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Controversy as a Developmental Tool in Cross Self-Confrontation Analysis

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Abstract

In Psychology, the issue of language usage as a means of action in psychological life requires that we question the relations between the forms of language expression and their psychological functions. The current paper contributes to an understanding of this question. The relation between form and function is examined here, with particular focus on a discursive and dialogic method employed in the Activity Clinic approach to elicit controversy as a means of developing dialogical thinking. We argue that the interfunctionality of levels of dialogue serves developmental processes, promoting thought and the possibilities for its elaboration. We describe these developmental processes on the basis of an empirical analysis of a sequence from an intervention conducted with Roman Catholic Priests on preaching in homily. Our methodological frameworks have the function of vivifying dialogical thinking about work, by making use of the interfunctionality of levels of dialogue and the vital function of social relations in the psychological life of the subjects.

Keywords: Dialogue, Development, Dialogical Thinking, Interfunctionality, Inner Dialogue, Preaching

Introduction

In Psychology, the issue of language usage as a means of action in psychological life requires that we question, in one way or another, the relations between the forms of language expression and their psychological functions. The current paper contributes to an understanding of this question. It is this relation between form and function that we attempt to examine here, and in particular, a discursive and dialogic method employed in

the Activity Clinic approach to elicit controversy as a means of engaging the minds of the professionals involved with us and our methodologies.

The first part of the paper introduces the functional relationship of thought and language and the links between the transformation of language forms and development. Initially, we discuss the relation between form and function in Human Sciences, as well as the interfunctionality of levels of dialogue and the emergence of dialogical thinking. We then present the dialogical aspects of the cross self-confrontation (CSC) method, and analyze how the interfunctionality of levels of dialogue may serve development. The second part of the paper describes these developmental processes on the basis of an empirical analysis. The sequence analyzed is excerpted from an intervention conducted with Roman Catholic Priests on preaching in homily. We highlight how inner dialogue shifts to external dialogue, and back, thus supporting elaboration.

The relation between form and function in Human Sciences

The relation between form and function is a question that continues the work of Vygotsky, and for some, such as François (2005), is the “most original vision ... according to which the diversity of relations between language and that which is not language leads to heterogeneous types of thought” (op.cit. p.135). Brossard (2004) returns to the sources of Vygotsky’s ideas, and in particular to those concerning the relation between the forms of language and their functions, from the work of Humboldt and Iakoubinski. This preoccupation with the study of relations between form and function is clearly present in *Thought and Language*, but already existed as early as 1925 in *Psychology of Art* (1925/1971). In this work, Vygotsky studied the conflictual relations between form and content that underlie the aesthetic response¹. According to Brossard, Vygotsky never lost sight of the dialectical unity of forms of language and their functions in the mind, which enabled him to explore concurrently the different forms of verbal thought, and furthermore to “make certain discoveries whose significance modern psychology still has difficulty to evaluate” (op.cit., p.66). For Vygotsky, Brossard reminds us, no verbal function prevails over another. It is necessary to study them in terms of their origins, in the diversity of their functions, and in their way of functioning.

Thus, the functional relationship of thought and language is to be found in a complex relationship of transformation of forms towards new functions. Analyzing the relation between form and function is not standard practice in modern psychology. To account for this, we could refer to the fault lines in the discipline described by Vygotsky in 1926 that are still in place today (Clot, 2012).

These epistemological struggles are also not unique to psychology. Elsewhere, in sociology, the ethnomethodology of Garfinkel (1967) defines itself in terms of the necessity to study the concrete conditions for construction and accomplishment of social facts. The sociology promoted by Garfinkel is a sociology that permits discovery of the

¹ On this subject, see the analysis by Ernica (2008), who attempts to account for the evolution of the major themes in Vygotskian theory in the author’s principal works. Among these themes, we find the social status of consciousness, the function of emotions in thought and development, and, finally, the relation between form and content or form and function.

concrete, observable, day-to-day procedures by which members of a society interpret, produce, and constantly revise social reality. For this reason, there is no doubt that ethnomethodology and conversational analysis can constitute a route, albeit unexpected, to the work of Vygotsky. In psychology, Deleau (1995, 2004) sees the need to concretely analyze this relationship: “It is not enough to establish that mastery of the instrument modifies conduct; it is necessary to analyze how the instrument itself is mastered and on which organizations this mastery is based ... [When we] consider that ‘psychological tools’ are responsible for transformation of mental activity, we must study anew the development of those tools – look at the organizations that make them possible and at the factors that regulate their acquisition” (Deleau, 1995, p. 22). For the same reasons, several years later the author argues that: “One of the promising areas for support of a cultural-historical conception is socio-discursive analysis, which is to say, the analysis of speech exchanged while accomplishing activities in common” (Deleau, 2004, p. 17). This proposition, which we endorse, nevertheless presents several epistemological, theoretical, and methodological issues, especially when it comes to studying dialogical frameworks constructed to intervene in the psychological life of subjects. However, let us first examine how we can view the relation of thinking to dialogue, and how the methodology of cross self-confrontation can put it into motion. Indeed, if, as affirmed by the Activity Clinic, controversy has a developmental function, we need to have a theoretical model that allows us to understand the relationship between a form of dialogic activity (the controversy) and the activation of thought.

