

Dialogicality and Language

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So, let me start by saying that I am very delighted to be here in Groningen and I very much regret that I can not be in Paris in June, for which this talk was really prepared. But I have to be somewhere else in June

I know that this audience is already attuned to the topics that we are going to talk about, which I am going to talk about, about dialogue and dialogicality. And I apologize for that: I will give one selection of topics, that is, I repeat, 'only a selection'. I will not do exactly the same thing as in Würzburg. But I would like to say, for my understanding of dialogicality and dialogical theories I am very in dept to Ivana Markova, because she has thought me most of what I know about it. And unfortunately I don't agree with her on all the points. But these are minor points. So I will talk about dialogical theories. And so, what are dialogical theories ? And I would claim that they are concerned with human sense making. How we as human make sense of the world and of each other and of our selves. And it is about the mind, it's not about the physical world as such. Dialogical theories have nothing to say about physics and physiology and things like that. And it also assumes that the mind has certain properties that we might call dialogicality. This is a very fairly general theoretical framework. It's a question of a certain kind of thinking. A certain kind of language to use about language, cognition and communication.

I would tempt to define the notion of mind as the sense making abilities of the human being. So this is about how we make sense together with others in contexts in the world.

I tried to summarize some of this things in a book called "Rethinking Language, Mind and World Dialogically". So some, many of the topics will be layed-out there.

Interactions, contexts and other orientation.... These are some of the key terms, because the theory says that in cognition, in coping with the world in communication with each other, we are interacting.

We interact with others, who could be both specific individual persons, but also generalized others. We interact with objects in the world, for example cognitive artifacts (I will return to that) and with various kinds of contexts. But there is also interaction within the Self..., in thinking...., we tend to oppose different stances about things, stances that we have appropriated or seen in the social world and than we have sort of imported them into our own Selves. What this is, is a theory against extreme individualism. The theory that people are basically autonomous individuals who make sense by themselves, and in themselves, for themselves.

And here you have the icon of the autonomous individual, the solitary thinker who thinks in isolation. This is, as you see, the famous sculpture by August Rodin, le Penseur. And he is thinking there by himself. He is a man. I don't think that is an accidental thing.

But most of us are not like him I think, except in certain situations of course. The dialogical opinion would be that we are thinking in the world. We are exploring the world perceptually. I mean this is a kind of thinking. When we look at things around us, we explore the world perceptually and think about it. And then intervene into the world. Respond to the world. All that is a kind of, if you want, thinking. And we do this thinking to a large extent together with others, in and through others.

For example in a conversation you use the other as a partner in your own thinking. Although sometimes we have different ideas, but that will only stimulate thinking in some contexts. Also when we read a book or use the internet or something like that, that is interaction, indirectly, with other people. Cognitive artifacts are important. So written texts of course have played an enormous role in our cultures. And so have a lot of other artifacts like calculators, computers, and so on.

And these are, in a way, partners in thinking. So we relegate some parts of our cognitive processing to this; this for example, to the left here, is the anesthesia-machine, which is used during surgical operations. And this can do many things. It can show the patient's heart rate, it can show the blood pressure, respiration, levels of oxygen and CO₂ in the blood, levels of anesthetics like how much inhalation gases the patient has at the moment; levels of intravenous analgesia and so on. It's used for checking many values. It always produces figures and, you know, curves and it can provide alarm signals, and so on. You can also use it just for storing things like your papers and pages and things and then they are often used for other purposes than you can imagine. This is a very sophisticated machine, but it can't make meaning. It's only the humans who can use that kind of information that this artifact produces. So the human being, or the team there, they use it contextually to see if the values have some significance for their work. But of course they can't do this kind of thinking without the artifact. And there are many examples like that, in our society. We think with the help of artifacts too.

And this I think I have said more or less in other words, that the individual is interactive with others and with contexts. The fact that meanings shouldn't be thought of something that we have in our heads, or something which is out there in the world. The meanings that we make of the world is something that emerges in our ways of dealing with the other and with the world. It's relational. And of course, meanings are not purely immaterial spiritual things. They are something that's made by the minded body. So the body is important. Communication and thinking are embodied activities. And our senses are also not just channels for getting impressions into us. They are used interactively in exploring the environment.

