

***“I am fighting the hardest battle for my Germanness now”*: Internal Dialogues of Victor Klemperer**

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Diaries of people living through turbulent times can be a valuable resource for the study of the dialogical nature of the self. Victor Klemperer’s diaries, first published in 1995, continue to generate considerable interest in the field of social history. For an interdisciplinary study that intersects history and psychology, the ways in which Klemperer confronted the dilemma of having converted to Protestantism and served in the German Army in WWI, while later being persecuted as a Jew and threatened with deportation by the Nazis, offer important insights that enable a closer examination of the Dialogical Self in crisis. His struggle to reconcile his German and Jewish identities, his constructed utopia of German society in which he sees the Nazis, not himself, as aberrations, and his constant reevaluations of his “Germanness,” bring to light an internal dialogue, or process of self-negotiation, under duress. This paper examines the dialogical struggles within the self of Victor Klemperer through analyses of selected sequences of inner dialogue found throughout his diaries.

Since their publication in 1995, Victor Klemperer’s “Third Reich” diaries have generated considerable scholarly interest in the field of social history. As one of the few published personal accounts by a baptized Jew, war veteran, and German patriot, they offer an unparalleled view into the Third Reich from the perspective of one of its victims. Klemperer’s depiction of personal struggle under Nazi tyranny and his vivid impressions of German society provide a remarkable portrait of daily life as a Jew in Hitler’s Germany. An astute observer of people and events as well as a gifted writer, Klemperer gives life not just to his own tribulations, but adds a human face to the travails of German Jews as they are humiliated, ostracized, and systematically transformed into pariahs in their own homeland. His diaries provide an anatomy of crisis. They unveil a sense of urgency and impending doom that capture the emotional trauma of social death and anticipated physical destruction.¹ After 1933, Klemperer documents the steady, incremental process of humiliation, segregation, and annihilation beginning with Hitler’s seizure of power until the Final Solution unfolds around him. Reduced to a nonentity in the country he unequivocally feels part of, Klemperer poignantly recounts the experience of exclusion from below - from

¹ Drawing on Orlando Patterson’s study of slavery in the United States, the concept of “social death” was applied by Marion Kaplan to describe the dehumanization and systematic exclusion of German Jews from mainstream society in Nazi Germany. See Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), and Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

“close to the ground,” revealing a shattered sense of disbelief, disorientation, and bitterness as he is systematically banished to the fringes of German society. Though exhibiting great immediacy, his writings are more so a protracted deliberation on his self-concept as a patriotic German, Protestant, and WWI veteran, who is persecuted by the Nazis for being a Jew.

Memoirs and diaries of people living through crisis are an extremely valuable resource for the study of the dialogical nature of the self. A substantial volume of literature has been produced on what Klemperer’s writings tell us about his self-understanding as a German, his reactions to persecution, and his perception of German society under the Nazis. The existing work devoted to theories of identity has primarily focused on how persecution and society’s indifference influenced Klemperer’s self-understanding as a German and a Jew, and his “inner emigration” as a means to psychologically escape Nazi oppression (Aschheim, 2001; Donahue, 2001; Faber, 2005; Misik, 1997).² While these studies unravel key aspects of Klemperer’s coping strategies and hybrid German-Jewish identity, important questions remain unanswered. What more can the diaries tell us about how identity is formed and maintained through self-deliberation? What role do Others play in its construction? And, in studying Klemperer’s internal dialogues, can we learn more about how identity functions as a coping mechanism? Dialogical Self Theory (DST) offers an innovative approach to answering these questions. In the following, this article looks at selected passages of the diaries to probe into the internal dialogues of Victor Klemperer, and aims to situate Klemperer’s “battle” within the context of DST.

The dialogical self in a historical context

This essay is intended to offer a stimulus for further discussion on how inner dialogue influenced Victor Klemperer’s perception of himself as a German and a Jew, and how identity came to function as a coping mechanism during his trials under Nazi oppression. As a historian, my intent is to raise questions rather than provide conclusive answers or assertions. No claims for comprehensiveness are being made here. I examine the voices of Victor Klemperer to determine how DST can throw light on his self-identities, coping behaviors, and survival strategies under the Third Reich. My hope is to add both nuance and substance to the established scholarship, as well as to impart the usefulness of DST in analyzing diaries and how such analyses can offer new venues for further psychological and historical enquiry.