Interfunctionality of levels of dialogue and dialogical thinking

Vygotsky (1934/1986) insisted that language, like other functions, is first social and thus directed towards others before being individual and turned towards oneself. It is social before being psychological. The functions of language in thought are the result of the internalization of interpersonal language forms. For Vygotsky, internal language is of this nature.

More recent works (Markova, 2003; Linell, 2009; Fernyhough, 1996, 2008) have broadened the understanding of internalization and its consequences for the relationship between dialogue and thought. For Fernyhough (2008; p.233), thought implies a conversation with oneself. This dialogical thinking is characterized by integration of different perspectives on the same object within the same psychological action. Based on Vygotskian studies that explain the emergence of internal language, and in keeping with Bakhtinian work on the co-existence of voices in discourse, Fernyhough tries to account for the ontogenetic development of dialogical thinking. He advances the idea of the emergence of dialogical thinking in line with the equivalent developmental process described by Vygotsky in the advent of inner speech. This development proceeds through 1) a progressive decline of interpsychological and externalized expression, accompanied by 2) a development of new internal and intrapsychological functions. He thus distinguishes different levels in the functioning of dialogue, corresponding to the four stages of its development. Dialogue therefore becomes progressively internalized, according to the following model (Fernyhough, 2008, p.237). The four levels of internalization of dialogue are as follows:

- Level 1: *External dialogue*. First the child engages in interpersonal dialogue with an adult or a peer. This dialogue is based on the habitual structures of conversation.

- Level 2: *Private speech*. The child then talks to him- or herself aloud, in a way that clearly shows this form of speech is not addressed to others but to the self.
- Level 3: *Expanded inner dialogue*. The externalized form of *private speech* then gives way to an initial form of inner dialogue that manifests as a silent conversation with oneself. At this level, says Fernyhough, the syntactic and semantic forms of language have regressed but the inner dialogue retains the interactional and sequential aspects of conversation, its “give-and-take” patterning. The possibility of having different perspectives of the same object, which co-exist or are in opposition, is still supported here by this internal conversational format.
- Level 4: *Condensed inner dialogue*. The inner dialogue can then discard its sequential and successive form, and accommodate the simultaneous co-existence of different perspectives within a dialogic interaction that is not based on the *give-and-take patterning* of conversation. It is at this stage, according to Fernyhough, that thought becomes what Vygotsky qualified as “thinking in pure meanings”.

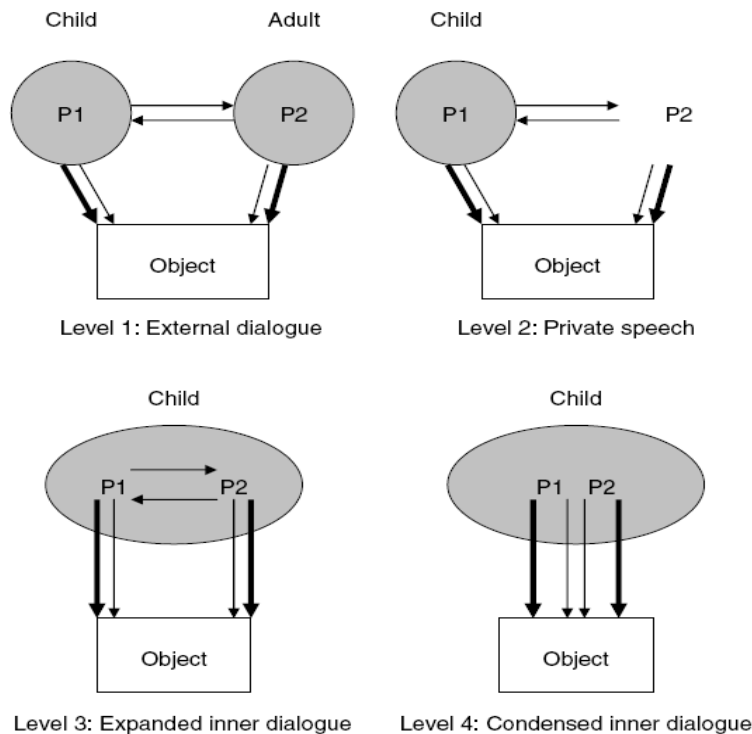


Figure 1. The development of dialogical thinking according to C. Fernyhough (2008).

Thus, as described by Fernyhough, dialogical thinking comes into being through the internalization of the perspective of the other (in triangulation), and then discards both semantic and syntactic forms and patterns of alternation in verbal exchange, allowing for co-existence of different perspectives on the same object. The author states in a previous paper that these co-existing perspectives are often conflicting (1996, p.51). Hence, according to his work, interlocution is not only one form of dialogue usage: It is also an ontogenetically and functionally primary form of dialogue. Indeed, the exercise of interlocution is intimately linked to the exercise of dialogue in its different forms. As noted by Faïta (2001, p.281): “In the dialogic process, the person engaged in development in the dialogical order is thus within him- or herself while in communication with others.

The actions of verbal exchange gain meaning and value both in the actual dialogue context (the ‘representation’ engendered by the interactive process) and in the context of his or her own experience. When the latter is shared by the interlocutors, then confrontation unfolds in all the dimensions of the dialogue and makes it a plenary activity where elements of prior actions are redeployed, where underlying values interfere ... where the traces of the excluded, of repressed choices, reappear.” Consequently, the exchange will not only constitute a reality founded in language, but also a fundamental location for the exercise of dialogue, internally and externally. These processes inherent to verbal exchange are involved in a wide range of human activities, and are at the core of psychologists’ work, regardless of the fields or contexts in which they practice or their goals.