And then the cultural artifacts we have already talked about. So I think, if this is a theory that goes against extreme individualism, it means that it portrays people as social beings, with social minds. Others have a role in our thinking and that applies to different activities. We are not talking just about social dialogue in a situation where people meet face to face and communicate. Also in thinking. Even Rodin's *Penseur* is dependent on social knowledge, concepts, arguments that he has got from other people.

Language of course and the linguistic resources that have been sedimented in language, are produced under social circumstances. And the people's biographies, their experiences of meeting other people are extremely important for their abilities to think and communicate. And I think the deafblind case is a very good example of that. So we are talking here, when we are talking about others, we are not just talking

about other specific individuals, but also about others that are individuals, but are not here; they might be absent, I might be thinking of various people who have influenced me who are not here, but they sort of, sometimes, speak through me. And then there are generalized others you know, general opinions and so, groups of people, or maybe very general attitudes, held by many, most human beings perhaps. And so on. Sometimes we talk about these as third parties. So, dialogue wouldn't just be between two people, but with more parties, more voices involved.

What I am doing here is trying to talk, argue for what I called an ecumenical definition of dialogism or dialogical theory. This means that dialogism is not just philosophy theory. Even though there are very important traditions, particularly around so called dialogue philosophy with Bakhtin and Buber and others. But there are many other things that are gone into this kind of thinking, the interactional contextual theories of human sense making. Phenomenology, pragmatism, and so on... But what is particularly important, I think, for me is that I think that in recent decades... in the last two, three, four decades, we have been able to study interaction empirically by studying sound recordings and in particular video recordings in detail. So we can see what 's going on between people there. These are not just theories, they are empirically based generalizations.

And in my view there are many different traditions in contemporary social and human sciences, that have contributed to this . CA (= abbreviation for conversation analysis), which is one of them, but And it is dialogical in some senses. Maybe not as dialogical in some other senses and that applies to most of the others too. And I would certainly include here disability studies of certain times, because sometimes I think that you, who work with those disabilities in people, have more to teach us as theoreticians of dialogism than we can have to give you.... But there are the other traditions too.

So, one can't help mentioning, at least in parsing, that in order to understand what dialogical theories are, you must understand that this is a sort of a counter theory to something else. Something else that is dominant in most of the established sciences like psychology, sociology, linguistics, not to speak of neurology or neurobiology, for example.

And these are these well known things that the mainstream idea is that thinking or cognition is something that only goes on in the head, in the brain of the single individual. And we wouldn't of course deny that the brain is important, that the neurological substrate is necessary. It is really going on in there and in the bodies, but that doesn't tell us very much about how meaning is made between people. Because this is something which goes on in relation to other people in the world. So, thinking I think it is misleading to talk about just the neurobiological substrate, as if that was the only thing. That doesn't say very much about understanding. In the same way communication has traditionally been portrayed as a transmission, the transfer of the product of the internal cognition, so that once we have thought about things, then we can talk to others about them, and then they can start thinking and return something to us, but in a dialogical approach something happens in the interaction itself. Sense making is made there in the conversations. And we have here the idea that language is a code, in the sense that words have stable meanings. That's a conventional idea. People have said: how else could we communicate ? But stability doesn't exclude that there is a certain plasticity, a capacity in language to be stretched to cover the communicative needs of new situations. Situations always vary. We have to use the resources we

have, in order to communicate in new situations. And of course the point is, that you don't just use language. And you have the dichotomy between cognition and communication, as if these were two different kinds of processes, happening at different places, so to speak. And contexts are seen as purely more or less external, given environments. And I want to go more into that now.

I wouldn't say that these so called monological theories are outdated in a way. They are still dominant. They are still the mainstream. And new theories pop up all the time, new versions of it. I can't go into this, but for example in linguistics we have had the Chomskyan theories of language as a particular, you know, circumscribed module in the mind/brain. As if language could be isolated from cognition, perception and action. And of course it takes a longer argument to prove that these are monological theories. In linguistic pragmatics we have had something called speech act theory, which is based on the idea that individuals issue acts like questions, assertions, promises, declarations, what have you.... But in that theory there is no place for responses, for replies, for agreements and disagreements, confirmations, and so on. All the things that presuppose that someone has already said something and then we do something with that, respond to that. There is no theory of interaction there.