Klemperer’s published diaries span the years 1918-1959. In addition, his pre-1918 diaries served as the basis for his memoirs, which document his early life and career in Imperial Germany, and his military service during the First World War. He had intended to rewrite

² “Inner emigration,” refers to the theory that many opponents of Nazism had “emigrated” in spirit, if not in body, by turning inwards, away from National Socialist ideology, in order to survive war and oppression with their values intact. See Neil H. Donahue, ed, *Flight of Fantasy: New Perspectives on Inner Emigration in German Literature, 1933-1945* (New York: Berghahn, 2005).

all his diaries into memoirs, a goal cut short when the Nazis confiscated his typewriter, rationed writing material, and denied him access to public libraries. The focus here, however, is on his “Third Reich” diaries, which cover the Nazi era and the Second World War from 1933-1945. They alone comprise over 1500 pages of text and provide a detailed account of his daily existence under Hitler. His entries capture the minutiae of everyday life in Germany in often excruciating detail – from his obsession about ongoing house repairs, frustration over his unreliable Opel motorcar, his wife’s ongoing health issues, to evocative descriptions of literature and contemporary cinema. Intertwined throughout is a meticulous record of Germany under National Socialism from the perspective of both outsider and insider, a persecuted Jew who struggles to hold on to his German self-identity. The initial phase of Nazi persecution, from 1933-1935, is when Jews were racially defined, systematically pushed out of their professions, and revoked of their German citizenship. This article draws attention to passages from this period, where the issue of identity is at the forefront of his writing. They are remarkable in that they record the tensions and internal conflicts in the early stages of persecution as Klemperer, a Protestant, is told by the Nazis that he is, in their eyes, a Jew. Nazi persecution not only forced Klemperer to confront his Jewish past, but also heightened his awareness of other Jews in his environment. His early entries form a daily succession of utterances and deliberations as Klemperer, his self-perception as an “ordinary” German thrown into disarray, tries to negotiate confusion and uncertainty through self-deliberation. The problem of identity appears to recede as matters of physical survival dominate Klemperer’s narrative, however, it remains an unbroken strand throughout his diary and continually resurfaces in the form of utterances and self-affirmations.

The Dialogical Self Theory presents an interesting alternative for the theoretical description of the self and identity. Hermans and Kempen (1993) developed the conception of the self as a multitude of different so-called “I-positions” fluctuating within the imaginal landscape of the mind. This theory holds that the self is composed of a collection of different, even contradictory, positions represented by the “I.” The “I” does not remain static, rather it has “the capacity to imaginatively endow each of its positions with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established (Hermans, 1996, p. 11). The I-position, therefore, is dynamic, often changing from one moment to the next. Each position embodies a voice that utters its own subjective view of self and the environment. Despite tensions and apparent contradictions, the Dialogical Self continually strives to maintain its cohesion through dialogue and is constantly engaged in construction of identity and stability amidst ongoing change or crisis (Hermans 1996; Cunha, 2007). Following Hermans and Kempen, we begin to see that Klemperer’s “battle” is, in fact, a dialogical struggle. He debates himself on the meaning of Germanness. Klemperer’s writings elicit an ongoing dialogical positioning and re-positioning, an attempt at “meaning making” as his world and self-identity descend into crisis with the advent of the Nazi regime (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998). Oftentimes, it appears that there is no single writer or narrator at work. At different points in the diary, he assumes multiple authoring positions, at times simultaneously, and throughout the course of certain events there is evidence that

a multiplicity of I-positions engage in self-deliberation, or internal dialogue. By using DST as a basis of analysis, we are able to contrast Klemperer's internal positions (I, self), external positions (social others), as well as Klemperer's "outside world" (German society).

DST holds that internal positions – the "I" – are anything considered as "part of myself," in Klemperer's case "I as German," and "I as a Jew," whereas external positions are the "social others" that inhabit his environment (e.g. Germans, Nazis, Zionists)(Raggatt, 2007). I-positions maintain an ongoing dialogical interaction with each other. The internal and external dialogue between I-positions and Others make possible the narrative about the self's identity. This brief overview of DST allows us to throw light on some central features of the Dialogical Self that stand out in Klemperer's writings. It will hopefully provide a framework that can move us beyond container metaphors that suggest mere ambivalence or "identity crisis," and analyze Klemperer's internal conversations between the voices of "I, myself" and those of Others, as they appear in his diary (Ligorio, 2010; Susswein, Bibok, & Carpendale, 2007).