Analysis in cross self-confrontation: Interfunctionality of levels of dialogue as a means of development

Cross self-confrontation sessions (Clot, 1999, 2008, 2005; Clot & Faïta, 2000; Clot & al., 2000; Clot & Kostulski, 2011; Kostulski, 2005; Kostulski & Clot, 2007) create a framework to permit dialogue about details in the performance of work.

This method is based on video recording of work activity, because recording shows the ways in which professionals have performed their activity, and the other ways that they have haphazardly abandoned. We first select the contexts of activity to analyze; we then choose two voluntary subjects for analysis in each of those contexts, and then, after a period of observation, film the activity of the two participants for subsequent collective discussion about their ways of operating in those situations. The analysis based on these films then proceeds as follows: We request that each subject watch the film of his or her activity alone with us; the subjects are instructed to focus on analyzing the details in their ways of working – what they did, how they did it, what surprised them when they saw themselves working, what seemed to weigh on the situation, and what resources were available to act effectively. This is called analysis in simple self-confrontation. Here, the function of the psychologist is mainly to keep the focus on the details of the activity and to question their means, their assumptions, their ways of completing something, and the history behind the activity. We ask the two volunteers, who were filmed performing identical tasks, to watch the films of their respective activities together. In this way, we effectuate the analysis in cross self-confrontation. Of course, the juxtaposition of the two films, which show the step-by-step performance of the activity required to complete the same task, demonstrate differences in the professionals’ ways of operating, in their interpretation of the procedure, in the internal organization of their workgroups, and in relations with stakeholders from other groups. According to this method, we consider what the subject is actually doing, as well as the dynamic of possibilities and impossibilities – objective and subjective, individual and collective – that lead to the observable results of the work. The professionals take these questions into consideration and engage in dialogue on ways of operating and on their presuppositions. The psychologist here favors a *deliberative dialogue* on ways of operating by providing reminders about differences that were either directly perceptible or pointed out by the subjects while watching the films. We also film the dialogue between the professionals while they watch the initial films. This shows their surprise, the questions they ask each other, their hesitations, their disagreements, as well as their silences, which are sometimes more eloquent than their speech. Finally, and to commence our collective analysis, we ask all participants at each group session to watch excerpts from the video that show particular

moments during the work activity and during the discussions between the professionals. Different frameworks of dialogue thus permit development of the analysis: alone, with a colleague who is also confronted by images of the self, and with the entire collective associated with the intervention.

The language-based processes implemented in cross self-confrontation appear to have “large” and diversified dialogical contours. Actually, cross self-confrontation sets up a succession of different dialogic frameworks that bring about multiple forms of dialogue regarding the object being analyzed. We attempt to understand developmental aspects by analyzing conversational, discursive, and dialogical activities in the sequences of self-confrontations (Kostulski, 2005; Henry & Bournel Bosson, 2008; Kloetzer, 2008), as is the case in this study, with a view to understanding the dynamic in which conversation, discourse, and dialog occurs, as well as the psychological processes evoked within the subjects.

In the broad sense of this dialogic method, the repetition of these dialogues in different contexts already has a developmental function (Clot, 1999; 2004). The discourse of the subject is affected by changes of recipients and dialogical contexts. It may evolve, as it is targeted at different people: In simple self-confrontation, the researcher is the main recipient of the subject's discourse. In cross self-confrontation, the subject answers questions or comments initiated by a single colleague and engages in a discussion with him/her. The researcher is still a recipient, but not the main one. During the whole self-confrontation process, the group of peers is the invisible but present superaddressee (Bakhtin, 1986) of the exchanges, as the subject knows that the simple and cross self-confrontations are video-filmed for further collective discussion.

At a more granular level of analysis, the method brings about a diverse range of dialogical forms and the functions inherent in that diversity. A subject's inner dialogue is elicited from the moment filming starts, as the fact of being observed by the interviewer and the camera serves as a means of self-observation. This inner dialogue is developed in simple self-confrontation when the interviewer, alone with the professional, asks for explanations, asks for analyses, and asks what surprises the subject while watching a film of his or her own activity. Here, the actual dialogue is only a façade as the psychologist is already helping the subject to develop his or her thinking. This simple self-confrontation dialogue, in its relation of form to function, resembles the hybrid of internal and external speech that Piaget and Vygotsky² debated in their famous controversy: Piaget referred to this speech

² In *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky engaged in a debate with Piaget over the nature of “egocentric speech”, a controversy whose epistemological value remains intact. Egocentric speech is the language produced by children when they engage in solitary activity while in the presence of other children. It is a collective monologue: Even though other children are present, the speech is not addressed at them. According to Piaget, this egocentric language is the expression of egocentricity in the thinking of the child while advancing towards socialisation: Egocentric language would therefore be an intermediate stage between the child's original egocentricity and its progressive socialisation. Thus for Piaget, the disappearance of egocentric language is the sign of the disappearance of the egocentricity in the thinking of the child, to the benefit of social thinking. For Vygotsky, the process is the exact opposite: at first the child is fundamentally social in nature, and egocentric speech is an intermediate structure in the development of language that permits the process of individualization. The developmental path is not one of progressive socialization but of progressive individualization. According to

