ethical and *epistemological* unit: they are 'the givens' of dialogical epistemology and of the theories based on this epistemology. If something is 'the given', or if it is an axiom, then it means that in principle it is not possible to decompose it or even to question its existence. The principle of not questioning 'the givens' applies to any scholarly discipline and there is nothing remarkable about that. However, despite its obvious nature, let us labour this point because it is often ignored.

Let us exemplify the claim that one does not question 'the givens' with reference to the traditional epistemology in psychology. The traditional individualistic epistemology is based on the 'unquestioned givens' such as 'the individual's cognition', 'the individual as a processor of information' or 'the existence of facts in the outside world'. These 'unquestioned givens' constitute the point of departure in terms of which the researcher postulates questions or suggests hypotheses that are constructed on the basis of these 'givens'. One can find many examples of psychological experiments based on such 'givens'. Let us consider the study that was published by a very distinguished American social psychologist Shelly Chaiken (1980). The author presupposed that humans are information processors and she constructed her study on these 'givens' (Marková, 2016). The study was concerned with the subjects' involvement in persuasive communication. The author divided the experimental subjects into two categories: those who were highly involved and those who were poorly engaged in a given persuasive message. Using an inductive type of design Chaiken found that subjects who were highly involved used a strategy of systematic information processing while those who were poorly involved used a heuristic information processing. Without going into details of this experiment, it is important to emphasise that the researcher makes her 'givens', or her axioms, such as 'humans as information processors', part of the research design without questioning whether, indeed a human can be treated as an information processor. In other word, 'the givens' or axioms are indubitable presuppositions from which the researcher starts. Chaiken's particular 'givens' are fully consistent with an individualistic epistemology that conceives humans as entities that can be grouped together according to some externally devised concepts such as 'high involvement', 'low involvement', or 'systematic information processing' and 'heuristic information processing'.

Dialogicality as epistemology is based on 'the givens' that essentially differ from those of an individualistic epistemology. 'The givens' of dialogicality involve the ethics of the ontological and epistemological (thinking, imagining, knowing, multivoicedness, intersubjectivity, social recognition, trust and responsibility) interdependence, dialogical communication and dialogical action. The Self-Other interdependence is unique in each dyad and therefore, uniqueness is not questioned.

Just like Chaiken derived her concepts (e.g. 'individual's cognition' or 'information processing') from the individualistic epistemology, one derives dialogical concepts, such as 'resilience' (Nafstad, 2015), 'dialogical co-presence' (Vege, 2009), 'dialogical attachment' and 'dialogical trust' (Berteau, 2010), from dialogical epistemology. Therefore, in adopting dialogical presuppositions, one not only adopts 'the givens', but 'the givens' also determine the kind of dialogical concepts that can be derived from these 'givens'. For example, the concept of 'dialogical co-presence' stipulates the participants' emotional and psychological engagement in co-constructing a narrative. Specifically, Vege refers to four competencies that are essential to establish the 'dialogical co-presence': shared attention, communicative intentions, sustained experience of perspectives and a capacity of building and sharing tension. These competencies jointly contribute to the development of togetherness that is vital for the co-construction of a narrative.

Single case studies

If the uniqueness of the Self-Other interdependence is the foremost feature of dialogical epistemology, then, in order to examine its specific features, one must treat each case as a single instance. This unavoidably leads to notorious questions: what can one conclude on the basis of a single study? Can one make any generalisations from findings based on single cases? Sciences and professions aim at providing credible knowledge that would be applicable to diverse cases in different conditions and therefore, the question of generalisability cannot be avoided.

Disputes about Single Case Studies

The question about generalisation of findings has been considered as having vital importance throughout the history of science and professional disciplines. According to conventional knowledge one needs more than a single case to be assured – or at least to expect - that the matter in question has a general validity. This is why the disputes about merits or not of single case studies in psychology have persevered since the 19th century (e.g. Salvatore and Valsiner, 2010; Wagoner, 2015). Disputes have been governed by the emphasis on statistical analysis based on the manipulation of elementary variables enabling the generalisation of findings. Single cases cannot fulfil these demands. While they are not

totally worthless and could be used as pilot or preliminary studies, they cannot be used as a basis for generalisation (e.g. Lee & Baskerwille, 2003), which is a fundamental scientific requirement.