The dialogical struggles of a self: the diaries re-examined

This article focuses on three major, interrelated issues. First, it identifies sequences of internal dialogue at key junctures in Klemperer's diaries. Research methodology used for studying the Dialogical Self typically relies on interviews between subject and researcher. As these interactive dialogues are designed to elicit dialogical processes as they occur, to capture subjective self-other dialogues of the subject(s) moment by moment, it is important to first establish that diaries are a valid resource for studying internal self-dialogues (Hermans, 2001b; Cunha, 2007; Simão, 2007). Second, DST will be used to determine how Klemperer positions Others to construct, maintain, and strengthen his self-concept as a German. Although it is generally acknowledged that Others play a decisive role in identity formation, in this specific case how the perceived Jewishness of Others serves to reinforce Klemperer's sense of Germanness, DST can offer further insights into how inner dialogue facilitated this process. The final section will explore how identity functioned as a coping mechanism with which Klemperer was able to navigate the Third Reich. By using Others to strengthen his concept of Self, and through the construction of myth, this paper argues that Klemperer was able to repair rifts and negotiate challenges that threatened his self-perception as a German. Identity, in other words, provided a mechanism that restored certainty in times of crisis. DST offers an innovative approach to pursue these lines of inquiry, one that will hopefully enrich historical analyses while also providing further stimulus for psychological theories of identity.

Three of Klemperer's positions, "I as German," "I as a Jew," and "I am German, the Others are not," have been identified in related diary sequences. Although a number of other identification strategies were undoubtedly employed by Klemperer during his ordeal under the Nazism, these prototypical examples have been selected for closer investigation. "I as German" manifests itself as the dominant, yet neutral position, one whose stability is

threatened after the Nazis suddenly brand Klemperer as a Jew. “I as a Jew” becomes apparent when Others, or his environment, succeed in rendering his “I as German” position unstable. From the position “I am German, the Others are not,” the cultural Other’s differences are perceived as abnormal or negative, and serve to reinforce his own self-concept. Here Others serve as a foil for Klemperer’s Germanness.

Who was Victor Klemperer?

Klemperer’s biography has been sufficiently covered in numerous books, articles, and academic journals and will be repeated here only briefly. Born 1881 in Landsberg an der Warthe, in the former Prussian province of Brandenburg, to a father who served as rabbi in the liberal Jewish Reform Community (*Jüdische Reformgemeinde*), the Klemperers considered themselves grounded in German culture and values; their Jewish faith and the father’s position as rabbi never overshadowed their decidedly German outlook. In 1906, he married Eva Schwemmer, a gentile, and converted to Protestantism shortly thereafter. He earned his Ph.D. in German literature from the University of Munich in 1913, and received his first teaching position in Naples, Italy as an adjunct professor. In 1915 Klemperer returned to Germany and volunteered for military service just prior to Italy’s entry into the war. He initially served with an artillery unit on the Western Front, but after a debilitating illness, was transferred to Poland where he worked as a censor until Germany’s collapse in 1918. Following a brief stay in Munich after the armistice, he was offered a position as a professor of Romance Studies at the Technical University in Dresden, a job he held until 1935. Initially exempted from Nazi racial laws due to his front service in WWI, that year he was legally defined as a Jew by Nuremberg Laws and subsequently removed from the faculty at the university. In addition to losing his professorship, he was stripped of his German citizenship, academic title, and military decorations. Spared from deportation to Nazi death camps only due to his marriage to his wife Eva, an “Aryan,” he was later forced into segregated Jewish housing and compelled to work as a forced laborer in various armaments factories in Dresden until war’s end. The ways in which Klemperer confronted the dilemma of having served in the German Army in WWI while later being cast as a pariah and threatened with deportation by the Nazis, offer important insights that allow for a closer examination of the Dialogical Self in crisis. His patriotism and participation in the war left an indelible mark on Klemperer’s self-identity, one that shaped his perspectives, attitudes, and decision-making under Nazi oppression. His struggle to reconcile his German and Jewish identities, his constructed utopia of German society in which he sees the Nazis, not himself, as aberrations, and his ongoing reappraisals of his “Germanness,” bring to light an internal dialogue, or process of self-negotiation, under duress. As such, Klemperer’s writings expose a Dialogical Self amidst the real-life conditions of persecution, war, and fear of impending destruction.