as “egocentric”, whereas Vygotsky argued that it was an intermediate structure of language in the process of internalization. In such apparently concrete dialogue (as described by Fernyhough), the methodological framework redirects speech from its intended recipient: When the subject addresses the psychologist, the latter redirects the dialogue to get the subject to engage in self-directed speech instead, to concentrate thinking on the details shown in the film, and to express issues and reactions of surprise verbally. The psychologist then repeats the subject’s responses to get the subject to readdress the self and to re-examine those responses. Actually, this dialogue should already display a conflict between form and function – a conflict induced by the methodology. The function consists more of the externalization of internal dialogue. This is when both the “difficult to say” (François, 1998) and the possibility of regarding oneself with the eyes of another (Vygotsky, 1925/1987) lead the subject to examine his or her own ways of doing things and to construct a point of view, an enunciative position, that permits each person to engage in dialogue with a colleague in cross self-confrontation.

In these cross self-confrontation dialogues, the dialogue begins to play its part, but in another way: of controversy between peers about details of the work activity. In terms of the activity it brings about, we can define controversy (Kostulski, 2012) as “... a form of discursive activity, more precisely a deliberative and reciprocal activity that deploys opposing arguments in dialogue – arguments with the characteristic of being drawn from generic and historical themes within the profession”. This controversy between peers provides the opportunity for the professional to initiate, develop, and manifest that dialogical form in inner dialogue: an internal controversy involving the self, or more specifically between the self and the general forms of the professional milieu. In this way, the internalization depends equally on interfunctionality linking dialogical thinking and on the different forms that the dialogue can take. However, controversy also calls on processes of functional migration (Clot, 2003; Kostulski & Clot, 2007; Kloetzer & Henry, 2010): A deliberative dialogical activity carried out with a peer becomes the means of stimulating reflection – in a silent conversation with oneself.

The functional migrations at the core of this process are no doubt made possible by the polar oppositions inherent in language, which Vygotsky describes (*ibid.*), but also by the

Vygotsky egocentric language thus fills the intellectual function that will later be assumed by internal speech: This egocentric speech helps the child to be mentally oriented within his or her activities, to be aware of them, and to surmount obstacles. Egocentric speech thus assumes the functions of internal speech even while having the form of external speech. Its destiny is to transform itself into internal speech. Thus it is the child’s oral expression of this language that regresses but not the language’s functions. The disappearance of egocentric speech in children is not the sign of a decline, but the birth of a new form of language (1934/1997, p. 451). According to the author, egocentric speech marks the passage from interpsychological functions to intrapsychological functions. It is in this development that the speech for oneself is born due to a differentiation of the initial social function of language directed to others. Ultimately, egocentric speech corresponds to a stage of development of inner speech. Finally, note that the definition employed by Vygotsky for these languages is not chronological but functional. According to Vygotsky, inner speech doesn’t precede external speech, but is the opposite of it: External speech is a process of transforming thought into phrases, its expression, and its objectification. Inner speech is a process in the opposite direction, which moves from exterior to interior, a process of volatilization of language in thought.

interfunctionality of levels of dialogue described by Fernyhough (1996, 2004, 2008). Indeed, the levels of dialogue he defines do not imply that development is unidirectional:

It is important to note that this scheme is not intended to represent a one-way trajectory of development. Rather, it allows for movement between the four levels as processing demands change. For example, demanding cognitive conditions may result in a transition From Level 4 (condensed) inner speech to Level 3 (expanded) inner speech, or even to Level 2 (private) speech (Fernyhough, 2004b). This is consistent with the evidence from introspection that we experience a more explicit inner dialogue when a task is challenging (representing the Level 4 -> Level 3 transition). Under very demanding conditions, we may even speak to ourselves out loud (Level 4 -> Level 2), an observation that is also consistent with the evidence that children's (Behrend, Rosengren, & Perlmutter, 1989; Winsler & Diaz, 1995) and adults' (Duncan & Cheyne, 2001) private speech increases under cognitively challenging conditions. (Fernyhough, 2008, p. 238).

Therefore, the internalization of dialogue during development is neither unequivocal nor definitive, and dialogical thinking gains support from the four levels among which it can shift to find ways of realizing its aims: For example, we speak out loud when we don't feel capable of internal thought. Fernyhough actually advances the idea of a cognitive pay-off by reinstating the linguistic and interactional structures of inner speech. This pay-off can be understood as a recuperation of more explicit structures in the functioning of thinking, especially because the recuperated structures rely on the older and functionally more-solid system – the articulation of speech and of interactivity – to clarify thinking. Fernyhough studied this recuperation from a cognitive point of view: He states that the introspection we experience as internal dialogue becomes increasingly explicit as the difficulty of the current task increases. There is thus interfunctionality among the levels of dialogue – interfunctionality in the service of thought and the possibilities for its elaboration.

This leads us to formulate a hypothesis about the function of the dialogic frameworks constructed in an Activity Clinic. In our analyses through cross self-confrontation, we start with the objective dimensions of the activity and move towards an understanding of the Real of that activity via the means of its step-by-step implementation, which is made accessible by viewing the video recording of the activity. When we orchestrate discussion to lead to controversy, that is to say, a deliberative dialogue of perspectives³ on the details of the ways the activity is performed, we rehabilitate the functional forms of dialogue that are based on verbal expression, and facilitate the confrontation of perspectives that then take the social form of controversy between peers. In a way, our methodological frameworks have the function of vivifying dialogical thinking about work, by making use of the interfunctionality of levels of dialogue and the vital function of social relations in the psychological life of the subjects.