In contrast to the perspective that emphasises statistical generalisation, those who argue for the merits of single case studies, base their arguments on the presupposition that phenomena must be treated in a holistic manner rather than be decomposed into elements. The nineteenth century pragmatist philosopher and mathematician Charles Sanders Peirce insisted one does not start research by collecting data but by observation, making sense of and explanation of real life phenomena that are in front of him (Peirce, 1931-1958, 5.145). In Peircean way of thinking, the researcher observes a single event as a whole, and devises a preliminary theory concerning that whole by means of intuition (or what Peirce called instinct). Such a preliminary theory merely suggests that something may be or may-not be the case (Peirce, 1931-1958, 5.171; 6.475; 8.238) and the researcher must be prepared to discard or to change it if it proves to be irrelevant. At no stage of his/her observation, the researcher departs from the holistic perspective of the phenomenon in question.

The methodological approach of the British psychologist Frederick Bartlett was based on a number of presuppositions challenging the approach that decomposes humans into elements and treats them as static entities. Among these, Bartlett presupposed that the study of psychological qualities was preferable to quantities, he emphasised psychological control over physical control and he considered human actions to be holistic. He assumed the advantages of single cases over group probabilities, and the thinking about phenomena over the accumulation of facts (Wagoner, 2015). Bartlett's methodological presuppositions, based on a holistic and dynamic approach to human conduct, were in accord with other interactional theories in the early years of the 20th century. One could augment these considerations by detailing methodological ideas in the classic studies of Jean Piaget, Albert Michotte, and of others who made notable contributions to psychological knowledge based on single case studies and naturalistic observations.

A holistic approach was also adopted by Kurt Lewin (1938/1999) who argued that the structure of human behaviour is formed by 'a whole-of-processes' that operate at different levels and depths. Therefore, these can be captured by single case studies as concrete events that cannot be submitted to statistical analysis (Lewin, 1938/1999, p. 284). Lewin's study of group relations pertaining to democratic and non-democratic thinking did not require representative samples from which to generalise to the population. Instead, his experiments pursued the dynamics of interactions between individuals in groups and their social environment. According to Lewin, interactions modelled realities of daily life and a sense of reality was an important feature of his theory. Lewin argued that reality 'is established by "doing something with" rather than "looking at"' (Lewin, 1947/1951, p. 193). Reality, however, is not everything that is 'outside'. Humans have the capacity to select elements in

their environment which they consider relevant. They attend to some things and not to other things, and in doing so, they consider the intentions, motives and desires of others; they have ability to combine these capacities into meaningful wholes in terms of past traditions, daily life experiences, and future expectations.

Today, however, the demands for inductive generalisations underlies the search for scientific status in social sciences and in social services. The bureaucratic demands for quantitative measurements dominate the discourse. This customary wisdom about measurements ignores that the question about generalisation of findings can be answered in different ways.

While single case studies cannot be submitted to statistical generalisation, they can be generalised through theories (e.g. Yin, 2003). Among the most up-front advocates of generalisation based on single case studies is the Danish researcher Bent Flyvbjerg (2006). Arguing against conventional misunderstandings of single case studies he refutes the claim of customary wisdom that one cannot generalise findings from single case studies. He emphasises that the extent to which the researcher can generalise, depends on what the case is, and how it is chosen. Single cases must be strategically selected in order bring out their richness, and to make them most effective for analytic generalisation. He points out that when the aim of research is to bring about the greatest possible knowledge about a given phenomenon, then a random or a representative sample, aggregation, and averaging of gathered facts do not provide rich knowledge about the phenomenon in question. He suggests several possibilities around choosing the case for study. Among these, he proposes that the researcher should look for extreme or deviant cases that can provide complex and productive data that cannot be obtained from inductive studies. One can suggest that dialogical communication in CDB provides an example of extremely difficult communication and this is why, adopting Flyvbjerg's perspective, it enables reflecting upon, and comprehending features, that in non-problematic communication remain hidden. Let us explain.

In non-problematic daily communication, dialogical features such as co-construction of meanings, heterogeneity, multivoicedness, unfinalisability of messages, among others, are adopted largely implicitly and are unreflectively implemented in discourse. The participants take these features for granted as part of their mutually shared social environment and they have no reason to bring up any questions about these dialogically shared features. In contrast, in a discourse involving people with CDB, and indeed, with other kinds of difficult communication, the participants usually must become explicitly aware of implicit dialogical features because they cannot be routinely applied. The participants must cope with misinterpretations leading to disagreements, with emotional and fear-producing situations which can be loaded with mutual distrust, and with various kinds of communicative errors. In order to cope with these difficulties, various strategies are implemented. For example, the

carer keeps repeating the gesture of the person with CDB to verify that they both refer to the same meaning; or he/she questions the gesture as part of the process of negotiating meanings. Bringing out implicit messages into explicit communication requires dialogical sensitivity on the part of professionals to negotiate problems with patients and family members, to establish trustful relations and to cope with conflicts and tensions. Dialogues involving people with CDB provide fundamental dialogical knowledge that would be difficult to acquire in non-problematic communication. Thus, we can suggest that single case studies involving people with CDB enable the professional and researcher to arrive at dialogical concepts that can be subsequently confirmed, (i.e. generalised), or disconfirmed, in other dyads and in other socio-cultural situations in which the participants are involved.

