MARIE CURIE ACTIONS

6th International LAB Meeting - Summer Session 2006
12th International Summer School
of the
European Ph.D. on
Social Representations and Communication

Social Representations in Action and Construction
in Media and Society

"Applying Dialogical Approaches and
Conversational Analysis
via Focus Groups to Research on Social Representations"

with joint sessions with the concurrent integrated event
"8th International Conference on Social Representations"

From 28th August to 6th September 2006

http://www.europhd.net/8thICSR

**Scientific material**

European Ph.D

on Social Representations and Communication

**International Lab Meeting Series 2005-2008**

www.europhd.psi.uniroma1.it
www.europhd.net
www.europhd.it

IVANA MARKOVÁ

# Dialogicality and Social Representations

## The Dynamics of Mind

them' (Durkheim, 1957, p. 186). In particular, when specific words are expressed in specific rituals, they assume a sacred quality and impose respect or a contract. A contract has a meaning only if both parties in communication accept it as binding. If the will of fulfilling contract is missing on either side, the contract is empty: 'All that is pronounced is words devoid of meaning and so, devoid of value' (1957, p. 203). One could interpret Durkheim's ideas as pre-empting the analytic Oxford speech act theory and specifically, Austin's perlocutionary act 'I promise' (cf. also Nerlich and Clark, 1996). This is probably the closest point where Durkheim approached the notion of interaction and communication, which he saw as an exchange, as placing someone in obligation. This particular subject of exchange, and of gift as an exchange, later developed Durkheim's nephew Marcel Mauss.

5. In other words, new representations cannot be explained only through recombination of past representations but through the study of contemporary social structures. Piaget applauds this genetic method and in fact, this is something which he himself adopted from Durkheim (Moscovici, 1998). Piaget continues with Durkheim's rationalism. While Durkheim starts with thought and representations as social facts and from these he derives action, Moscovici shows that Piaget reversed this process. Piaget starts from action and arrives at thought. Like Durkheim, he hypothesised an uninterrupted continuity, in his case from child to adult.

6. Although Durkheim did not study beliefs systematically, Pickering (2000d) and his colleagues argue that the theory of collective representations is in fact a theory of belief and that, indeed, belief is a synonym for collective representation (Paoletti, 2000, p. 129).

7. As we noted in Chapter 4, the Marxist point of view also emphasised the idea of continuity in progress.

8. To illustrate ways of life, Gellner refers to the well-known distinction between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*, society and community, respectively. *Gesellschaft* consists of a society of anonymous individuals, liberalism, free markets and 'open' society. In contrast, as a way of life, *Gemeinschaft* binds together members of a community with romantic ideas of cultural closeness, of uniqueness and distinctiveness of culture. Gellner applies these two conceptions of knowledge specifically to Central Europe where these two styles were present in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In particular, they were characteristic of the Habsburg empire but one can find them also in other socio-historical contexts. In discussing *Gesellschaft* versus *Gemeinschaft*, Gellner does not define analytically the distinction between the two kinds of knowledge, but presents them descriptively. In the former case he characterises knowledge as a relationship between the sole individual and nature and in the latter case as a team or collective game (Gellner, 1998, p. 6).

9. We have pointed out earlier in this chapter that for Durkheim *any mental activity* was a representation.

## 6    Dialogical triads and three-component processes

### 1    Thinking in triads

#### 1.1    The magic number three

Let us recapitulate. Traditional epistemologies require *two separate elements* to explain the process of knowing: first, monological and solipsistic knowers, either individuals or collectives; and second, the objects of knowledge.

In Platonic/Cartesian theories of knowledge the knower is an *individual*. Continuing on this tradition, modern cognitive-computational theories often reduce the knower to the mind/brain (Chapter 1), which contains specialised computational devices enabling the process of knowing. These devices analyse information or translate information from one specific form into another one. The process of knowing involves the formation and reproduction of *mental representations*.

Alternatively, the knower is a *collective*. The idea of a collective knower, collective consciousness or a crowd soul was quite common in sociology in the nineteenth century. The collective knower also figures in the sociological theory of knowledge of Emile Durkheim. The collective knower, i.e. society, observes and interprets social facts, which exist *a priori* as a given social reality. Society regulates and sanctions activities of individuals who, as a result, reproduce social facts. In this case, the process of knowing involves the formation and reproduction of *collective representations*.

In both cases, traditional theories of knowledge provide descriptions and causal explanations surrounding the object of knowledge. They are both depicted in Figures 6.1 and 6.2.

In contrast to solipsistic and monological knowers of traditional epistemologies, be they individual mind/brains or collectives, the knower in a dialogically based theory of knowledge is the *Ego-Alter*. Therefore, a dialogically based theory of knowledge requires the *Ego-Alter* and the object of knowledge to be the starting point of enquiry.

If the *theory of social knowledge* starts from the *Ego-Alter* and from the object of knowledge, we are faced with the following question. What kinds
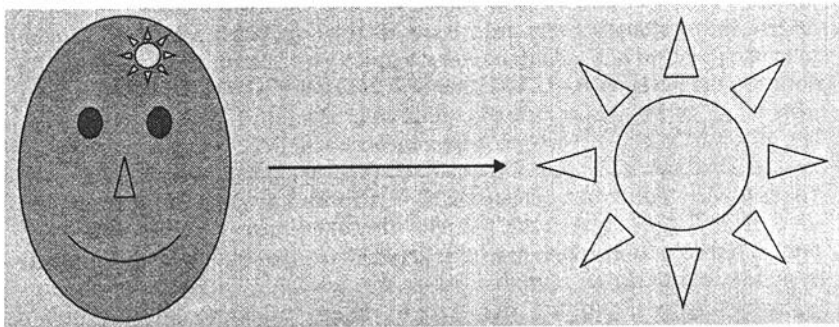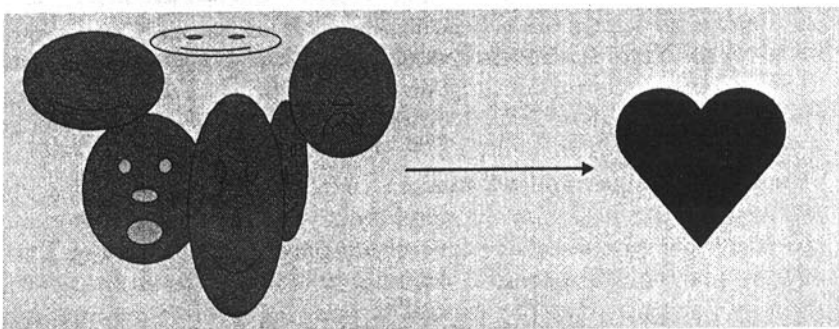
Figure 6.1  Mental representation



Figure 6.2  Collective representation

of conceptual tool do we need in this theory of social knowledge? We need to find out how to proceed from *dialogicality of the Ego-Alter*, which we have already hypothesised as *ontology* of humanity, to *dialogical theory of social knowledge* based on the *Ego-Alter-Object*. How do we conceptualise this magic three?

The magic number three comes not only from fairy-tales, from the three wishes, the three trials and the three wonder words. Triadic models of various kinds have pervaded the whole history of humankind. Triads represent religious images of God, we can find them in the mediaeval magic (cf. Chapter 2) and in different kinds of dialectic that are based on the resolution of two conflicting components into the third component. Fichte's and Hegel's dialectics, based on the thesis-antithesis-synthesis, are but examples, among many others, of thinking in triads. Semiotic relations, too, have been commonly modelled as triadic. Above all, Peirce's semiotic theory of the growth of knowledge[1] attempted to explain communication and knowledge by means of triadic signs.

More recently, the triangles of representations have become incarnated in literary theory, politics, history and philosophy (e.g. Prendergast,

2000). These various triadic semiotic conceptions and the underlying triangles of representations are based on heterogeneous theoretical presuppositions that serve different purposes. These semiotic conceptions all argue that human symbolic functions cannot be captured on the basis of a single element or two elements because symbols are constructed socially. In order to account for a social construction you need an individual, a society and an object. Nevertheless, not all of these triangles of representation are pertinent to our case. We cannot make magic simply because we have found three elements that can be juggled together.

### 1.2    *Bühler's triadic organon model of communication and representation*

Let us start with Karl Bühler's triangle of representation, which is perhaps more relevant to our case than other triangles of representation. In the early part of the twentieth century Karl Bühler (1982) argued that in order to understand the nature of knowledge and language, we must not look for it in the cognition of the individual. Analysing the social nature of the mind, this anti-Cartesian philosopher, psychologist and linguist assumed that what constitutes the mind is 'the social matrix of language' rather than 'the individual-related speech act'.