In terms of the interfunctionality of levels of dialogue, our methodological frameworks engage the older forms for accomplishing dialogue, forms that cause dialogical thinking to

³ The term “perspective” is employed here in the sense used by Fernyhough (2004, 2008) based on his interpretation of Bakhtin's polyphonic theory. Fernyhough makes use of the Bakhtinian concept of voices in language, which allows him to define how dialogue can incorporate different perspectives on reality (2008; p. 233).

regress to prior levels, and so provide support for its functions. For example, and to revisit the categorizations of Fernyhough, this takes place by returning dialogical thinking to level 3 – to a silent conversation with the self – and by using modes of expression from level 1 (external dialogue with another) and level 2 (private speech⁴) within the collective. And this is to return to more solid structures that, as Fernyhough asserts, support more explicit introspection, but that also benefit the vital force of social relations as a means of psychological development.

In terms of the psychological vitality of social relations, controversy is a form of deliberation both with and against the perspectives of the other, and this deliberation is the source of psychological vitality in its dynamic, affective, and conflictual dimensions – in the sense that they embody oppositions among perspectives on the same object, and these oppositions have the particular quality of referring to the “conflictuality” inherent in the performance of a profession. This last point matches the viewpoint of Clot (2003) in his examination of means of action in psychological life: According to him, action within the social context is perhaps the most certain means to act on subjective life.

At this point we propose to demonstrate the manner in which dialogical thought maintains conflictuality among perspectives on a work situation, conflictuality that can be elicited and realized in the concrete dialogue of cross self-confrontation.

A shift from inner dialogue to external dialogue and back: a controversy over first-person speech in homily

The developmental methodology of cross self-confrontation was chosen to co-analyze the activity of priests delivering homilies, with a group of voluntary Roman Catholic Priests. The research took place in Paris from June 2004 to July 2005, with the participation of eight priests. For details about the timeline of the research, see the diagram appended at the end of this article.

Delivering a homily is a demanding activity, which takes place in church during Sunday Mass, and is usually addressed to hundreds of parishioners. The homily itself is a short commentary (around 12 minutes) on biblical texts that have been read during the first part of the Mass. It is a liturgical act, set out by protocol but underspecified in its content or method. The initial demand of the priests engaged in this research was therefore to investigate the details of this activity, in order to share efficient ways of preaching with less experienced colleagues. The homily is a very interesting focus of research since it is, in Vygotskian terms, “a water drop object”: It holds all the properties of the activity of the priests within a small, demarcated, historical entity. Simple and cross self-confrontations were conducted on the basis of video recordings of actual homilies delivered by volunteers, paired so that they commented on the same biblical texts. The selected sequence is extracted from an interview in cross self-confrontation. The pair engaged in the co-analysis consisted of two diocesan priests from two upper-middle-class Parisian

⁴ The “instructions to a double” session involves use of private speech by participating subjects: Indeed, the scope of the session, its recording for later viewing by the subject, the need to submit to certain procedures (being listened to, being recorded) contribute towards making the subject – him- or herself – the initial recipient of his or her own speech, and this is potentially the case from the moment the instructions session begins.

parishes. One of the priests, a former Dominican monk, is a parish priest in the 16th district of Paris; the other is a curate in the 6th district and is concurrently a sociologist specializing in religious orders and a member of an academic research team. Both priests are intellectuals, and are concerned about the way they address their parishioners, who are reputed to be cultured and exacting. These socio-cultural characteristics undoubtedly influence not only the type of homily delivered but also the nature of discursive exchange. The priests adapt themselves to their interlocutors (this is part of their job), and thus to the socio-cultural, economic, and political diversity found in different parishes or within a single, often heterogeneous parish.

At the point where this sequence begins, the subjects already have experience in the Activity Clinic approach: During the early steps of the research, while we observed their activity in the field or on film, they answered our questions – which sometimes sounded strange to them – about the different ways they do their work. They are by now familiar with the video sequences discussed below, which they have already watched three times (once in simple self-confrontation, once at the beginning of the cross self-confrontation session, and once while commenting on and discussing the films). They have also experienced the specific framework and discourse genre of cross self-confrontation, as presented, enacted, defended, and supported by the researcher at the beginning of the meeting. In the sequence analyzed below, two priests, Fathers N. and G., and the researcher are looking at the film of Father N.'s homily. At the request of the researcher, Father G. is commenting on it, asking questions, and expressing surprise at differences from his own approach.