Generalisation through dialogicality

Let us consider the suggestion that the findings from single case studies based on dialogical epistemology (and/or pertaining theories) can be generalised to other single cases and to other situations by developing appropriate dialogical concepts. Here are some examples.

Dialogical Learning

In his studies of teaching episodes involving the carer and a person with CDB, Berteau (2010) referred to tension arising from the discrepancy between different teaching scenarios; the one in the mind of the carer and the one in the mind of the person with CDB. Berteau observed opposition between what he described as 'educational learning' and 'dialogical learning'. Figure 1 shows that while in 'dialogical learning' (the right-side schema in figure 1) both participants co-construct the Object of learning, in 'educational learning' (the left-side schema in figure 1) it is the teacher who transfers his/her knowledge of the Object to the person with CDB. Therefore, the latter remains only passively involved in this process: the process of co-construction of the Object by the Self and Other is replaced by the process in which the Self adopts the Object from the carer. Berteau found that if the carer monologically followed his/her own teaching scenario of 'educational learning' in terms of 'imperative and declarative communication' without listening to the person with CDB, the participants did not achieve the educational goal.

Figure 1: Educational and Dialogical Learning
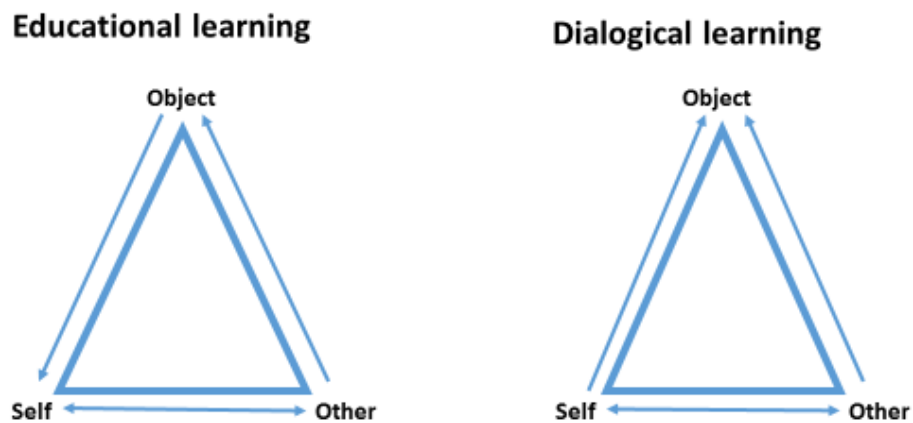
Through his analysis Berteau arrived at further dialogical concepts of 'attachment trust' and 'dialogical trust'. Only reciprocity in the Self-Other interactions can establish the attachment trust. In order to develop dialogical trust with reference to learning, Self-Other interactions must allow people with CDB to express their agency (figure 2).

Figure 2: Intersubjective and Epistemic Trust
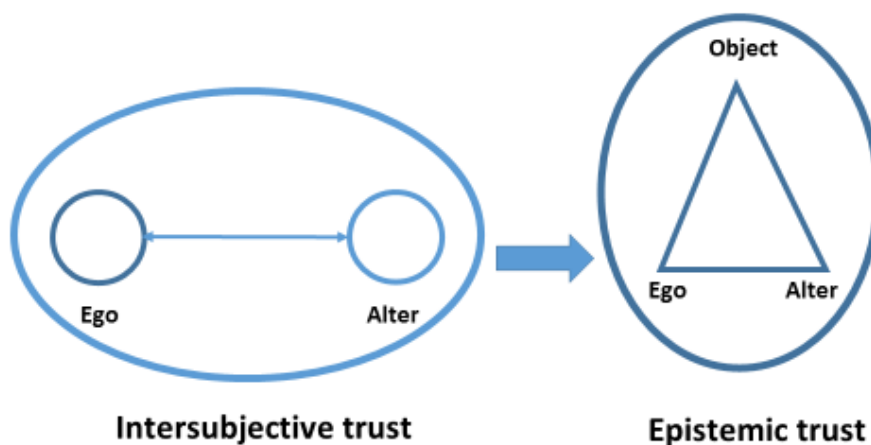
Likewise Zittoun (2014), taking a dialogical perspective in her single case studies, found that in school education, the teacher and pupil had to establish interpersonal trust in order to arrive at epistemic trust, that is, trust of the teacher as an educator. Pupils enter school as young and as less experienced than their teachers. In order to trust their teachers, pupils must see that teachers are personally committed and care about them. Equally, teachers expect pupils as having the intention to learn. If teachers see pupils as motivated to learn,