Cognitive psychology is at present suffering from the impact of the so called theory of mind, which (that would also need a longer argument) but at a more general level one could say that monologism tends to overstate the autonomy of individuals. I already said that. It tends to exaggerate the autonomy of thinking, of cognition, of the intellectual functions at the expense of emotions, interests, volitions, and so on. So, Rodin's Penseur, he is just exercising his theoretical reason (I think). Well in fact he isn't, I think, but that is the idea.

An other thing is that it tends to exaggerate the role of language for thinking and communication. In some kinds of activities at least, as I will show, we use other resources and means. And in fact I think I'll just leave this for ...

And let's... I think if you have here on the handouts.... Where are we.... This is number 13, I think..... This is an example that I borrowed from Jack Goodwin: someone says: "So she sold me this, but didn't sell me this...or that". So this is a perfectly possible utterance. What does it mean ? Well we can't tell it from only the language. And even if you add the sound it won't help I think.

But, this speaker doesn't only use speech, language, prosody. He uses the situation and he uses the artifacts involved.

Here, ... So you see, the point is that you can never understand this and many other things in most situations, if you don't have the situation, and in this case the object here which he is handling and showing variously. You couldn't either understand it by just seeing the gestures. It is a configuration of handling the object, the gestures and the linguistic resources that are used.

So..., back to dialogicality. You saw in this little film how he was doing gestures and how he was handling things, sort of dynamically. And dynamics is an important keyword in dialogicality, because thinking involves more than just static structures and more than individuals. We often want to talk about movements. These movements sometimes can be relatively discrete moves, but often they are chains of

continuous movements. Like when we are talking, the phonetics are not a sequence of segments, but rather continuous gestures. Just like singing language. And when we talk we sort of maneuver into positions where we can say a particular thing. It's not something that can be done without preparations and so on. ... We sort of pave the ground for playing out..... making a move... So development, evolution, genetic explanations are important here. And when I say genetic explanations of thinking, language, etc., I am not talking about genetics, but about genesis, how things develop, evolve. And I think that this is a very important part of the analysis. Trying to see how things emerge at one or the other time scale. So we can talk about evolutionary biology where things in phylogenesis have developed over very long time scales in the development of the human cultural species. Ontogenesis is the individual's cognitive and communicative biography. The socio-historical genesis would be the cultural development over generations. And micro-genesis is the situated development of a particular encounter. A particular conversation where things develop; and things said at one stage must be seen in relation to what has been said before. This is the perspective that more advanced forms of thinking or communication emerge from precursors that the individuals involved can use before. Which means also that the biography of the individuals can be important in order to understand what they can do and what they cannot do. And in some cases it's a question of a shared biography between those who communicate, which is so obvious for you, who work with the deafblind. But it's actually, seeing the deafblind children is an eye-opener for us, who haven't that immediate experience. Because this is what has happened with our children as well, although of course things went much faster.

So this is downplaying a bit structural explanations. You know, that kind of explanation where you said that in order to understand something said in language for example, you must know how the language as a whole is structured to see the position of the particular phenomenon, the particular unit. That's the argument from Saussure and Chomsky and other leading linguists. There is no evolutionary dimension there. For example they would have tremendous difficulties in understanding how we could use negation. Negation is such an abstract thing in language. So it can't be explained, except by assuming that it is innate. And there are many examples like that. But if you study how small infants use negations in situations where the thing that you should avoid is very close to them and it's in the concrete world that they learn to use the first forms of negation and then going in to advanced logic, it's a long way, sure, but you can see a lot of the stages there.

So, I ... Some of the difficulties of mainstream linguistics have to do with the fact that they start from the fully developed system of the maximally competent and advanced individual. And they don't look at how this system has developed into what it is. A part of that is also very much an idealized system of course..we don't see it directly. Nobody has seen the universal grammar.