The sequence that we would like to analyze begins when Father G. stops the film to question Father N. on his use of a singular first-person pronoun in the homily. In the film of the activity that they are watching, Father N.'s words, in which the first-person pronoun is used, are audible: “Jesus is about to criticize this philosophy [of the Sadducees], which should make you feel better – me, too – Jesus is about to criticize this philosophy, and to do so he is going to...” This use of “me, too” triggers Father G.'s curiosity about the way his colleague uses first-person speech in his homilies. This point is very delicate, and a simple question could mask an implicit criticism. The question of speaking in the first person has been already raised in simple self-confrontation by Father G., who made a definitive statement: According to the best tradition, one does not speak for oneself during a homily, as one does not speak in one's own name but on behalf of the Lord. So, the pronouns “I” and “me” would be out of place in that activity. This clear statement seems to be a generic answer, supported by institutional discourse and professional training, to a recurrent problem – or temptation: In preaching from the pulpit, the priest is a man of flesh and blood, talking to fellow human beings, and affected by his individual experience, and who, as such, may use first-person speech for he is a man like others. In cross self-confrontation, Father G. notes that, in the recorded homily, Father N. speaks in the first person, using the expression “me, too”. Therefore, Father G. questions his colleague on this atypical usage. Note that we have numbered each speech unit in the dialogue for later reference:

1. *Father G.*: Eh – You also use “me” often – I mean to put yourself at the same level as the assembly, saying I am like you, I belong to...
2. *Father N.*: I mean I often tend to set myself in opposition, speaking from the point of view of Sirius [as if from a great distance], and to alleviate it – it's a trick I use – to alleviate the

impact when I speak somewhat critically, well, where I try to tell the parishioners, for instance, eh ... well, in fact, for instance I would denounce, I don't know, their being late for Mass. It's a typical thing, so I would tell them – yeah: "I'm fed up with your being late for Mass." That's what I want to tell them, but in reality I am going to say: "Well, I am like you, and sometimes it bothers me". So that is a, eh – it is something I use to make myself less remote but I do not know if it works; I've never had feedback about it.

3. *Researcher*: And you, that is not something you use?
4. *Father G.*: Yes, yes. Yes, yes, well....
5. *Researcher*: Not in that homily, anyway.
6. *Father N.*: No, not in that one.
7. *Father G.*: No, I haven't ever used it, or?...
8. *Father N.*: I don't think so.
9. *Researcher*: Once, maybe.

Father N. adroitly responds to Father G. by explaining how he takes advantage of their shared human situation to "alleviate the impact when I speak somewhat critically". One rule of thumb would be that priests should avoid offending people, but should also guide them and prevent negative behavior. Formulating the issue with a first-person statement may be a way to solve this difficult problem. The discussion would likely have stopped there, if the researcher hadn't turned their attention to Father G.'s way of speaking, as shown in the video recording of one of his homilies. The researcher's insistence is motivated by prior knowledge, from the simple self-confrontation, of Father G.'s point of view regarding first-person speech in homily: A priest should avoid using it. At that point, the researcher tries to get Father G. to express publicly, to his colleague, the point of view that he expressed to the researcher alone in a different context. The researcher succeeds at speech unit 10, when Father G. explicitly makes his argument by stating that "the nature of the homily is not one of testimony", even if he understands that sometimes using first-person speech may help make it "easier to listen to ... [and, in speech unit 12] so that they [the parishioners] see my speech is not abstract":

10. *Father G.*: I'm trying to ... yes once, I think that ... but in that case there are two things, eh.... The first thing is that I think the nature of the homily is not one of testimony. So it's not – I don't speak in the first person [singular]. In the end, I tell myself that people don't care what I think or care about my own life. It's not part of the purpose to say, "Look, this is what I have to tell you", so that is why I try to avoid using "I". And it seems to me the nature of the homily is that it is a speech that we make because we were given a mission – it's not me who decides to speak, so the use of "I" can blur the genre of speech. On the contrary, there are times when I can use "I", for instance, to talk at the audience's level and make what I have to say easier to listen to.
11. *Father N.*: Yes.
12. *Father G.*: It's to tell them something a little bit difficult, which is not necessarily intimate, but for example, death – my own death – that is when I spoke in the first person [singular] – it is hard to speak about the death of those who are closest to you and of your death, your own death – that's where I can speak in the first person [singular] so that they see my speech is not abstract.

13. *Father N.*: That's it.

14. *Father G.*: But instead the person speaking is someone who also lives through things and can understand us.

So far, Father G. has verbally expressed two conflicting perspectives that he holds in his mind simultaneously regarding the use of first-person speech in homily. The inner confrontation of perspectives takes the social form of controversy between peers. Under the pressing demand of the researcher and of his peer, supported by repeated observation of the video recordings, the level-4 Condensed Perspectives have been expressed verbally in a Level-1 External Dialogue, which is validated and further developed into a controversy when Father N. decides to address this issue directly by stating his fundamental disagreement on the true nature of the homily: He refers to the etymology of the homily to highlight its “intimate” nature, which would legitimize personal discourse:

15. *Father N.*: Sure. But I disagree with you about the nature of the homily. Since *homilein* is a verb that translates as discourse of love. That is to say, the intimate discourse.

16. *Father G.*: Yes but I do not think that there is any sort of love relationship between the preacher and, – eh, and the one he is talking to.

17. *Father N.*: *Sermo* means a small casual conversation between friends.

18. *Father G.*: All right. But – eh, it doesn't have to be related to love.

19. *Father N.*: Ah no, but it does not have to be – ah, but I....

20. *Father G.*: It is rather a sign of God's tenderness, okay, but we still are a medium, a form of mediation

21. *Father N.*: The friend of the Spouse but not the Spouse.

22. *Father G.*: Anyway. I think so (they both laugh).

23. *Father N.*: But, well, it doesn't matter.