they are likely to display trust in pupils' intentions to learn by offering them some choice or autonomy. Therefore the teaching-learning process requires interpersonal trust, which makes this process ready for the development of epistemic trust. The trust of the learner and of the teacher are mutually dependent. Furthermore, Zittoun points out that in cases where interpersonal relations between the teacher and students do not develop, no reciprocity of epistemic relationships takes place.

In the context of psychotherapy, Fonagy and Allison (2014, p. 373) define epistemic trust as 'an individual's willingness to consider new knowledge from another person as trustworthy, generalizable, and relevant to the self'. Here again, recognition of a patient as an agent is essential for the development of epistemic trust. Fonagy and Allison draw attention to the research evidence concerning the relations between secure attachment and the ability to generate epistemic trust. Secure attachment and epistemic trust of Others generate trust of the Self and vice versa: in contrast, lack of attachment creates epistemic hypervigilance and orientates the patient towards mistrust not only of the Other but also of the Self and the Self's own experience. Fonagy and his colleagues (e.g. Bateson and Fonagy, 2010; Fonagy and Allison, 2014) have studied a social process that facilitates the individual to achieve a sense of being understood as a unique being: 'Feeling understood in therapy restores trust in learning from social experience (epistemic trust)' and it also contributes to regenerate a capacity for social understanding (Fonagy and Allison, 2014, p. 378). In and through social interchanges patients 'experience themselves as an agent in the mind of their therapist—they "find themselves in the mind of the therapist"' (Fonagy and Allison, 2014, p. 377). The authors point out that better understanding of social situations increases the patient's capacity for becoming aware of sensitive responses from others and of being understood. This opens up the patient's capacity for new learning in a broader context beyond the therapeutic sessions and enables the patient to form more interpersonal relations with Others. In other words, such a therapeutic outcome shows yet another example of generalising through theory which, in this case means generalising social experience from a concrete case to social understanding beyond the therapeutic session.

The final example comes from the study of communication involving people with cerebral palsy. In this study a person with cerebral palsy and the carer played a guessing game (Collins and Marková, 1999). The person with cerebral palsy had a picture of a kitchen which was hidden from the carer's view and the carer was supposed to reconstruct that picture in a drawing by asking questions about the picture. In this situation, it was the person with cerebral palsy who had knowledge that the carer did not have. The quality of the carer's reconstruction of the picture was determined by the kind of questions he/she asked and this, in turn, was determined by the carer's representation of the person with cerebral palsy. If the carer represented the person with cerebral palsy as an individual who was unable to efficiently communicate and whom he/she considered as intellectually

impaired, he/she asked the kind of questions that reflected preconceptions about people with communication problems and intellectual impairment. The reconstruction of the kitchen, based on inappropriate questions from the carer led to inappropriate answers from the person with cerebral palsy. The outcome of inappropriate questions and answers was a very simple drawing that was deprived of any interesting features (figure 3).

Figure 3: A Kitchen Reconstruction I
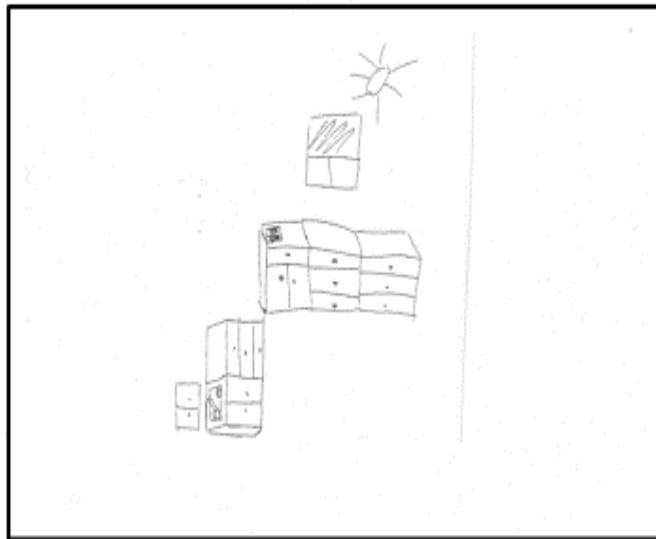
On the other hand, if the carer got involved in the guessing game and treated the person with disability as a competent partner, the resulting picture comprised rich details that featured in the original picture (figure 4).