Bühler studied signs and meanings in communication. For him, signs and meanings were socially constructed through an irreducible mutuality between the sign-giver and the sign-receiver.[2] All languages have their own grammatical, semantic and pragmatic means to serve their representational or symbolic functions. They thematise social reality in the manner that is specific to each language (Bühler, 1934/1990). All linguistic signs are related to specific fields of practice and each field of practice requires specific symbols or representations to make communication possible.

The concept of representation figures in Bühler's organon model. This model is based on the idea that language accomplishes three functions: expressive, appealing and representational. Representation does not refer to the mind as mirroring the external world. The conception of mirroring would imply, again, the separation of the object of knowledge from the mind, a kind of Kantian thing-in-itself and its cognitive representation. Rather, a representation in Bühler's sense is the capacity of the mind to imagine, to fantasise and to create something new, using symbols in the field to which they apply.

It was on these grounds that Bühler postulated triad *Ego-Alter-Object* (representation) as the basis of his semiotic theory of knowledge (Figure 6.3). This figure clearly shows that knowledge of an object is co-constructed by the *Ego* and the *Alter*. The *Alter* is not just another person but a group or a society. It is the triad *Ego-Alter-Object* that, for Bühler, is the unit producing knowledge.

things

orga      num
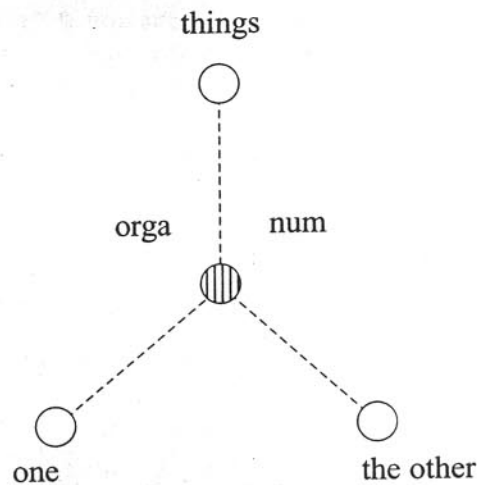
one                    the other

Figure 6.3 Bühler's organon model. From Bühler (1934). Copyright © 1990 John Benjamins B.V., reproduced by permission

With the triadic relation *Ego-Alter-Object* we now have a unit of knowledge, which radically differs from the unit constituted by the knower-object of traditional epistemologies. This unit cannot be decomposed into its constituents, the *Ego*, the *Alter* and the *Object*. The *Ego-Alter-Object* can function only as a whole. If we decomposed this unit into its constituents and if we treated them separately from one another, we would be back to the traditional epistemology.

Although we now have a different unit of knowledge, we have not resolved the essential question. The triad *Ego-Alter-Object is not intrinsically dynamic* and therefore, it could still refer to knowledge as a stable relation rather than to *knowledge as a dynamic relation*. Despite Bühler's claim that the *Ego*, the *Alter* and the *Object* are interdependent, he did not show what it is that makes their interdependence dynamic. In fact, he was not concerned with that issue.

If the frame of reference in traditional epistemologies was *stability*, the frame of reference in the theory of social knowledge is *change*. Therefore, we need to face Moscovici's question: How can static epistemologies be transformed into dynamic epistemologies? How can we transform Karl Bühler's unit the *Ego-Alter-Object* in order to make it dynamic?

### 1.3    Dialogical tension

The term 'tension' is not the one, which social sciences in general, and psychology specifically, enthusiastically incorporate in their scientific

terminologies, despite the fact that 'tension' has been used for centuries in medical, biological and physical sciences. In medicine and in the natural sciences 'tension' refers to strain, pressure or to being stretched.

Tension arises from activities of different forces. For example, it comes from conflicting powers within a single entity, like attraction and repulsion in electricity and magnetism, or between the organism and its environment. However, sewing machines also have 'tension devices' as a dictionary explains: 'By adjustment of the pressure at the tension device, the required tightness of stitch is obtained' because 'a loose tension will produce a flabby, ill-fitting garment' (*The Oxford Modern English Dictionary*, 1992). Nevertheless, while low tension will produce a flabby garment, low-tension systems of electricity are safer and cheaper than high-tension systems! High tension can lead to nervous exhaustion, anger, violence or a sudden collapse.

Terms like 'distension', 'extension', and 'pretension' all accord with 'tension' and the variant 'tention' agrees with 'attention', 'intention' and 'contention'. These dictionary meanings all show that the notion of tension is polysemic and that it has different applications both in daily language and in sciences. Yet these meanings have one sense in common: the notion of tension expresses impetus to an action or to a change.

The study of tension in psychology has been very limited and apart from the work of Kurt Lewin and Sigmund Freud, there is not much to be found. However, in the work of these two psychologists, tension is viewed either as a force to solve conflicts or as a negative and a damaging force. Kurt Lewin beautifully depicted tension in behavioural activities of young children and captured them in his films[3] in the late 1920s. These films show in great detail that it is tension that motivates the child to resolve problems and to achieve goals he sets for himself. Both Lewin and Freud considered tension as a force to resolve the individual's problem arising from the choice between conflicting alternatives or between own goals and obstacles posed by the environment. The balance of the organism is re-established through the reduction of tension.

However, tension is implicit in all life situations although it may not be explicitly regarded as such. For example, in everyday life and in professional contexts we often hear that in order to instigate individuals or groups to action, we need to increase their awareness of the main issue. Thus, health campaigns attempt to increase public awareness of risks attached to smoking, drugs or lack of exercise. Or, training courses attempt to increase professionals' awareness of the difficulties involved in communication with people with a disability. These well-meant practices, however, often ignore the fact that knowledge and awareness as such are insufficient to instigate action. We can have as much knowledge and awareness about the issue in question as we like, but unless that

knowledge creates tension and conflict in the self and groups, action is unlikely to be taken.

The experience of contradiction, to which Hegel already drew attention and which he called 'the root of all movement and vitality' is not enough to instigate action. It is not contradiction that living organisms must endure in order to live, but it is tension and conflict arising from contradiction that is the source of action and vitality. The concept of tension is *implicit* in Hegel's master/slave parable (see Chapter 7, note 2).

In Karcevskij's theory of meaning (Chapter 3) and the change of meaning, the concept of tension is indispensable. Similarly, in Rosenzweig's and Bakhtin's dialogical theory tension is the source of dialogical change. Tension is inherent in the relation *Ego-Alter* and, by implication, in the theory of social representations and communication. There can be no communication unless the participants are drawn together by tension. There can be no social action – unless oppositions in tension confront one another, are negotiated, evaluated and judged.

We can suggest that the attempts to achieve goals and to reduce tension are no more than specific instances of the dialogical tension.

## 2    Dialogical triad

Throughout his whole academic career Moscovici has always placed emphasis on tension as the force of change. In contrast to Bühler's *Ego-Alter-Object*, what makes Moscovici's (1984a) semiotic triangle *Ego-Alter-Object* (Figure 6.4) dynamic, is the presence of tension.
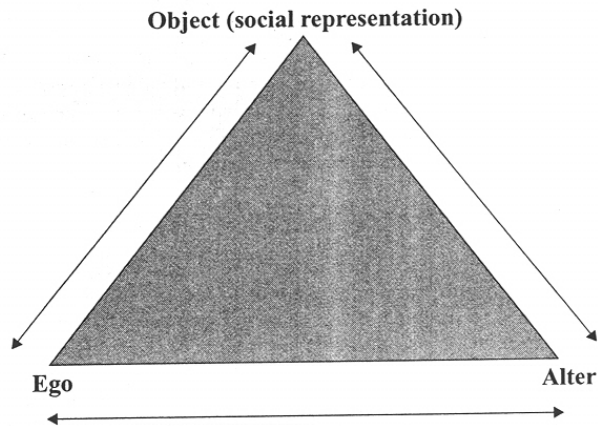


Figure 6.4 Moscovici's *Ego-Alter-Object*

With tension we have a *dialogical triad*, the dynamic unit of the theory of social knowledge. The *Ego-Alter-Object* is a triad within which the components are internally related. As in Bühler's triad, if the components are internally related the unit can function only as an organic whole that cannot be decomposed into its parts.

### 2.1    Components in dialogical triads are bound together by internal relations

In order to explain the meaning of internal relations between the *Ego-Alter-Object* let us consider two examples from rather different spheres of social science.