This external dialogue, with its underlying controversy about the true nature of the homily, creates psychological effects. Father N. and Father G. experience disagreement, as Father N. is seeking an emotional, intimate relationship between the priest and the congregation, employing etymology to support his point, whereas Father G. argues that the priest is “a medium, a form of mediation”. “Love discourse”, initially mentioned by Father N. to support his point, is questioned by Father G., who redirects “love relationship” to the relationship between God and Humanity, not to the relationship between the priest and his parishioners, and then questions the word “love” itself, replacing it by “a sign of God's tenderness” and insists on their role as a form of mediation. In speech unit 21, Father N. acknowledges the point, using a biblical quote, which makes them both laugh as they recognize that they share the same background and values. This exchange is an important element of the discussion, as external dialogue, prompted by the argumentative demands of the controversy, reactivates their own internal dialogue on the point in question. This external dialogue has psychological effects, which then open new dialogical possibilities in the following exchange. Trust is required – in the dialogical partner, as well as in the dialogical framework – to be able to discuss truly difficult issues, as first-person speech points to the enunciative position, and therefore to the professional and personal identity,

of the subject. Both comforted by this recent, shared experience of disagreement/agreement and stimulated by the discussion, Father G. goes one step further by agreeing to explain his own views on the use of first-person speech in homilies:

24. *Father G.*: The homily – in the homily I try not to use “I” or rather “I think” more than twice. “I think” is a little bit different. I think that....
25. *Father N.*: Um....
26. *Father G.*: “I” more, but “I think that” – I avoid using it because people couldn’t care less about what I think. In terms of my personal opinions, which are not worth more than anyone else’s.
27. *Father N.*: Well, when I use the expression “I think that”, I do it on purpose. I mean when I absolutely have to inject a personal conviction within the argument so as to exist myself. But at what point? At the exact point when I have to commit myself as a person.
28. *Father G.*: It’s not to assert a truth.
29. *Father N.*: No, no.
30. *Father G.*: It’s so they’ll see it’s from you.
31. *Father N.*: No. And it’s – it’s because it is some kind of – it is a position we use – I use, as you put it, not very little – in that case it is something else. “Me, too” – I place myself at your side; I am a fellow traveler on the itinerary I am currently creating in front of you.

But when Father G. begins to express his views, he adjusts them within the dialogical framework. A gradual shift in focus is taking place from the forbidden use of the pronouns “I” and “me” to the forbidden use of the expression “I think/ I think that”. We hypothesize that these corrections are driven by the fact that Father G. is hearing what he says, simultaneously from his internal perspective and from the external perspective of his peer. In his statement, he integrates the alternative perspective formerly expressed in the external dialogue by his peer, and rectifies his point accordingly. This triggers interest and further reflection on the part of his colleague, who then begins to think on his own use of the expression “I think that”, recognizing it as problematic. The problem space under joint investigation in cross self-confrontation thus shifts and becomes more concrete: from a discussion on the use of first-person speech in general, to a discussion on the use of a specific expression, “I think that”. This exchange brings new elements to the topic under discussion from the outset: the enunciative position privileged by the priest in the specific dialogical context of the homily (both related to preaching and to liturgy). Father G. explains that this phrasing is problematic because it expresses the personal opinions of the priest, which should not be given more importance than any others. Reflecting on his own practice, Father N. explains how the expression is of restricted use, since it is used to express personal convictions in an argument: “... when I have to commit myself as a person”. “Me, too” would refer to very different dynamics, in which the priest places himself “as a fellow traveler”. The dialogue moves rapidly, as the two interlocutors master its underlying topics and premises. First-person speech is implicitly situated between abuse of their institutional position of authority – which would most of the time be condemned with reference to free will of the parishioners – and human solidarity, conceived as a mean to help the parishioners develop their own faith. The discussion is likely to stop here again, as confirmed when, in speech unit 31, Father N. closes the problem space that his colleague opened on “me, too” by asking his initial question. The

researcher then (in speech unit 32) uses a clinical trick: saying that she doesn't clearly understand the problem, to make them express the implicit dimensions of their discussion in an explicit manner. Her request leads Father N. (in speech unit 33) to elaborate in External Dialogue some of his Internal Dialogue on first-person speech:

32. *Researcher*: I don't understand well the problems posed by the expression "I think that" compared to just "I".
33. *Father N.*: I think that the problem is the reference. In other words, what [Father] G. says, which I understand very well, is that we are always referring to something or someone who represents a greater horizon than we do. So I cannot say that it is my own horizon. That is to say I do not represent anyone's horizon. For instance, if I say – eh, eh, I think that one cannot be a Christian and believe in reincarnation, basically I am asking people to position themselves in relation with what I think. But if I say that Christian revelation is not compatible with the idea of reincarnation, I am referring to a horizon that is equally in front of both me and them.
34. *Researcher*: Is that what you meant?
35. *Father G.*: Yes, completely. It means that the issue with "I think that" is that it applies to us, it directs attention towards us. If the purpose is to attract attention towards us so the entire community takes a step forward, it may be good, but if it's to keep the attention on us and blocks the horizon, well then it's – it's missed the point. We are here to direct attention to the Lord, the Other, the Wholly Other. We are not gurus, to put it differently. It's not – it's not me who holds the truth. So, in saying "I think that", we can potentially deal with a controversial issue where various opinions are possible, if I honestly think it is useful and will not create a division within the community – then, well, with caution. But there really has to be a reason and above all it should not give us more importance than we actually have.
36. *Researcher*: Okay, the "I think that" would be a sort of authority status?
37. *Father N.*: Yes.
38. *Father G.*: Yes.
39. *Father N.*: It's why I agree with G. You have to use the expression "I think that" very sparingly.
40. *Father G.*: Because "I think that" also means "I believe that and I ask you to believe that, too."
41. *Father N.*: That's it.
42. *Father G.*: It's implied, anyway.