OK, yes, the term language appeared in the title, so I thought I would say just a few things about how I look upon that. And how people like me, in the language sciences, would tend to think. I am very much opposed to the mainstream theoretical linguistics, as you may understand... ... and I don't think it's a good idea to start from the idea that language is a very specific thing that can't be explained by recourse to other abilities that people have. So, even if we were to end up with the theory that it is a special module in the mind, or even in the brain, like the theory of mind and language theory of Chomsky would argue, I think it's a better idea to think of it as an evolutionary product of many interacting abilities.

Cognitive abilities, communicative abilities, perceptual abilities and senses and motor capacities, emotional abilities and the ability to act, agency, ... So, perception and cognition and emotion and etcetera are all involved in linguistic behavior and linguistic interaction. For example when we intervene in the world, doing things, we often use language as a support for various things and even a linguistic action can move people to do things, as you know.

So of course, once language has been established as a resource for the individual, than perception and cognition etc... can be done in a different way. They are effected and the kinds of interventions will be transformed and enhanced. And culture, literacy have made a great difference. So I think it's a very strange idea to think that language has nothing to do with culture, as the linguistic theories would have it.

There has been a tradition to look at written languages as simply the secondary representation of the language which is already there, but once you have writing and literacy, you can do many more things that you couldn't do before. So, one of the important things about language is that culture makes a difference. Otherwise of course, one would say that there are certain domains of language studies that remain important. So, I would say it is important that you can make concepts, you can categorize things in the world. And that interacts with language in the sense of once you start to label things, use words for different categories like the crab, than you sort of lexicalize the conceptualizations of the world. So of course that's a lexicon. We can form complex signs of less complex signs, that's syntax. Some people think that syntax is the most important thing in language like Chomsky does. I don't think that this is necessarily true. I think the other things are also important. And than we have the so called digital organization of the phonetic behavior, which means that we reuse certain kinds of gestures like sounds and prosodies and so on, and combine them in different ways. These sounds don't have meaning in themselves usually, but they are used in order to build up meaning for utterances.

And than we have the whole range of abilities to infer meanings, not from language itself, but from linguistic utterances, used in contexts. This ability to infer, to develop stories for example, the narrative element and so on, that goes far beyond lexicon, syntax and phonology. Usually this is called pragmatics in linguistics. But we also have this fifth point, which is the impact of technology, the impact of artifacts and the transformative role it has on how we can think, what we need to memorize, how we can communicate. And of course the internet has created a lot of new types of communication and we'll see what happens. Otherwise I think, of course there are different semiotic systems available and I just remind you of this; this is not an exhaustive list of course, but spoken languages is not exactly the same as signed language, as you all know. I mean you can't just think that signed language is a secondary version of spoken language or the other way around.

Written language, when we have written language on paper, the classical type of writing, is very different from spoken language and now we have developed all these forms of electronic languages, which has the combination of both, using marks on some kind of artefactual substrate, but they are interactive. So, these different semiotic systems of course involve many differences of which some are whether we use exclusively our bodies as in signed and spoken language (that's not true actually, because we use the world around us, as we just saw that) but in some sense this is embodied language,

whereas written language of course always involves artifacts. And some are proximal, in the sense that they involve direct interaction or very close interaction between people who are present. And then we have distant, and so on... I'll leave that.

I think I'll just mention here that I wrote a book, some years ago, which I worked on for many years, called "The written language bias in linguistics". And that is a rather difficult book perhaps, but what I tried to argue is that our conception of language in linguistics, in the language sciences and so on, is heavily influenced by our way of looking *at the news* (???) in written language, particularly literally printed language. And a lot of ideas about how language is, the nature of language, the structure, have been heavily influenced by writing.

There are two things about this theory of the written language bias, I would like to emphasize. *First of all* I am not saying that all these things are completely wrong, because there is something in the idea that we have vowels and consonants. For example you get evidence for that in speech errors, where we sort of permute by mistake the sounds. But the point is that there is much more than that. There is prosody, there are bigger movements so to speak that are just as important and maybe syllables and syllabic structures are very important and so on. It's not that words never have any fixed meanings. Actually we work a lot on that point, in order to stabilize meanings in certain domains of language use, for example in science, or in administration. Or wherever, etc. But the point is that this cannot be taken as the full theory of language, specially not spoken language. *And the other point* is that this is not a theory that says that literacy and written language is unimportant. On the contrary! I think writing and literacy introduce new things that are extremely important in our cultures, and they actually transform language the way we use it and also to some extent its form.