Our first example comes from the extract of a conversation between two individuals. One of them has cerebral palsy and his speech is severely impaired. The other person is a carer in the day-centre, which the participant with impaired speech attends on a daily basis. In the extract below the impaired speaker tries to explain to his carer that on Monday, at 8 o'clock in the morning, he watches a television programme called 'Wheel of fortune'. The dialogical triad is constituted of the *Ego* (impaired speaker)-the *Alter* (carer)-*Object* (the television programme 'Wheel of Fortune'). The *Ego-Alter* dyad is in a dialogical and collaborative relation. What is problematic in their dialogue is to identify the *Object*. The person with unimpaired speech could say 'I watch *Wheel of Fortune* on Monday at 8 o'clock in the morning' using a single sentence. In contrast, someone with a speech disorder will need to apply a strategy in which each part of the message must be well understood by the other participant so that he can piece the parts together into a meaningful whole.

The sequence starts with the impaired speaker's gaze directed to the wall, while pointing his finger at the carer and at the same time vocalising 'omu'ay'.[4] The carer watches the impaired speaker in his attempt to comprehend 'omu'ay'. The impaired speaker consistently redraws the circle with his fingers and points to the chart and to the carer. Both participants are simultaneously directed to one another and their vocal, verbal and non-verbal gestures could be only artificially decomposed into independent components. Instead, their vocal, verbal and non-verbal gestures are integrated and synchronised. The carer needs to discover several things in order to identify the *Object*. He must interpret the impaired speaker's dialogical contributions

- 'omu'ay' as 'on Monday',
- the circle drawn with fingers as a wheel
- the connection between the expression 'omu'ay' and the drawn circle

- the gesture of pointing at a chart on the wall as the object showing television programmes
- the impaired speaker's pointing to the watch as a reference to time at which the programme takes place
- and all these parts must then be combined together to express 'I watch *Wheel of Fortune* on Monday at 8 o'clock in the morning'.

In this conversation the *Ego-Alter* are co-authors of each gesture that takes place in a seamless and uninterrupted fashion. In addition to simultaneous co-authorship of gestures the process of knowing take places in time and is sequentially organised. Interactional meaning of dialogical contributions is intrinsically determined by their position in sequences (Linell, 1998). Sense-making activities are orientated both towards past and towards retrospective interpretation as well as anticipating which possible directions knowledge and communication could take (Linell and Marková, 1993).

**Extract: *Wheel of fortune***    (NS = nonspeaker; S = speaker)

NS:  (*looking and pointing at wall behind partner*)
     uuh omu'ay
     (*draws a circle in the air with his finger*)
     er'l
S:   (*leaning forward*)
     *circle*
NS:  (*pointing insistently at wall behind partner*) (*vocalises*)
S:   (*looking at the wall*)
     what in the work?
NS:  (*holds up one finger*)
S:   one
NS:  (*points to himself, draws a circle in the air with his finger*)
     aah omu'ay
S:   (*scratching his head and looking confused*)
     Monday?
NS:  (*lifts up his wrist as if to look at his watch*)
     uu' ay clo'
S:   (*looking confused*)
     three o'clock?
NS:  (*holding up eight fingers*)
     ay clo'
S:   eight o'clock
NS:  (*nods*)
     mmmm:
S:   eight o'clock on Monday (*smiles*) circle (.) eight o'clock in the *morning*
     (*smiles*)
NS:  (*shaking head*)
     no
S:   (*turning round to look at wall*)
     oo::hh right

The microanalysis of the video of this dialogue shows that the participants' co-actions are synchronised and that they appear to be seamless to the extent that it is difficult to subdivide them into the actions of two persons. Nevertheless, despite their dialogical interdependence, the *Ego* and the *Alter* retain their independence as individuals. In other words, they do not 'fuse' with one another. Due to tension, each individual firmly retains his individuality *as* individuality. Terms like 'mutually constituted' or a 'seamless' relation do not imply a fusion of the two components and a loss of their individuality.[6] Dialogical tension manifests itself in both participants. With respect to the non-speaker, he assiduously attempts to redraw the circles (the wheel) and to revocalise 'omu'ay'. Concerning the speaker, he pays careful attention (see: tension – attention, in English) to the non-speaker's gestures and vocalisations in order to piece the message together.

As another example, let us imagine a dialogical triad consisting of an artist (the *Ego*), viewers of art (the *Alter*) and a modern collage painting (*Object to be represented*). The collage painting could include a conglomeration of different entities, like a piece of rock, a flag, a wire and a rose. It could have a title *The bride of Jesus* (cf. e.g. Mukařovský, 1936/1970). How is it possible for a material object, in our case a conglomeration of heterogeneous entities like a rock, a flag, a wire and a rose, to rise to the status of an aesthetic object in the eyes of viewers? Such transformation depends on several factors, for example, on content, extra-artistic circumstances, the taste of viewers, historical contexts, to mention but a few. Above all, the piece of art must provoke, it must cause tension (or attention!), and it must create a challenge for the viewers. However, if the challenge is too easy, if viewers do not perceive much that is new, they will say that the artist has produced no more than a cliché. This could be like an ill-fitted garment produced by 'a loose tension' (see section 1.3 above). On the other hand, if the problem is incomprehensible and if the artist distances himself too much from accepted norms, then the viewers will not understand the painting and will reject it.

Acceptance or rejection of a painting therefore may depend on the perceived continuity and discontinuity in artistic traditions. Modern art frequently heightens the antinomy between continuity and discontinuity and invites the viewer to share the meaning of this antinomy, i.e., continuity/discontinuity, with the artist. For instance, a surrealistic painting can be composed from totally heterogeneous objects. Or in a cubist painting, an object, say a musical instrument, can be completely decomposed into its parts and thus deprived of its unity as a well-recognised object. On the other hand, surrealist or cubist objects are reorganised in new ways and they propose themselves to viewers as objects with new

meanings. For example, they propose themselves as objects of the de-humanised world. Thus the artist creates a special kind of tension for the viewer, a tension based on collisions between known and unknown, old and new, discontinuous and continuous, among other things. More generally, art presents the viewer with several kinds of antinomy at the same time, creating perceptual, emotional and representational tensions. Such antinomies are created not only in visual art. Similarly, the theatre of small and fringe avant-gard groups change the existing norms, attract new audiences by creating new kinds of tension. From the fringe, avant-gard groups move to the centre of attention.

In literature, too, the relationship of the aesthetic norm of the time and shift of the work away from the norms institutes a dynamic tension (Vodička, 1976, p. 198). The tension leads to the reconstruction and in-novation of literary norm of a given period and thus to a 'change in the lit-erary viability of individual works and authors' (1976, pp. 203–4). Every artistic and literary work represents in one way or other the existing social realities of the time. Simultaneously, they communicate something new that violates these realities. The study of changes in readers' representa-tions of literary work, of their taste, of political and other kinds of tension, Vodička argues, are essential features of the study of the evolution of lit-erature.

Clashes between the past and the present and between conventions and innovations create the history of art (Gombrich, 1968). They also cre-ate the history of social psychological phenomena. They are, therefore, of urgent concern to social psychology and specifically, to the theory of social representations. These clashes, of course, have a different strength and oscillate between periods in which adherence to norms predomi-nates violation of norms. Tension, we have seen, is not a yes-no concept. There could be a low tension in a system that hardly produces any effect. In contrast, there could be a high tension leading to conflict and revo-lution. Sometimes tension manifests itself only internally as an internal polemics without any apparent external effect (Chapter 4) at the time, but preparing its effect for the future.

## 2.2    Multiple facets of the Ego-Alter-Object

Each dialogical situation involves different kinds of the *Ego-Alter*. For example, the *Ego-Alter* could be made up of I-specific group; I-another person; I-nation; group-community, and so on. During a single encounter several dialogical *Ego-Alter* relations may simultaneously compete and clash one with another. Dialogical participants bring into dialogue their present experiences and past traditions as well as expectations about their

futures. They may choose to change their priorities. They may perpetuate continuities and create discontinuities. They can focus on themselves and above all express their own interests. Alternatively, they may orientate themselves toward their *Alter*.

Let us consider a case from our research (Collins and Marková, 1999). This case illustrates multiple facets of the *Ego-Alter-Object*. Participants' communicative choices produce different kinds of tension and this in turn has implications for the process of knowing.

Imagine two participants, one with cerebral palsy, which presents a speech and communication disorder, and the other without any speech and communication disorder. They play a well known guessing game. The participant with cerebral palsy has a picture of a kitchen, which is hidden from the view of the other participant, who by asking suitable questions has to reconstruct the kitchen.