At the core of Klemperer’s self-identity as a German are assimilation and his unwavering belief in the ideal of “Germanness” (*Deutschtum*). His diaries portray a man consumed by inner turmoil, one who seemingly struggles to convince himself and his audience how he

perceives himself and, more important, how he expects others to perceive him. In his memoirs, as he reflects on his Jewish ancestry, Klemperer summarizes his thoughts on Germanness and what this meant to him as an assimilated Jew:

"If there really existed a difference between pure Germans and Jewish Germans, which I personally questioned, then I belonged, in my thoughts and behavior, to the pure German side...I did not feel myself to be a Jew, not even a German Jew, but rather purely and simply a German." (Klemperer, 1996a, p. 248).

Klemperer's conversion to the Protestant faith was not motivated by religious considerations. Aside from the purely pragmatic reason of having wanted to pursue a career as a reserve officer in the Prussian army, a path practically closed to Jews in Imperial Germany, for Klemperer, as for many German Jews who considered baptism, Protestantism was universally identified with Germanness. Conversion signaled the final step in Jews' assimilation to German culture. By shedding the outer vestiges of his Jewishness, he sought to fortify his sense of belonging, socially and spiritually, to Germany. Protestantism, although not in a religious sense, became an integral component of Klemperer's socially defined identity. He elaborates further on its relevance for him in his memoirs:

"I regarded Christianity as a fundamental element of the German culture into which I was born, to which my cultivation (Bildung), my marriage, and my entire thoughts and emotions were inextricably bound. This was the motive behind my voluntary conversion, it carried with it no change in my moral outlook." (Klemperer, 1996b, p. 16).

It is beyond the scope of this article to analyze the significance of Klemperer's baptism as a true "conversion moment" (Erikson, 1963). Important here is that Klemperer, a self-proclaimed atheist, regarded his baptism as a wholly secular affair, one that served to reinforce his self- and socially defined perception as a German (Rieker, 1997). Not long after converting, while traveling through Europe with his wife, he noted that, "We, we Germans, were better than the others, freer in thought, more genuine in our feelings, quieter and more composed in all our dealings. We, we Germans were the true *chosen people*." (Klemperer, 1996a, p. 315).³ His diaries begin to reveal some ambiguity after World War I, particularly as he encounters the popular antisemitism of the immediate post-war era and is reminded once again of his Jewish heritage. Accosted by elements of the growing far-right nationalist movement in Munich in 1920, he writes: "For me, Germany is only to be loved as an idea: in its present state it is absolutely repulsive in every way." (Klemperer, 1996c, p. 351). Years later in 1935, reeling from the shock of having been expelled from his faculty position for being a Jew, and dismayed by the indifference of his colleagues, he confides that "my principles over Germanness and the various nationalities are beginning to wobble like the teeth of an old man." (Klemperer, 1996e, p. 211). Yet in May 1942, in an oft-quoted passage, we see that his struggle has not abated: "I am fighting

³ Emphasis added.

the hardest battle for my Germanness now. I must hold on to this: I am German, the others are un-German. I must hold on to this. The spirit is decisive, not blood. I must hold on to this." (Klemperer, 1996f, p. 83-84).

The dialogical struggles of a self: "I as a German."

Who are these others that Klemperer describes? Who is he trying to convince of his Germanness? How can one explain the identity confusion, or "shock of multiple identities," that resurface throughout Klemperer's diaries (Aschheim, 2001)? DST provides a good lens for observing identity and the role of Others in its construction. Before 1933 he unambiguously views himself as a Protestant German. Then, suddenly, the Nazis declare that he is a Jew. Klemperer refuses to acknowledge Hitler's definition of him, and resists seeing himself as anything but German. What is interesting is that persecution by the Nazis does not draw him closer to other Jews. On the contrary, an outward manifestation of Klemperer's "battle" is his rejection of his Jewish identity. As he details the hardships and humiliation inflicted on him in the initial years of the Third Reich, he similarly records the suffering imposed on Dresden's Jewish community as a whole. Yet, he does not admit to share their fate: they are the Jews, he remains German. Although equally affected by Nazi oppression as every legally defined Jew living in Hitler's Germany, his writings evoke little sympathy or statements of solidarity with other Jewish Germans whose humiliation he shares. He refuses to identify with "their" suffering. Rather, Klemperer distances himself, even attributes some of the blame for Hitler's mass appeal on the Jews themselves. In his diaries, he positions Jews as social others, observed from the vantage of an "Aryan" German. He expresses contempt, even embarrassment, by any implied kinship to Judaism, and undertakes great efforts to dispel Jewish characteristics imposed on him by either Nazis or other Jews.