There is much more of a strive towards propositionalized language to write in terms of full closes and sentences, which we don't use in a.....Ja, just now before the break here..... after the break we'll say a little bit about interactions and I think some of the basic points here are that interactions tend to be asymmetrical. We don't do the same things. Two partners don't do the same things in most interactions. But they do different things. One may ask for advice, the other may give it; one may ask a question, you get an answer; one will greet, the other will reciprocate the greeting, which is not quite the same and of course in many interactions between people with different capacities you see more of a radical distribution of communicative labor. So that is an important concept. The distribution of communicative labor. You do something, I do something, together we do something that we perhaps couldn't do by ourselves. We sort of entertain some kind of projects together.

And I think that, if we look at the interactions with what we might call weaker parties, than there are these asymmetries, but they can take different forms. One might want to differentiate between those where the stronger party takes a scaffolding or supporting stance or attitude; the stronger party will guide the other one. The weaker party will follow and try to be part of it and then the stronger party will follow up and explain and so, as we do when we talk with our children. There is of course also the attitude of a strong party, exploiting the strong position by dominating and domineering, governing. So that he would order the other what to do and the other has to support herself. And the strong party will

decide and so on...We can discuss whether both these tendencies in communication are dialogical. In some sense I think they are, but in other senses they are not.

OK, What I thought I could do, is to show with permission this wonderful clip from the collection by Souriau-Rodbroe and others, showing Ingerid, who is 24 I think here, and with practically no sight or hearing. And Gunnar, her partner here. And they are on some kind of a pier by the sea. They have a bucket with small crabs there. Actually this is part of a very course transcription of this, at the end of your handouts. The last two pages here are from this. But I suggest that we just watch this film first. And I won't make a complete analysis of this, but I will just point at some things here. So I hope it will work now.

I Think most of you have seen this film before and you saw.... There was a scene on the pier at the sea, where they are involved in this activity of trying to find out what this crab is and what it can do and so on. This is done in several different rounds and then the day after they are rehearsing or repeating or recycling this in another situation when they have this common experience from the day before, but they don't have the same resources. There is no real crab on the second day, etc... I think here, as you have pointed out so beautifully in that book, what happens in this kind of communication, is very often that a certain activity is gone through in several rounds in re-cyclings. You recycled for example a sequence of actions, as in this particular example.

In some other activities it can be a little bit different, but it's still often this kind of recycling, as if you have a nursery rhyme, being ritualized and repeated.... And of course these recyclings occur also when we communicate with others or our own small infants. And in other situations actually in conversations there is a lot of recycling of certain ingredients. But one of the points is, that these recyclings are not pure repetitions. They are recyclings with variations because sometimes some resources are exchanged and substituted by other resources, for example you have more of signs in stead of the real event. And you can expand certain phases of it, or you can summarize, compress it, or re-contextualize it. So that for example I think one can say that in this activity with the crab, either the real crab or the played, imitated crab, you have an activity which is organized in terms of recycled sequences and these sequences themselves are structured, so that there are different phases in them. So I mean, perhaps one could talk about this getting up the crab, and then let it run on the arm; Gunnar's own arm or Ingerid's arm, and then perhaps repeating this a couple of times and then you leave this performance itself moving into a phase where you sort of summarize what has happened. What was that? *Ja hvad var det?* And often you make some kind of a point: this is what happened, and maybe some kind of a celebration there of the experience.

And this kind of phase structure occurs several times here, with a preparation phase, or an entrance if you want. And then the performance of the event, the actions, and then the summarizing phase. And in this short transcript (if you call that a transcript on page 9 and 10 of the handouts). I have only tried to write down the ingredients of two of those rounds, but there are at least 4 or 5 on the pier, but this is the second and third and I think the first one is basically line one to five, where Gunnar lets the crab run up his own arm and then re-acts this event by iconic movements. ...