The picture we used in the actual study was *The Far Side* cartoon by Gary Larson of the kitchen (Collins and Marková, 1999; this picture was reproduced with permission on p. 344). This picture displays common features of a kitchen in industrialised countries. There is a sink, run-ning water, cupboards and so on. The picture of the kitchen also shows features that are specific to this particular kitchen: there is a little dog on the picture making a cup of coffee. Using the concept of dialogical triad, we can think about different *Ego-Alter-Object* relations that enter into the reconstruction of the picture of the kitchen. The manner in which the dialogue takes place is determined by the presuppositions for communication of the two participants. We can imagine different dialog-ical triads of *Ego-Alter-Object* co-existing at the same time and clashing with one another. This may facilitate or impede the reconstruction of the picture.

One communicative possibility may involve the two participants fo-cusing on the fact that there is asymmetric knowledge between them in terms of the specific game which they play. The participant with the speech and communication disorder has knowledge of the picture of the kitchen, while the other does not. We can depict it as a dialogical triad consisting of:
- *Ego*: the first participant's knowledge of the picture
- *Alter*: the second participant's lack of knowledge of the picture
- *Object*: the picture of the kitchen to be reconstructed.

This specific triad creates several kinds of tension. For example, one kind of tension arises from asymmetry in the participants' knowledge, from the necessity to ask relevant questions and to provide appropriate responses. Another kind of tension is created by the difficulties in co-constructing mutual understanding due to the specific speech and communication

disorder of one participant. Tension of this kind can be diminished by negotiation of meanings, by self-repairs in talk and by mutual repairs.

We can depict another dialogical triad consisting of:
- *Ego*: the first and the second participant's commonalities in their respective images of the kitchen in question, e.g. due to commonalities in their personal experiences
- *Alter*: schematic or collective knowledge of kitchens in the participants' common culture, e.g. knowledge that kitchens have tables, chairs, refrigerators, cupboards, and so on
- *Object*: the picture of the kitchen to be reconstructed.

This kind of triad generates other kinds of tension, e.g. between what is taken for granted in the reconstruction of the picture and what therefore does not enter into the conversation; or in contrast, what is thematised in the conversation.

Third, we can depict yet another kind of triad. In this case we can focus on the two participants' own specific images of the kitchen containing specific features, e.g. the kinds of kitchen in their own homes, kitchens they have seen in shops and advertisements, their neighbours' kitchens and so on. Thus we can dream up another kind of dialogical triad:
- *Ego*: the first participant's idiosyncratic image of the kitchen
- *Alter*: the second participant's idiosyncratic image of the kitchen
- *Object*: schemata of kitchens in their common culture

This triad may generate communicative tension with respect to what is and is not taken for granted with respect to the two differing idiosyncratic images. It may lead to misunderstandings between the two participants and to negotiation and thematisation of their respective meanings.

These different dialogical triads may, moreover, compete with one another and clash in the process of the game and in the construction of knowing. They may become part of the game through the kinds of question that the participants ask one another and through the responses that they obtain. They may be reflected in drawings; and in the seriousness or lightness with which the participants play the game.

We cannot explain the existence of these and possibly other dialogical triads in terms of choices that the two participants make here-and-now. Their presence or absence can be related to social representations that the participants hold. For instance, the participant without a communication disorder may hold a certain social representation of disability, which the other, by having direct experience of the disability, will not share. For example, the participant without a communication disorder may hold a social representation of people with cerebral palsy as having not only a muscular disability but also an intellectual disability. Therefore, even if the able-bodied participant asks questions relevant to the game, she
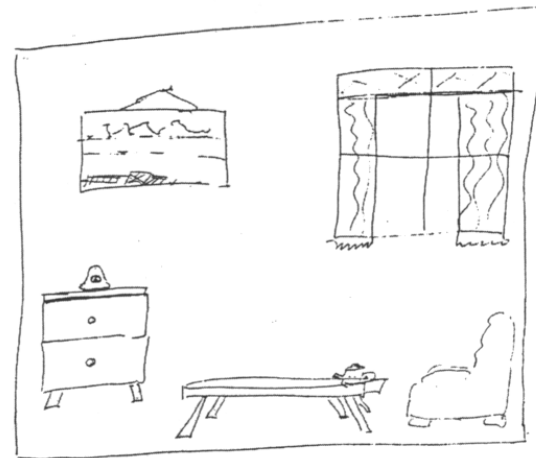
Figure 6.5 A reconstruction of the kitchen in drawings: little resemblance to the original picture

may not await the response from her co-participant whom she considers to be intellectually disabled. Instead, she may venture to reconstruct the picture of the kitchen largely on the basis of schematic, culturally shared knowledge rather than on the basis of information given by her co-participant. Such social representation could instigate the formation of the following dialogical (or indeed a monological!) triad:
- *Ego*: schematic or collective knowledge of kitchens in the participants' common culture, e.g. knowledge that kitchens have tables, chairs, refrigerators, cupboards, and so on
- *Alter*: schematic or collective knowledge of kitchens in the participants' common culture, e.g. knowledge that kitchens have tables, chairs, refrigerators, cupboards, and so on
- *Object*: schemata of kitchens in their common culture

In this fake triad, the *Ego* and the *Alter* represent only the carer's voice. It is a monologue that excludes the voice of the person with impaired speech. This is what actually happened in our study. As a result, reconstructions of the kitchen in drawings were of a poor quality because they did not contain relevant features of the original picture that could be provided by the impaired speaker. One can see that these drawings (Figures 6.5 and 6.6) show no more than schematic features and that they have little resemblance to the original picture. In contrast, when the able-bodied
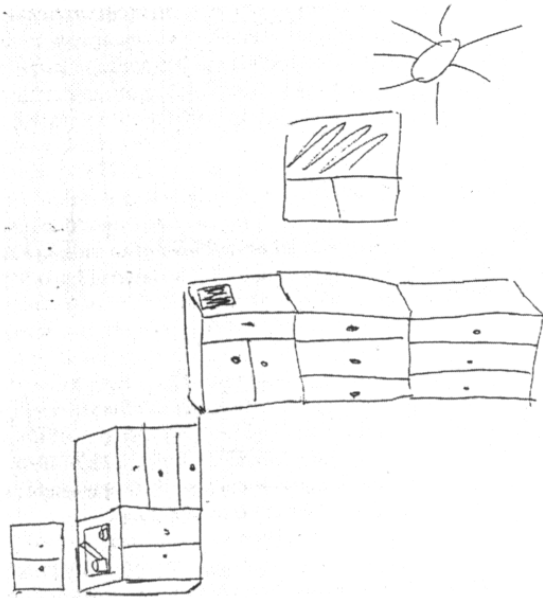
Figure 6.6 A reconstruction of the kitchen in drawings: little resemblance to the original picture

participant did not make assumptions about the intellectual disability of her partner, or if she seriously considered information provided by her dialogical partner, the reconstructed picture bore a great deal of similarity to the original picture. The drawing in Figure 6.7 results from the latter case. It includes details of the original picture, e.g. it shows the little dog making a cup of coffee, the details of the taps and even a chequered tablecloth.

This example from our research shows cognitive polyphasia and heteroglossia at work. The reconstructions of the picture by different dyads were regulated by more or less permanent styles of thinking and communication. These styles were partly due to social representations that participants held. In addition, they were partly determined by temporary motives, goals and situational contexts. In our concrete cases, the participants employed different kinds of knowledge, e.g. schematic, specific to the task or knowledge based on experience. Their choices were also influenced by the kinds of questions they asked or avoided asking; the kinds
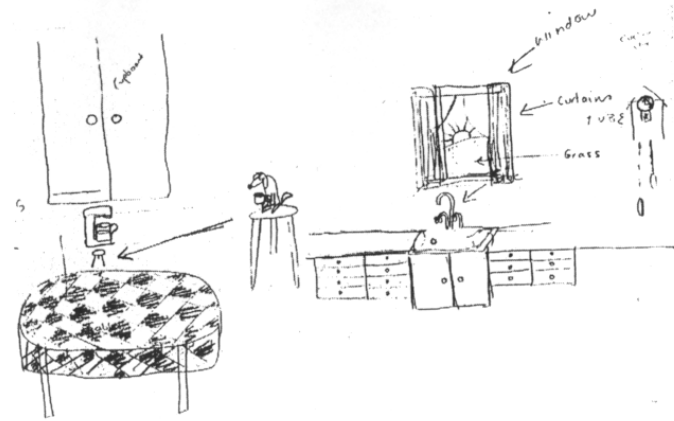
Figure 6.7 A reconstruction of the kitchen resembling the original picture

of responses they gave or did not give; the kinds of issues they raised and thematised. In addition, their communicative choices were dependent on the quality of dialogicality they displayed with respect to one another: whether they treated one another as dialogical partners or whether they pursued monologically their own goals and perspectives.