In a series of entries spanning roughly five months, from January to June 1934, Klemperer relates conversations with Jewish acquaintances who resign themselves to the new antisemitic laws and contemplate their future in a National Socialist Germany. Like many German Jews during the early years of the regime, they believed that their situation would eventually improve, or hoped that it didn't worsen. They speak to Klemperer as fellow Jew, assuming he identifies with their suffering. However, confronted by their perception of him as a Jew, Klemperer perceives these encounters as a personal affront to his Germanness.

"9 October 1933. Especially repugnant to us is the behavior of some Jews. They are beginning to submit inwardly and to regard the new ghetto situation atavistically as a legal condition that has to be accepted...Recently on September 25, after a gap of years, we had to go to the Kaufmann's for a ghastly coffee afternoon, because the Hamburg sister, Frau Rosenberg, was there and because we could not evade the constant invitations any longer. Anyone who does not at every hour of the day hope for a revolt is a low dog! Eva's bitterness is even greater

than mine. National Socialism, she says, more precisely the attitude of the Jews toward it, is making her anti-Semitic." (Klemperer, 1996e, p. 58).

"24 February 1934. They believe the worst is over; if there are agreements on tariffs, things will improve again. That means: These people are happy if they can look forward to consolidation of the Hitler regime and an end to the foreign boycott. They may be forced back into the ghetto, may be kicked and humiliated, their children may have lost their homeland – but as long as they can do business again, "the worst is over." It is so infinitely shameless and dishonorable that one could almost sympathize with the National Socialists." (Klemperer, 1996e, p. 92-93).

Klemperer unequivocally separates himself from "these people" – the Jews. As in other passages relating similar encounters, he assumes different authoring positions as he recounts conversations with German Jews who, despairing over the onset of Nazi persecution, try to make sense of the dire situation confronting them. Crucial here is that Klemperer assigns the "social others" an independent voice, and constructs – or reconstructs – a self-other dialogue based on subjective meaning given to recent conversations. He positions Jews as Others by assigning them stereotypical behaviors. In doing so, he constructs a dichotomy between Germans and Jews, specifically his Germanness and their Jewishness. The emergence of Klemperer's identity struggle as seen from the perspective of Others serves to address the problem of his Germanness. The recorded utterances by Jewish Others, reveal an aspect of Cunha's "Social Positioning Phase": that of "looking at myself through the eyes of the Other." Positioning himself as a German, as he does throughout his diaries, permits Klemperer to draw sharp contrasts and defy the same stereotypes he ascribes to Others. He does not "submit inwardly" in order to "do business again," and refuses to accept that he has "lost his homeland." In disassociating himself from "them," their otherness serves to buttress his German self-identity, and gives dominance to his "I as a German" voice (Cunha, 2007). Zionists create an altogether different problem for Klemperer. For them, National Socialism was evidence of a pervasive, if latent, antisemitism within German society that decades of Jewish assimilation had failed to erase. They, too, approached Klemperer as a fellow Jew, often trying to remind him that he was in fact Jewish and would forever be looked upon as such by German society. Referring to his sister Grete, who became drawn to Zionism after 1933, Klemperer writes:

"5 April 1934. It was both shocking and characteristic to see in Grete the extent to which everything German has fallen away from her and how she can only, and wants only, to look at the whole situation from a Jewish standpoint. "You may persuade yourself that you are German – I can no longer do so." Then the horrible ghetto oppressiveness. All in all therefore: She has become un-German, inwardly degraded and quite resigned. That no doubt is how things stand with very many Jews." (Klemperer, 1996e, p. 102-103).