... So there is a sort of a preparation phase up to line 11 or so, and then comes the performance rising at least two runs by the real crab. And one interstitial faked run. So that is the performance here. Then there is some kind of a, perhaps more emotionally outgoing enthusiastic celebration of the event. Lines

18 to 21 or something like that. And then on the second day of course it's different. Some of the actions perhaps magnified in a sort of being even more salient and perhaps the role of tactile signs and so on is greater there. When you read this, I mean if you were to do a real transcription of it, it would involve so many more things. I think it would be nearly illegible.

But what is one feature of it is, as I said here in the text, that Ingerid becomes almost invisible in the transcript. Because what she is doing is much more fragile and much more fragmented and sometimes it's not very clear what happens with her. You really have to look for this, but I don't know if you agree. We can't discuss it here perhaps, but there is a certain progression from the first day to the second day in that she becomes more of a communicator who takes some initiatives. This is something that you may want to look for, that kind of small changes in the recycling, so there is really a variation, some progression, across the rounds. What we have here is of course a joint activity, a joint communicative activity. You can regard that as a big project. You can also say that the different constituent rounds are projects in themselves. They do it once again, is a project. But these are very asymmetrically organized. The division of labor is extremely uneven.

But one could often analyze such a project in terms of who is initiating them, who is then the main actor, or the main speaker in the body of the activity and who is the addressee. And if there are different people, are they direct or indirect addressees. And even other participants who are not addressees but who are legitimately there. With ratifications so to speak, like observers. And other third parties in the participant framework. For example an artifact may be one party here. And in this case we would perhaps even say that the crab is one participant here.

But if you have these different, if you want activity or discursive roles (like initiator, main speaker and so on), this is often a two course analysis, because in reality these things are negotiated and people jointly somehow negotiate their role. For example the initiation may be divided up on one who sort of gives a slight sign that (maybe Ingerid does that on the second day... we could perhaps do it again. And some of you can snip it. You are much more salient on that point I think) but than most of the job of initiating the activity would still be done by the partner here. And also you can have several main speakers or main communicators of course. But in an ordinary conversation you tend to share this in some topics although there is a clear tendency for topics to be owned by certain people. So somebody has something to say and she becomes the main speaker. For an episode or so. But the participant framework is very obvious in the communication with the disabled, with persons with disabilities.

A couple of more notions here. I think that in the interdependencies with others and the world, people have singled out different kinds or different levels, so that there is something that (and that in Paris, I think, Colwyn Trevarthen will come back to these notions of different kinds of inter-subjectivity). In the primary inter-subjectivity you have sort of an interaction between the two people and they are engrossed in these nursery rhymes together there, and sort of forgetful of the world around them.

Then you have this situation where the two parties, under the guidance of the stronger party focus their attention on something, a third thing, an object for example. In this case the crab. So you have what Trevarthen and Braten would call secondary inter-subjectivity because there is still these two there, but they are somehow jointly focusing on a third thing. So you have three different poles in this interaction.

And then you can have various forms of a more advanced tertiary interactivity, where maybe that object that you talk about is not present but it is something that you create linguistically and still you have also these other things of bringing in other people's opinions, voices and so on. As if they were internal voices in the discourse of those who are present there. And there are various sorts of that.

What I would like to point out here, as has been pointed out by others of course, is that these are not exclusively stages of development. So that the primary inter-subjectivity sort of would be left behind once you have developed into secondary or third types of inter-subjectivities. Because these layers persist throughout life and in some situations we do somehow come back to primary inter-subjectivity, although, I am sorry to say, Rodin's *Le Penseur* didn't quite live up to that, perhaps.