A final point: the aim of the above considerations concerning different kinds of *Ego-Alter-Object* is *theoretical* and not *empirical*. This analysis shows that in any dialogue we must presuppose polyphasia and heteroglossia. Moreover, we must also presuppose *co-existence* of different styles of thinking and the *co-presence* of different voices in communication. It would be a misunderstanding if these considerations evoked the idea that we could discover, *empirically*, dialogical triads as a mechanism of generating data resulting, for example, in specifying different kinds of dialogical triads and their quantification.

A dialogical triad is not an empirical datum but it is a conceptual construct enabling the researcher to consider the problem from its theoretical perspectives. It is a construct for generating ideas. It could be used as a *Gedanke experiment* (thought experiment) to enable questions to be asked which otherwise are likely to be ignored. Examples of such questions are the following. Which aspects of culturally shared knowledge are taken for granted in the given case? Which aspects of culturally shared knowledge are thematised? What characteristics of objects do participants presuppose? A theoretical analysis and the relevant theoretical

questions will enable the choice of research methods to answer those questions.

## 3    Object in the dialogical triad

### 3.1    From stable to transient objects

No theory of knowledge can ignore the object of knowledge. Objects, however, could mean very different things in different theories of knowledge. For example, for philosophers of the seventeenth century like Descartes and Locke, the starting points of enquiry were objects, which they could perceive clearly and distinctly. These objects were mechanisms that had unchangeable qualities, like 'an orange beak', 'whiteness', 'a long neck', and 'black legs' of a swan.

The ways in which objects are represented is not only a prerogative of philosophers. Representations of objects are cultural representations and they penetrate all spheres of life. There is a similarity between Descartes' and Locke's representations of objects with clear and distinct qualities and the artistic representations of objects at that time. It is because we recognise such representations as pertaining to particular historical epochs that the history of art could develop as a scholarly discipline.

In order to illustrate this point let us consider the painting of Hans Holbein the younger from the sixteenth century entitled *The Meyer Madonna*. On this painting there is a detail of the two wives of one of the friends of Holbein, Jacob Meyer, who was at the time an important person in the City Council in Basle. This beautiful painting of the two serene faces, like a photograph, mirrors the expressions of these two women. It captures minute details of their emotions as well as of their scarves and dresses as if the painter wanted to grasp reality in its entirety and truth. These faces of the two wives of Jacob Meyer are a detail from a religious painting, in which several pious women encircle the Virgin Mary. Holbein's image of these 'objects' corresponds to the representation of an ideal aristocratic woman of his time: stable, elegant, reliant, pious and aware of her duty.

The modern world and its technology hardly ever deal with objects that merely impinge on our senses and present themselves as the reason for contemplation and reflection. Instead, objects are conceived as transient.

In the early part of the twentieth century the French painter Marcel Duchamp was fascinated by X-ray imagery (Chapter 5) of objects and by the possibilities created by X-rays to penetrate invisible realities. He displayed his fascination with transient objects in many of his paintings. Like Hans Holbein, he painted the faces of two women, in this case his two younger sisters (Figure 6.8). He entitled his painting *Yvonne and*
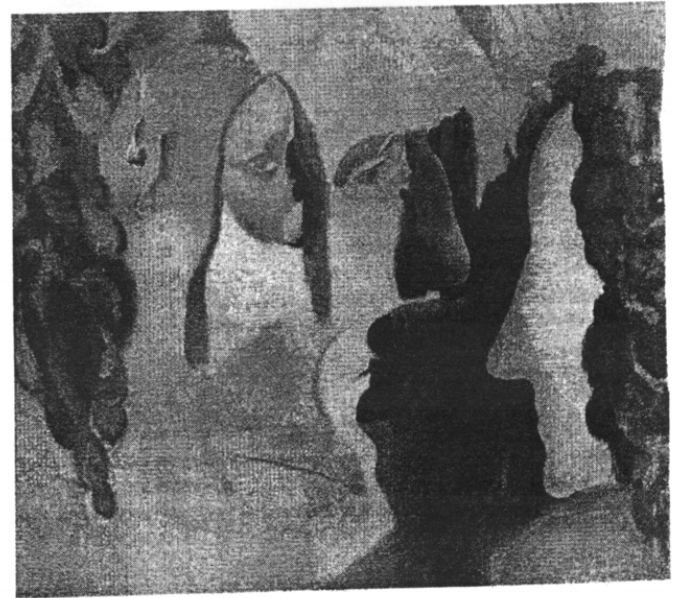
Figure 6.8 Duchamp's painting of Yvonne and Magdaleine torn in tatters

*Magdaleine in Tatters*. The paintings of Hans Holbein on the one hand and that of Marcel Duchamp on the other represent contrasting perspectives of objects and their respective social realities. While the former shows stability, continuity and serenity of the objects in their visible reality, the latter shows the objects with their life histories, discontinuities and movement in their invisible realities. The latter painting shows four profiled heads of the two women, showing their motion in time as they progress from youth to old age. The painting is a study of the modes of representation with the nose as a focus. The dark nose or Magdeleine links Duchamp's image specifically to X-rays. X-rays pass through the cartilage of the nose and are resisted by bone (darker blots). Duchamp related X-rays to the idea of transparency and cutting (Henderson,1998).

It is not that the world of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries was the world of stable objects. Hans Holbein, René Descartes and John Locke all lived in the world of transient objects just like we do, although they might not have experienced changes so rapidly as we experience them today. Clearly, Descartes and Locke could have focused in their

epistemologies on phenomena in change, because such phenomena were around them. Objects, which they perceived as stable, were those existing naturally in the physical world like rocks, artefacts and physical characteristics of animals and plants. These also included their images of pious and serene women.

Objects of symbolic power, like, for example, *money*, have hardly ever been in the focus of attention in the traditional theories of knowledge. Moscovici (1988/1993), in discussing society as a machine for making Gods, analyses *money* as passion throughout the history of mankind, showing stabilities and changes in their social representations. The magical power of money was shared by most cultures from early antiquity. Money has always created powerful images in all spheres of life. It has had a profound influence on economy, it has been a ubiquitous theme in world literatures and it has always led to gruesome murders and horrific wars. Nevertheless, until the nineteenth century money was hardly an object of social scientific exploration. Liu (2002) shows how money has become an obsession in China's current transition to a market economy, where material possessions have become closely linked with a lay representation of a market economy. This obsession sharply contrasts with the previous socialist system and its promised goal, a communist state in which money would be abolished.

The modern world and its technology present us more and more often with objects that are fluid and transient. We can hypothesise that their fluidity is one of the reasons why, today, various relativistic epistemologies proliferate in social sciences.[7] Think of an object like *food*, something essential for survival, the source of pleasure and life, or of illness, poison and death. What today is considered as *food* constantly changes its boundaries and these boundaries are dialogically formed and transformed. We might consider a beautiful looking vegetable, which is genetically modified, as *inedible*. We might eat meat and wonder whether or not it is *contaminated*. Social knowledge cannot ignore conceiving objects of daily life as being in transition.

The changing nature of the object of knowledge gives rise to scientific and public disputes. It also affects the kinds of tension in communication between the *Ego-Alter*. For example, if the object does not present itself to senses or is difficult to comprehend, e.g. the AIDS virus, it gives rise to myths and beliefs and it alters the ways in which we communicate about it.

## 3.2    A baby as a virtual object

Let us consider an example of the transient object in the study by Middleton *et al.* (2001). Middleton *et al.* (2001) explored a prematurely

born baby as an 'object' in the neonatal care unit. The neonatal care unit can be described as a complex social practice, which involves a multidisciplinary team of professionals, parents, technologies and medical services, all working together to safeguard the healthy development of the baby. The authors explain that the prematurely born baby is ambiguously thought of as being placed between a 'social' and a 'biological' entity, his life being dependent on technology, medical care and the knowledge of professionals. The boundaries of the neonatal care unit constantly change and are often ambiguous. As new patients come, new parents get involved in the functioning of the unit, different staff members are employed and new technologies are used.