The whole sequence shows the development of a controversy. In a dialogic movement, inner dialogue (Level 4: Condensed Inner Dialogue), simultaneously holding two conflicting internal perspectives (the useful or forbidden use of first-person speech in the context of the homily) turns into External Dialogue (Level 1), resulting in an interpersonal controversy among the priests on the legitimate use of first-person speech. This interpersonal controversy turns back into an intrapersonal extended dialogue (through Level 3) when both subjects realize that this controversy exists in each of them, as it constitutes a dilemma common to the activity of preaching. The exchanges filmed during simple or cross self-confrontation are revisited by the entire group of priests who volunteered to take part in the co-analysis. This allows a distinction to be drawn between context-specific issues and generic problems that they see as generalizable to their diverse situations. The specific characteristics of the initial pair of priests are disclosed at the start of this part of the analysis (a sound intellectual education, and assignment to upper-middle-class parishes viewed as consisting of the cultured and economically well-off). Though these characteristics may have visible effects within the individual's situation and

in self-confrontation, they do not impede priests with different outlooks – who work with lower-class parishers – from finding lines of reference in the exchange to structure their activity and interpret what they face on a daily basis. The co-analysis, revisited and developed in the group, thus permits a filtering of the problems endemic to their role that are at play during homily, and to organize a sharing of resources among all the participants regarding the dilemmas common to all.

The CSC method as a dialogical artifact

We have attempted to understand how interventions in cross self-confrontation can be a means to develop thinking and activity, and to understand the relationships between dialogue and thought in this process.

The clinical approach we use in these interventions has proven effective in a great range of trades and professional contexts – from industry to the magistracy, and from hospitals to education – in situations that are sometimes deleterious to the health of professionals. As we know, work does not always promote good health, and this subject is often the focus of requests for us to perform an intervention. Our vision is to permit professionals to develop their ways of performing their work, but it consists sometimes of simply permitting them to regain a grip on the actuality of their way of operating when – frozen by the weight of precedence – it jeopardizes not only the profession but also the health of the professionals involved (Litim & Kostulski, 2008; Clot & Kostulski, 2011). In this sense, our approach to action is first and foremost conceived in terms of clinical operations to respond to what might too tersely be described as psycho-social risks, or “risks to mental, physical, and social health, engendered by working conditions and organizational and relational factors with a likelihood of interaction with mental functioning.” (Gollac & al, 2012, p.31). In a way, we seek to act within the sphere of social relations, within the transpersonal and historic-cultural dimensions of the professional milieu, because these dimensions lie at the foundation of the psychological life of the subject in the workplace. In this sense, the Activity Clinic intervenes at the very foundation of work psychopathology.

In addition, our approach for action in the field of work opens the door to a field of research concerned with the psychological processes engaged in our interventions, to understand them as paths for subjective transformation of the activities under study and of the subjects who perform them, along with the way the dialogues operate within these processes in a subtle interweaving of the subjective and the social within psychological life. These dialogues have already been studied from other perspectives than that proposed here: from Bakhtinian perspectives, through speech analysis, or from the perspectives of pragmatic analysis of inner speech following Vygotskian theories. The approach we propose here, in relation with the work of Markova and Fernyhough, seems particularly conclusive in one way: It permits the objectification, in a concrete form of psychology, of the articulation linking the forms of dialogic expression and their psychological properties or functions (Kostulski, 2011). This articulation becomes an artifact that the subject can grasp and use as a developmental tool.

More precisely here, we have tried to understand what takes place in CSC dialogues that may make them become developmental tools for the subjects. In this sequence, we highlighted the developmental role of the interfunctionality of levels of dialogue. Going back and forth from external to internal dialogue and vice versa enables the subjects to deepen their reflection on professional concerns. The issue is not only one of

appropriation: It is not only that the priests internalize the external form of the dialogue; confronted by an unusual and challenging situation, they switch from one level of dialogue to another, from inner dialogue to an external dialogical realization of the conflictuality of perspectives, and from external dialogue back to inner dialogue. These shifts, that certainly support our daily dialogues, are not one-way, and in part, explain the use of casual conversation as a way to socially share one's relation to the world. The Activity Clinic method organizes these shifts in a systematic way: One of the uses of our method is as a specialized artifact that promotes variation of dialogical frames and recipients, and maintains work activity as the central, often conflictual, topic of dialogue. In this way, the cross self-confrontation method elicits different levels (modalities) of dialogue and promotes their interfunctionality. This interfunctionality, and the vital function of social relations in the psychological life of the subjects, supports the subjects' individual and collective reflection about work activity.

In any case, the place of the social in psychological life is not limited to the domain of work. The activity of children at school is thus also the subject of such analyses (Ouvrier Bonnaz & al., 2001), and we are currently engaged in analysis of other psychological practices using Activity Clinic methods. These new fields of study may permit us one day to employ these methods in the field of psychopathology. Such a shift of domains, especially towards the latter field, require continued reflection and maturation, because the demands therein and their underlying psychological dimensions are not the same as the mechanisms tested to date in the field of work psychology.

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Appendix 1: Timeline of Research with Priests from the Diocese of Paris

