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Dialogical Self Theory as a Bridging Theory

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Dialogical Self Theory (DST) is not an isolated theory, separate from other theories and concepts. On the contrary, it is an open theory that explicitly seeks contact and connection with other concepts and theories, resulting in “happy coalitions.”

To illustrate this thesis, I will explore the connection between DST and two advancements in psychology: (a) the concept of psychological richness as a recent development in the psychology of well-being; and (b) Self-Categorization Theory, which has produced a multi-dimensional identity concept in social psychology.

Recently, three forms of well-being have been distinguished: happiness, meaning, and psychological richness. A happy life is characterized by comfort, joy, and security. The main qualities of a meaningful life are purpose, coherence, and productive social relationships. A psychologically rich life is marked by diversity, curiosity, and wisdom. I will demonstrate that the latter form of well-being is directly relevant to the dialogical self as a multiplicity and diversity of I-positions.

Self-Categorization Theory was developed in social psychology in the last decades of the previous century and has been advanced in isolation from DST. It has distinguished three levels of identity: individual, group, and human. I will argue that in our present era, a third level is required: the ecological level. Moreover, I will demonstrate that these identities are linked by dialogical relationships, in agreement with DST’s principle that identity positions can be connected and organized through such relationships.

My central argument is that both psychological richness and Self-Categorization Theory, as separate developments in psychology, can be meaningfully linked and incorporated into DST. In its exploration of these and other theories and concepts, DST functions as a theory that explicitly looks for relationships and connections with other theoretical and conceptual developments in the service of their mutual enrichment.