"13 June 1934....in Zion the Aryan is exactly in the same position of the Jew here. Par nobile fratrum! To me the Zionists, who want to go back to the Jewish state of A.D. 70 (destruction of

Jerusalem by Titus), are just as offensive as the Nazis. With their nosing after blood, their ancient "cultural roots," their canting, partly obtuse winding back of the world they are altogether a match for the National Socialists...That is the fantastic thing about the National Socialists, that they simultaneously share in a community of ideas with Soviet Russia and with Zion. – With her naïve stories, Frau Schaps, who has returned from visiting her Sebba children in Haiffa, confirms me in my hatred of these Zionist doings." (Klemperer, 1996e, p. 111-112).

The following year, Klemperer unwillingly participates in an orthodox Torah reading at a friend's home for coffee:

"5 October 1935. It turned out that the Isakowitzes are more orthodox than we had known; the man came from the "temple" (I have not heard the word for thirty years), his head covered he read from the Torah, a hat was put on my head too, candles burned. I found it quite painful. "Where do I belong? To the Jewish nation" decrees Hitler. And I feel the Jewish nation recognized by Isakowitz is a comedy and am nothing but a German or German European." (Klemperer, 1996e, p. 220).

Here the power of Others in identity formation is apparent. In the act of transcribing his experiences onto paper, Klemperer elicits imagined dialogues between self and Other. The social others, invariably absent as the diary is being written, are endowed with an independent voice, often assuming a third-party role at the time of writing. This is most apparent in sequences where Klemperer reconstructs previous dialogues about an important problem, such as identity, that was discussed. These relived conversations with Others are played out in the form of "as-if" moments, in which "the (absent) social others are, thus, invoked as audiences or imagined interlocutors in the present interaction." (Cunha, 2007, p. 292). These discourses serve as a functional and situated dialogical exchange between Klemperer (as self, his own audience) and his interlocutors, the Zionists and Jews (Others). The absent Others – Grete, other Jews, Zionists, even Hitler – are given an active voice and become participants in a self-other dialogical exchange. Positioning himself against "social others" allows him to draw attention to, and exaggerate, the differences between himself and the stereotypical traits he associates with their "otherness" (Jewishness). By negating or disowning any shared attributes with other Jews, by not sharing their "ghetto oppressiveness," his self-concept as a German is pronounced and achieves stability. Put differently, the Jewish Others provide a mirror for Klemperer's German identity: the more time he spends with them, the more German he feels. While reliving, or reconstructing, past dialogue with Jewish acquaintances as he writes, Klemperer presents himself as falsely accused by both sides, and courageously defying the illegal Nazi regime. He dissuades himself from seeking refuge in Zionism like "them." Klemperer's social positioning, that of looking at Jews from the perspective of "I as a German," reinforces his dominant I-position and becomes a means to negotiate his dilemma: his desire to be acknowledged as a German (Cunha, 2007).

“I as a Jew”

Recent scholarship suggests that culture – or in this case Klemperer’s Jewish heritage - can manifest itself as an I-position in two different ways. It can in itself constitute an I-position, as in the example of “I as a Jew,” or it can “speak through” the position of a specific Other. Here we see how the “social other” also functions as an I-position. Following Ruck and Slunecko (2008), Klemperer’s “I as a Jew” position is in fact voiced through Jewish Others – by “them” – his sister Grete, Frau Schaps, the Zionists. My argument is that these dialogues represent an active dialogical exchange between Klemperer’s voices. His view of Jews as fellow sufferers fighting a common struggle under National Socialism, and thus similar to his way of being, does not assume a central position in his dialogues. Instead, it is suppressed by his other I-positions that demand rejection of otherness. By disavowing the behaviors of Jewish Others, then drawing clear distinctions between them and himself, Klemperer is able to preserve the continuity of his “I as a German” voice as it faces serious challenges. This process of monologization diminishes his “I as a Jew” position insignificant by associating it to Others, while simultaneously allowing the “I as a German” voice to maintain dominance (Märtsin, 2010).

Klemperer’s identity, therefore, is reinforced through dialogical interaction: by comparing, contrasting – and rejecting – perceived differences with Others. He tirelessly distances himself from any elements of his Jewish identity, real or perceived. Using “social others” as a negative foil – a looking glass through in which he sees himself - they provide him with subjective proof of his inherent Germanness. Meaning is created through fundamental incongruities between the two perspectives of I and Other. Although he shares the same oppression as other Jews, from the same oppressors, he does not admit to share their fate: they are Jews, he remains German (Faber, 2005; Rasmussen, 2008).