In their study, the authors make an explicit assumption about *change of the unit*, its boundaries and practices. In contrast, if a *relative stability* of social practices in the unit is observed, it is something that requires explanation. Moreover, 'ambiguity and uncertainty rather than clarity and procedure are important features of neonatal care' (Middleton *et al.*, p. 6). Working in the face of radical uncertainty, the participants in the neonatal care unit orientate themselves 'to the production of stabilities in practice', adapting their knowledge and actions to the changing circumstances.

The 'object' is a baby who is an agent and therefore, is in a constant state of change both because of his activities and because he develops. This 'object-baby' also transforms the relations between each of the co-acting individuals and other participants because his needs for medical care change and he requires different kinds of care and professionals. Through their involvement, as well as the involvement of the baby's parents who take a more active role in his care, the baby gets better. This is why the authors refer to *the baby as a virtual object*, i.e. as something, which stabilises the dynamic relationships between the social order, action and technology. In this example, the authors' analysis of the case continuously balances on the verge between realities and potential realities.

This virtual object and the authors' focus on shifts between realities and potential realities cannot be conceived in mechanistic terms but in dialogical relations. Introducing the concept of virtual object raises new questions about the dialogicality of realities and potential realities, which constantly shift their boundaries. What is supposed to be real and what is potentially real is dialogically determined within the multitude of relations between the *Ego-Alter-Object*.

In what ways the changing object takes part in the formation of social knowledge and social representations will necessarily become an intriguing subject of study in social representations in years to come. For example, modern technology, like computers, changes not only the nature of communication in general but, more specifically, the relations between the *Ego-Alter*. Moreover, the dynamic object can take on different

functions. For example, the object could be something of what the knowers may try to make sense, e.g. medical knowledge, democracy and the functions of institutions. Alternatively, the knowers may themselves create the object of knowledge or they may transform it, e.g. democracy, genetic modifications or virtual objects.

### 3.3    Belief-based and knowledge-based social representations

In the discussion of dialogical triads I have so far ignored one important issue: the relative strength of relations between the three components in the dialogical triad. This means that I have not raised the question as to whether there could be, for example, strong relations between the *Ego-Alter* on the one hand, but relatively weak relations between the *Ego-Object* on the other hand. Alternatively, whether there could be strong relations between the *Ego-Object* but weaker relations between the *Ego-Alter*.

If we consider relations between the *Ego-Alter-Object* in science, we can assume that the relation between the *Ego-Object* is foregrounded. The scientist focuses above all on the object of knowledge, on evidence concerning the nature of that object and on scientific explanations relating to that object. We can also assume that while she does not ignore, whether implicitly or explicitly, the community of communication with other scientists, these relations could be less important in scientific work.

In contrast, if we consider the relations between the *Ego-Alter-Object* in social representations, we can hypothesise two possibilities involving the strengths of relations between the *Ego-Alter-Object*. We can make a very tentative suggestion about these two possibilities that follows from Moscovici's (Moscovici, 1998b/2000, p. 136) ideas about beliefs and knowledge in social representations.

Some kinds of social representations are predominantly belief-based. In the theory of social representations beliefs are considered to be mental states of some considerable duration. Beliefs are usually rooted in culture, tradition and language. They are characterised by firmness and rigidity of conviction and they are often bound with passions. Beliefs are of social origin and the fixation on the object of belief comes from the *Alter* rather than from the *Object* as such. This means that the believer neither searches for proof, nor for evidence relating to the object. For example, if one believes that AIDS is transmitted through a handshake, one will not look for facts to prove this belief. The hardness of this belief will lie in its attachment to other beliefs, for example, to the belief that AIDS is a dirty disease, or that AIDS is associated with the punishment of the perpetrator and that punishment is linked with death. Such beliefs may

implicitly live in a community for generations. They may be unconsciously transmitted through collective memory, implicit communication and traditions.[8]

Beliefs are also built on 'the reciprocity of perspectives' (Schutz, 1970). Sharing cultural schemata and taking part in actions jointly with others produces similar experiences in individuals who are part of that culture. Cultural schemata get re-cycled and become part of routines that consequently affect our motivational, topical and interpretational 'relevances'. We see what we are motivated to see: in view of these motives, paradoxically, things lose their particular significances and they become, to use Schutz's words, 'topics in hands'. In such cases, interpretation, too, loses its relevance because motives have already determined our interpretation. Sharing cultural schemata and motives, values and topics resulting from them also means that our *Ego-Alter* relations are in the foreground while the relations between the *Ego-Object* are in the background. Culturally shared beliefs, which lie behind these schemata of 'topics in hands', make us oblivious of differences and of inconsistencies in perception and experience.

When something like an outbreak of AIDS takes place, beliefs become invigorated and, being expressions of conviction and commitment, they make social representations salient and powerful. In the case of strong beliefs, even logical contradiction or sensory contradiction is ineffective for the believer. Beliefs can be effectively replaced only by another belief. In order to deny the belief, Moscovici argues, we must present a powerful image that evokes commitment to passions (Moscovici, 2000, p. 252). Beliefs, therefore, while they are fixations on an idea or on an object, paradoxically, are also expressions of a social commitment. They differ in durability, strength and the degree of engagement. Some beliefs are more easily changed than others.

Other kinds of social representations are predominantly knowledge-based. Common knowledge involves different kinds of knowing. It can involve transformed scientific knowledge or knowledge based on the experience of interpersonal relations, conversations, daily routines and so on. To know, just like to believe, means to hold something true. Knowledge-based social representations foreground the relation between the knower and the object of knowledge, i.e. the *Ego-Object*. To know is to examine, as far as possible independently of others, the nature of the phenomena in question. Of course, the notion 'independently' has a relative meaning because we can hardly totally ignore knowledge circulating in public discourse. Knowledge in social representations is always social and the *Alter* remains part of the dialogical triad. However, the relation between the knower and the object of knowledge is not fixed but is open. In contrast

to the believer, the knower is ready to enter into the argument, proof and criticism. If someone 'knows' that 'AIDS can be caught from a handshake' such 'knowledge' will be based on the search for evidence. For example, the individual may present personal experience or argue on the basis of observation. He will negate his knowledge if he finds evidence against it. In the case of knowledge, the *Ego* may go against the *Alter*, whether it is common opinion or the ruling majority or otherwise.

The difference between knowledge and beliefs does not concern the content of propositions expressing one or the other (Moscovici, 1998b/2000, p. 136). Propositions expressing knowledge and beliefs can have the same content. However, whether such propositions are ascribed the status of beliefs or knowledge rests in the style of thinking and the method of searching for 'truth'. If individuals or groups search for evidence of the truth concerning that object, the resulting social representations are knowledge-based. If, on the other hand, representations are formed and maintained through the consensus with others, representations are belief-based.

In reality, social representations always involve both knowledge and beliefs[9] and it is unlikely that we could find a system of thought that would be based purely on one or the other, whether it is science or religion. The question as to whether a social representation is knowledge-based or belief-based, is a matter of prevalence of one or the other style of thinking and reasoning.

However, the question as to whether social representations are based predominantly on knowledge or on beliefs could have important implications for social practices. For example, belief-based social representations may inspire social categorisation and exclusion of groups and individuals. This is why self-help groups, just like governmental campaigns, attempt to change belief-based social representations into knowledge-based representations and thus reduce or eliminate exclusion and discrimination (Farr, 1995).

## 4    The three-component process

### 4.1    *Simultaneity and sequentiality in a three-component process*[10]

The *Ego-Alter-Object* is the dynamic unit of social knowledge and the relations within that unit are both simultaneously and sequentially dynamic. It is the co-existence of simultaneous and sequential relations in the three-component processes that defines the concept of social change.

We have already characterised the simultaneous relation in the *Ego-Alter* as a figure-ground relation and we have illustrated it with respect to the Moscovici concept of minorities/majorities. Minorities are defined in

terms of majorities and dialogically speaking, a group could constitute the majority *only* in terms of the specific minority (Moscovici, 1976b, 1979). A particular minority and majority come into being together like figure-and-ground not because of a characteristic that is *a priori* important in some sense but because, for one reason or other, that specific characteristic becomes significant for their emergence as the minority/majority. This characteristic defines their *internal* relations and therefore, is also a defining characteristic of that specific majority/minority. Such an internally significant characteristic could be anything, whether it is having black eyes or holding a specific political view. Importantly, that characteristic creates a dialogical tension within the *Ego-Alter*: it becomes a subject matter for their communicative relations, that is it becomes an *Object*.