Another thing that is easy to observe in the data, like Gunnar and Ingerid's activities here, is the emergence of meaning. Of course not everything happens there and then, but there is some kind of a progression. From experiencing somehow the wholeness of the situation with the crab there and the event of the crab running on the arm, as some kind of a total experience, into Gunnar's highlighting of the different aspects of it. It sort of focuses on the crab and maybe you signed somehow the notion of crab. And then you have the notion of the movement, as another aspect of the situation. And there are other such components which you can see in the situation. So here there is this beginning of analyzing a situation into the subject and the verb, verb-al action as we have in language. Highlighting aspects, trying to single out components and references that are then assigned names: "*Ja hvad var det?? krabben!*" and so on labeled. It's nice, by the way, as you pointed out, the word verb, a sign, giving a sign, one label to something. And then of course later on these become more freestanding signs in the sense that you need not have the concrete event there. You can actually use the signs and so on. But these develop out of these pre-conceptual, pre-semiotic, pre-conscious aspects of sense making and of course these too persist through life, so that sense making later on in life is not always exclusively and exhaustively conceptual linguistic conscious.

That's the conscious aspects of sense-making, supported by language sort of tend to arise out of a more vague and misty situation sometimes. So this role of emergence from a time of preverbal, verbal and nonverbal mediated resources, is a gradual one. And I don't think it's a good idea to start your theorizing about language by assuming that language is totally different from everything else in the world. That is linguistics.... That was part of establishing linguistics as a separate discipline. We needed to assume that language was something specific. So than you may run the risk of cutting off the links with other things.

The other thing that I have also highlighted a bit here is the role of shared communicative biographies. This is something that I also think has been neglected in linguistic theory, because linguistic theory has been so much depersonalized, as if language was simply an abstract system, de-contextualized from real people. In actual fact I think when we learn language as we have seen in this case, there is a shared-ness with specific others that is an important resource for going further and using what you have experienced in new situations where you perhaps develop it. You find such an idiosyncratic personal individual word-meanings for example in small infants, as we all know.

But also in later developments, perhaps not only, not so much shared-ness with individuals only, but more shared-ness with groups, generalized others. But nevertheless, it must be shared to some extend.

It's not that you share everything, but we have to share sufficiently much in order to understand. So, where words become relatively situation-independent some of them. But they still tend to be associated with topical domains. You use words in certain kinds of situations, about certain things. And in certain activity types. And there are different styles and so on. There are dirty words for example as you shouldn't use here.

To finish up here, I would not miss the opportunity to mention that dialogical theories need to be, I think, interdisciplinary. We need to try to see the complexity of the human life and the human sense making with language, perception, cognition, action, intervention, volition and so on. That reality doesn't come organized in academic disciplines, although we might in academia think that so.

Finally one more point here. And this has to do with the relation between dialogical theories and human values. Sometimes, when we talk about dialogical theory and dialogism, many people think that this is a theory of how people should be. And that is nice people who are open to giving space to the other. To listen to the other. To have a society with equal opportunities and so on. And I think that dialogical theory is neutral with respect to that. It's a theory of how people make sense and they don't always make sense in that way at all. We have a lot of asymmetrical situations, societies. We even see Machiavellian personalities sometimes around us. And I think the theories should be capable of explaining that kind of very asymmetrical interactions as well. Because these are forms of human sense making which are out there and dialogical theories should be empirically and descriptively, adequate and robust theories of human interaction and sense making. So, even totalitarian organizations are there in the world and that's one way of exploiting the abilities. Something that we might not want to see so much of... and therefore maybe there is also another sense of dialogies, some kind of an applied dialogical ethics in which you sort of try to derive a kind of attitude, a kind of human values from the basic assumptions that we are dependent on others. That we need other people in order to develop, to understand the world. And some of us are less able to do that, weaker, ... their resources are fewer, they are more fragile. They are more biography-specific as I think Anna Nafstad has written in the very beautiful paper 'Communication as Cure'. About that attitude of trying to see some signs of initiative of the agency in the deafblind person and to build upon that, to adopt that kind of scaffolding, supporting attitude rather than the Machiavellian and domineering, governing attitude. So I also think there is indeed something like that.... There is a possibility of an applied dialogical ethic. And I think that this is something that was developed by some dialogue philosophers; Martin Buber for example, Bakhtin certainly has it and Levinas is another clear exponent of this.

So yes, I just refer to this book here. Most of what I have said is there and there is more in it and this is the clip, and many of the thoughts actually come from Souriau, Rodbroe, Janssen. Wonderful organizers here. That's it !

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Video-transcription: M. Daelman. With apologies for possible mistakes.