Figure 4: A Kitchen Reconstruction II
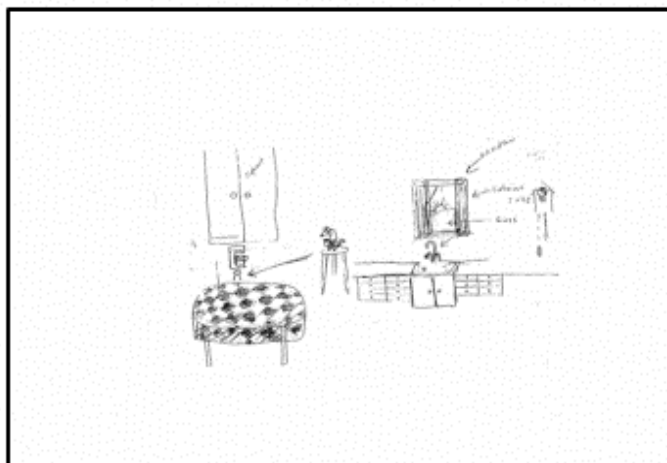
These examples in rather different situations of single cases using or not using the concept of dialogical learning arrived at similar findings. Mutual co-construction of the Object of

learning by the Self and the Other, reciprocal trust and treating the person with a communication disability as an agent, lead to the intended learning outcomes. One can suggest that concepts such as 'dialogical learning', 'attachment trust' and 'epistemic trust', which arise from the dialogical epistemology are generalisable to different Self-Other dyads and to different learning situations. These concepts create additional opportunities for more advanced enquiries into further qualities of dialogical learning and possibilities of theoretical generalisation.

Resilience

In our example of 'dialogical learning' the focus was placed on theoretical generalisation with respect to the outcome of learning. In our second example we shall focus on the effect of the Self-Other interaction on the Self's awareness of social recognition. This example relates to a similar issue as our first example; however, while the first example emphasised the quality of outcome in dialogical learning, the present example draws attention to the importance that social recognition has for the selfhood.

Anne Nafstad (2015, p. 31) connects dialogical trust in CDB with the Self's feeling of being 'worthy of being listened to', and with the sense of dignity. This is based on the belief that the Other adopts the listening attitude with respect to the Self and that listening will be sustained despite the difficulty in predicting the intended meaning. She examines resilience as a dialogical concept. In order to understand the meaning of resilience in a specific problem, we need to draw attention to the quality of the Self–Other(s) interdependence, features of collaborative intersubjective thinking, of trust, and of the search for social recognition. People with CDB communicate with a constant risk that when they speak using their unique tactile gestures that they have co-created with their carers and that are specific to each individual, they may not be understood by other carers. If the Other is prepared to listen and to follow the communicative gestures of the Self, the resilience of the person with CDB is collaboratively constructed with the Other through mutual trust enabling a sense of dignity.

Our research in communication in cerebral palsy suggested that resilience showed itself in the perseverance of the Self to get across the precise meaning by whatever means. For example, the person with disability displayed persistence in transforming his gestures and in drawing attention to his re-drawn signs to make the carer aware of their significance. He kept introducing component parts, discarding and reintroducing them again according to need, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, until the correct fit was achieved between his message and the understanding of the carer (Marková, 2003). In another single case study, in co-constructing the meaning 'bar supper' it was very important for the person with cerebral palsy to make it clear that she was talking about a 'bar supper' and not about a 'barbeque' or 'bar lunch'. She achieved this understanding through long negotiation and re-negotiation of

meanings (Collins and Marková, 1995). If we turn to CDB, the case of Kirsten discussed above, points to the same kind of insistence in negotiation and re-negotiation of the meaning 'hot chocolate'.

Conclusion

Dialogical methods cannot be developed by improving the traditional methods of individualistic epistemology by making them more dynamic and less rigid. Instead, the point of departure for the development of dialogical methods is the unique and ethical nature of the Self-Other and the Self-Other-Object interdependences. Such interdependences are irreducible and they constitute 'the givens' of dialogicality. While single case studies are most apt to examine specific features of these interdependences in their historical, cultural and social contexts, the question of generalisation of findings from such studies has been a persistent question over a long time. Single case studies defy the conventional knowledge that assumes that generalisation of findings requires the statistical treatment of the data. Instead, dialogically based single case argue that findings can be generalised through appropriate theories and concepts. In order to facilitate generalisation, the researcher and the professional must look for cases that can provide complex and productive data that allow the examination of relevant theories and concepts. One can suggest that dialogical communication in CDB permits reflecting upon, and comprehending concepts that remain hidden in non-problematic communication.

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