In contrast, no characteristic, however important it may seem to an observer, e.g. power, discrimination or exploitation, can define two groups as the minority and majority, if that characteristic is *outside* their relations, i.e. if it is not in their discourse. In other words, however dominant one group could be with respect to another group, if the two groups do not define themselves in terms of dominance and submission, *vis à vis* that characteristic, they do not form the majority/minority. They simply remain two independent groups. They could be dependent in some other sense but not as the minority/majority with respect to dominance/submission.

The fact that the *Ego* and the *Alter* enter into existence simultaneously gives rise to their *sequential* relations. Sequential relations are *internal* relations and must be contrasted with *external* sequentiality. External sequentiality is constituted of a series of static states which, when quickly projected, lead to the image of the change as we have seen in Saussure's case or as we can find today in many linguistic and cognitive models (for criticism see Marková, 1990; Rommetveit, 1990; Linell and Marková, 1993; Linell, 1998). Sequentiality in these models is *external* to the *Ego-Alter* because each dialogical contribution is conceived as an independent act, one contribution following the other. For example, the teacher asks a question, the pupil responds, the teacher provides a positive remark and so on. External sequentiality treats change as a linear sequence of moments in time.

In contrast, internal sequentiality is implied by simultaneous changes in *Ego-Alter* even if these may not be immediately apparent as we have seen in the case of conversion in minority/majority experiments. For example, internal sequentiality may work as an internal dialogue and may have latent effects on dialogical participants. These effects produce tension, conflict and unconscious dialogical changes. Internal sequentiality is intrinsically contingent. Actions derive their meanings from their place in the communicative project or genre of which they are part (Linell and Marková, 1993).

Internal sequentiality, therefore, implies both apparent continuity and discontinuity of dialogical contributions of actions. Any dialogue is constituted of different kinds of the *Ego-Alter* (e.g. I-group, group-culture, I-you) that clash with one another and create different kinds of tensions which may result in discontinuities (Salazar-Orvig, 1999), abrupt changes like Mukařovský's (1940/1977) semantic reversals or hidden polemics discussed above. In other words, internal sequentiality treats change as non-linear and multifaceted.

We need to understand, above all, that simultaneity and sequentiality are theoretical and not empirical concepts. This means that they are conceptual tools enabling questions to be asked rather than answers to be given to empirically defined problems.

For example, the presupposition of simultaneity and internal sequentiality directs attention to the formulation of questions about the interdependence of the *Ego-Alter* rather than questions about a single communicative participant. A majority may try to impose its norms and rules on a minority. However, in doing so, the majority is under pressure from the minority, which tries to make itself understood and establish its visibility. It attempts to create its own rules and norms and make them accepted by the majority.

## 4.2    La Dissidence d'un Seul

Simultaneity and sequentiality of the relations between the *Ego-Alter-Object*, are theoretical concepts developed by Moscovici in *the genetic model of social change* (Moscovici, 1976b, 1979). The genetic model treats minority/majority as a simultaneous and internally interdependent relation with respect to a specific object, e.g. social recognition. The genetic model of social change is based on the dynamic three-component processes of the *Ego-Alter-Object*.

Let us explain this genetic model of social change by relying heavily on Moscovici's (1979) brilliant essay on *La Dissidence d'un Seul*.[11] The essay is an observation, a description and an analysis of a single man in 'minority', of the dissident Russian writer and the Nobel Prize winner Alexander Solzenitzyn and of his conflict with the 'majority', the authorities of the Politburo (Political bureau) in the Soviet regime. Thus Solzenitzyn and the Politburo are in *Ego-Alter* relations. What was the *Object* in this situation? The *Object* in the three-component process is Solzenitzyn's novel *One day in the life of Ivan Denisovitch*. Thus we have a three-component process *Solzenitzyn (Ego)-Politburo(Alter)-One day in the life of Ivan Denisovitch (Object)*.

The dyad Solzenitzyn-Politburo (the *Ego-Alter*) came into being simultaneously. Of course, the person, i.e. Solzenitzyn as well as the Politburo that came to constitute this dyad had existed before both as an individual (Solzenitzyn) and an institution (Politburo). Alexander Solzenitzyn had his life as a husband, as a writer and as a friend to various people. The Soviet political bureaucracy, i.e. the Politburo, existed too, carrying out its various political activities like persecuting dissidents, cleansing the Communist Party of traitors, and so on. Despite the fact that the Politburo persecuted other dissidents and groups, the dialogical dyad Solzenitzyn-Politburo came to existence when Alexander Solzenitzyn and the Politburo defined one another in a specific conflict. From that moment on, their activities within that dyad were meaningful with respect to one another: as the *Ego-Alter*.

Let us consider the emergence of another *Ego-Alter*. The Czech writer and dramatist Václav Havel (1979) refers to an event describing the beginning of the Czechoslovak dissident movement known as the Charta 77. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, various intellectual groups attempted to express some form of independent thinking but there was no uniting impulse to bring them together. The crucial moment arose in a totally different context: the regime found itself in the situation in which it challenged an a-politically-orientated generation of young people. The regime forbade public performances of a nonconformist group of young rock musicians called *The Plastic People of the Universe*. When the musicians resisted this pressure, they were arrested. The action of the regime led to the emergence of the *Ego-Alter*, the regime versus the young rock musicians. As an avalanche, this situation provoked to action various isolated groups of discontented citizens. When the regime arrested the nonconformist young men with long hair and when it performed a political trial with them, it did not realise, Havel points out, the consequences of their action. The regime never wished that to happen. The attack against an unknown group of young people was suddenly felt as an attack against freedom in general. It was felt as an attack against everybody. In other words, the established totalitarian regime created its own political oppositions from which yet another *Ego-Alter*, i.e. the regime versus the Charta 77 emerged shortly afterwards.

These two events, Solzenitzyn-Politburo-*One day in the life of Ivan Denisovitch* and the regime-Charta 77-freedom show the emergence of the simultaneous *Ego-Alter-Object* relations.

The dialogical situation described in Moscovici's essay *La Dissidence d'un Seul* also displays sequential effects. Moscovici describes events from 1962 when Solzenitzyn published his novel *One day in the life of Ivan Denisovitch* to 1974, when he was expelled from the Soviet Union. The

novel was first published in the journal *Novyj Mir* after Solzenitzyn had consistently refused to make any changes in his writing. This bothered the Soviet authorities and the situation created a conflict between him and the Politburo. The Politburo, despite the attempts to become more liberal in the early 1960s, could not cope with Solzenitzyn's exposing the taboo of the Soviet totalitarian practices. The publication of the novel led to a dialogue of intensified judgement of one dialogical participant by the other, in which no compromise was possible.

Tension and conflict so created were both manifest and latent, expressing themselves in hidden and open polemic, internal and external dialogues and other means of polyphasic and heteroglossic thinking and language. On the part of the Politburo, for example, Solzenitzyn was manifestly and satirically called the Father of Justice, and he became someone who was visible in the eyes of the general public and of intellectuals. Latently, there was a newly created problem for the redaction of the *Novyj Mir* as to how to cope with censorship and with dissidents of Solzenitzyn's type. The Politburo used to deal with such individuals privately at the personal level whether by interrogation, threats or by producing fear in order to prevent public dramatisation of the problem.

Solzenitzyn's and the Politburo's co-actions had both a personal effect on the writer and a boomerang effect on the Politburo. In order to understand this, we need to consider several related effects.

First, how did Solzenitzyn's actions affect him as a person? To answer this question we need to bear in mind the peculiar way of living that occurs in a totalitarian regime. This is living a divided life – one private and one public – and this double-existence in order to survive, is an essential moral problem for many. Moscovici has reminded me that the dissidents, by sticking to their consistent behavioural style, destroyed the double-existence, which the totalitarian regime forced upon them. By rejecting compromise they could live their own single life, or as the Czech dissident Václav Havel called it, 'the life in truth'. Living their authentic life was a reward for the problems they experienced, like persecution, interrogation and censorship.

Second, how was the regime affected? Moscovici shows in his essay that the dissident movement produced a boomerang effect on the majority in political power because, what was aimed at dissidents in terms of threat and anguish, turned back on the communist authorities in terms of public and international disrepute. In whatever way they treated the stubborn dissidents, that treatment affected them. If the regime expelled dissidents from their own country, the dissidents influenced the public opinion from the outside, from abroad. If they were persecuted in the country, they negatively influenced public opinion from the inside.

Havel (1992) raised the question as to why the Soviet regime decided to expel a single man like Solzenitzyn and why a thousand chartists in Czechoslovakia were perceived as dangerous to the totalitarian regime. He pointed out that neither of them, i.e. Solzenitzyn and the chartists, presented themselves as a threat to the regime, nor did they present themselves as an alternative power. They did not even fight for power. However, the regime perceived them as threat because they insisted on living in truth and in freedom. The regime that was corrupt and that was profoundly distrusted by its citizens had no choice but to define them as an opposition. Consequently, it had to bear all the consequences for the confrontation so created. By acting on the world individuals not only change the world, but they also change themselves. They then act on the basis of their changed selves. Thus we have a full three-component process *Ego-Alter-Altered Ego*.

Neither Solzenitzyn nor Havel succumbed to the regime's effort to monologise, by imposing rules and not giving them the possibility to respond, the dialogical relationship on which they both insisted. Instead, they both continued their difficult dialogues. As well-known writers, they were highly regarded outside the Soviet bloc, received prestigious prizes and rewards in the West for their literary works and any action of the totalitarian regime against them was immediately widely publicised in the West. The regime found it very difficult to cope with such individuals. Solzenitzyn was expelled from the country so that the regime could avoid putting him into prison. Havel, instead, was imprisoned on several occasions. He was even given an opportunity to ask for release from prison and the regime might have gladly given him pardon. However, Havel rejected that offer and created even more embarrassment for the regime.

Other dissidents did not have such high international prestige and they could hardly carry out such a dramatic dialogue with the totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes. They often disappeared in prisons and in hard labour camps without being noticed by anybody. For them, 'the life in truth' was too costly. A Czech dissident Milan Šimečka expressed how he, like many others, conformed to the regime rather than had the courage to take an uncompromising moral stand. He pointed out that he would employ words that were not his own words, but simply an expression of hypocrisy. He would search for excuses and would try to deceive himself by sifting through cases of justice, injustice and violence, in order to avoid taking risks and shouting that the Emperor was without clothes (Šimečka, 1984, p. 141).

Compromising majority, thus behaving as if the emperor had clothes helped to perpetuate the *status quo*. The regime accepted the *as if*

behaviour of the silent majority and the silent majority continued its double life and became even oblivious to that fact. Here apparently the minority accepted the role of a stable and a passive object, at least superficially. It was because the silent majority behaved as if they agreed and were compliant the regime could continue its totalitarian activities. In this case, no external dialogue took place, or if it did, it was only a faked dialogue (Chapter 4) in which authors did not take responsibility for their words. These were 'dialogues' without dialogicality, in which the three-component processes were only faked.

NOTES

1. Peirce's semiotic theory of the growth of knowledge is triadic. Knowledge cannot be instantaneous and intuitive. All intuitions are determined by previous cognitions and there is no exception to this claim. He uses the concept of sign in two senses. First, in a broad sense, a sign is a triadic relation between the object, the interpretant and a sign proper (representation). The second sense of sign is therefore the sign proper (representation). It refers to the representative function only and 'representation' means both the mind and thought.

2. As in George Herbert Mead's theory of conversation of gestures, speech actions are co-produced rather than created by single individuals. Bühler echoed Humboldt's conception of language as *ergon* and *energeia*, the product and the process of language. Language as a relatively stable social phenomenon (ergon) and language as the speech of individuals (energeia) are two interdependent aspects of language, rather than two parallel phenomena, existing in isolation one from another. For this reason Bühler was critical of the treatment of language in terms of independent elements. He argued that 'separation into aspects can never be accomplished in the concrete with a dismembering instrument such as the butcher's knife' (Bühler, 1982, p. 103). This quote reminds Humboldt's (1836/1971) insistence that language cannot be studied like a dead body by an anatomist. In addition, it was Bühler's conviction that language should never be regarded as a self-contained system but as a system, which inter-relates with, and represents an extra-linguistic reality. He argued that although language communities have their 'inner language forms' (Bühler, 1982, p. 152), it is also essential to recognise that language is not a Kantian thing-in-itself, but that the language of each community represents the world in its own manner.

3. These films were discovered by Fritz Heider a long time after Kurt Lewin's death. Their scientific and educational value cannot be emphasised enough.

4. I am grateful to Sarah Collins for her insightful analysis of the case. She also did the transcription of the extract below as part of our ESRC research project.

5. Valsiner (1998) has drawn attention to this important point. There are different ways in which we can consider the relation of unity between two entities, for instance person-environment or person-person. Valsiner (1998, p. 14f.)

points out that sometimes, notions like 'socially situated activities', 'direct perception' or 'socially aided learning' suggest 'an immersion of the person in the undifferentiated environment'.

6. Following on this point, Valsiner explains the difference between exclusive and inclusive separation between non-dialectic and dialectic oppositions.

7. Relativistic epistemologies are different from pluralistic epistemologies. Pluralism in epistemology refers to different kinds of knowing in different social realities. Relativism, in contrast, denies possibility of knowing.

8. This contrasts with philosophical and linguistic analyses, which are often concerned with beliefs as mental states of a fleeting nature and their expression in language. Such analyses often focus on contents of propositions that are straightforward like 'it is raining'. For example, Bernard Williams (1973), in his influential paper on *Deciding to believe* explains:

I am not going to take religious and moral beliefs, but cases of more straightforward factual belief; the sort of belief one has when one just believes that it is raining, or believes that somebody over there is one's father, or believes that the substance in front of one is salt (Williams, 1973, p. 136).

Others, however, like Wittgenstein, would not treat such language expressions as beliefs (e.g. Wittgenstein, 1953, pp. 191–2). It seems reasonable to assume that durable mental states are of different kinds than are mental states of a fleeting nature like believing or supposing that it rains.

9. There have been different ways in philosophy and the social sciences to distinguish between knowledge and beliefs. For example, Ryle (1949, p. 134) points out, even if the content is the same in the case of knowledge and belief, it is the 'because' in each of the two cases that is different. A person who believes that ice is thin and the person who knows that the ice is thin will use a different kind of explanation to that effect: Beliefs are like habits and inclinations, while knowledge is a skill. We may ask what may make people believe something but not what makes them know that something is or is not the case.

10. Some years ago I have suggested (Marková, 1987b, 1990) a three-step process as a unit of analysis in dialogue. This suggestion was inspired by the idea of George Herbert Mead (1934) of 'conversation of gestures'. I have characterised the three-step process as an epistemological unit that could not be subdivided physically into three parts but could be understood only as a whole. The three steps are internally related and take place both simultaneously and sequentially. The main idea of the three-step process is that dialogue is not a shifting of positions between the participants, or 'an exchange' of gestures but that it is a co-authorship. Co-authorship leads to co-development of dialogical perspectives of both participants. The third step in this process accounts for changes in the participants' awareness. The third step is, at the same time, speaking conceptually, the first step of the next three-step process.

The third step, representing changed perspectives in the mind of both participants, involves a special kind of knowing. It is the knowledge about the participants themselves. We can say that through the third step the participant

becomes the object to himself as he reflects both on his own perspective and on the perspective others have of himself. In other words, while the three-step process was about self as an object of knowledge, the three-component process is about any *Object* of knowledge.

11. This essay is published in the French version of *Psychologie des Minorités Actives* (1979) but not, unfortunately, in the English version of the book published under the title *Social Influence and Social Change* (1976).

# 7    Understanding themata and generating social representations

In this chapter I shall turn attention to what should be considered, to-day, the main concepts of Moscovici's theory of social representations: *themata* and *thematisation*. The concept of themata (or thema in singular) brings into focus the question of dialogical antinomies in new perspectives. This concept explicitly shows commitment of the theory of social representations to language and communication as well as the historical and cultural specificities of the *Ego-Alter-Object* and its dynamics.

## 1    The structure of social representations: core and periphery

The theory of social representations presupposes that contents and meanings of social representations are structured and the aim of the theory is to identify, describe and analyse these structured contents and meanings. The study of *contents or materials that are structured* and communicated in real life situations[1] of ordinary people differs from the study of structures as abstract and general concepts as it is the case in various forms of structuralism. Neither does the theory of social representations examine processes or rules of behaviour in general terms as do, for example, functionalism, behavioural approaches or social cognition.

In studying concrete social phenomena, for example, social representations of AIDS, madness or personal identity as structured, the researcher attempts to discover the manner in which history, culture and contemporary circumstances all contribute to the stability and dynamics of this or that social phenomenon. She examines why the social representation, e.g. of AIDS, is structured and thematised in a particular way in a specific epoch, or which aspects of content and meaning are foregrounded and why some components of the structured content change faster or slower than others. In other words, the theory of social representations conceives of the phenomenon in question as a whole. It studies it in a holistic manner and in relation to the contents and meanings of other social phenomena.