Despite the increasing hardships imposed on him by the Nazis, Klemperer continues to present himself as decidedly German in the company of other Jews. His public face is one of conviction, however, after years of humiliation and exposure to public indifference his diaries disclose a mounting uncertainty. Not surprisingly, faced with mounting Nazi persecution, loss of job, and social isolation, Klemperer increasingly questions his sense of belonging to Germany. He is surprised and shaken as German society remains indifferent to his suffering, gradually disowns him after 1933, and forcibly binds him to his Jewish ancestry. As his bitterness over ordinary Germans’ apathy grows, he begins to ponder his own Jewishness (Donahue, 2001). The stoicism he maintains in the presence of friends, acquaintances, and colleagues not only masks a deeper, underlying anxiety, but a heightened sense of his dual identity:

“17 August 1937. In the Stürmer (which is displayed at every corner) I recently saw a picture: two girls in swimming costumes at a seaside resort. Above it: “Prohibited for Jews,” underneath it: “How nice it’s just us now!” Then I remembered a long forgotten incident. September 1900 or 1901 in Landsberg. In the lower sixth we were 4 Jews among 16, in the

upper sixth 3 among 8 pupils. There was little trace of anti-Semitism among either the teachers or the pupils. More precisely, none at all. The agitation of Ahlwardt and Stoecker is no more than historical fact to me. I knew only that a Jew could become neither a fraternity member as a student nor an officer. So on the Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur – the Jews did not attend classes. The next day our comrades told us, laughing and without the least malice (just as the words themselves were also only uttered jokingly by the altogether humane teacher), Kufahl, the mathematician, had said to the reduced class: “Today it’s just us.” In my memory these words took on a quite horrible significance: to me it confirms the claim of the NSDAP to express the true opinion of the German people. And I believe ever more strongly that Hitler really does embody the soul of the German people, that he really stands for “Germany” and that he will consequently maintain himself and justifiably maintain himself. I have not only outwardly lost my Fatherland. And even if the government should change one day, my inner sense of belonging is gone.” (Klemperer, 1996e, p. 372-373).

The tensions between Klemperer’s German and Jewish identities are immediately recognizable. The juxtaposition between past and present, the implicit dialogue between his German and Jewish self, reveal the core of his “battle,” as he struggles to attach meaning to his teacher’s seemingly innocuous comment, “today it’s just us.” He recalls this event in the voice of “I as a Jew,” as it seems to challenge the hitherto dominant German position. The Others – “them” – are now the Germans, as Klemperer realizes his teacher’s reference to “us” did not include him, a Jew. Thirty-six years later, the related grade-school incident still becomes a functional construction of the present self. Klemperer’s identity is thrown into disarray as he reevaluates a past memory whose “horrible significance” renders his present “inner sense of belonging” meaningless. Where he posits Jews as “social others” that reinforce his self-concept as a German, his identity system is challenged when faced with exclusion by Aryan Germans. While his dealings with Jews are through the “eyes of I as a German,” – an unambiguous dichotomy of German (I) and Jew (Other) – these identity constructions are destabilized when other Germans, either individuals or society as a whole, see him as a Jew. The preceding passage shows the collision of two dominant I-positions, “I as a German,” “I as a Jew,” as interlocutors who compare and debate opposing perspectives – in this case Klemperer’s German self-identity (Susswein, Bibok, & Carpendale, 2007).

“I am German, the Others are not”: identity as a coping mechanism

As the aforementioned entries make clear, at the heart of Klemperer’s “battle” is the struggle to maintain continuity. As he is increasingly exposed to the effects of Nazi anti-Jewish agitation, he strives to find security in a precarious future, to negotiate meaning in a radically changed societal landscape, and control an otherwise uncontrollable situation (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998). Confronted by a fundamental challenge to his self-understanding and loss of psychological continuity - being labeled as a Jew by the Nazis - he combats uncertainty by reinforcing his self-identity. As O’Sullivan-Lago and De Abreu (2010) argue, “without an appreciation of self-continuity, connections to the past are

erased and the future holds no meaning.” A subjective sense of sameness, by rendering one’s being in the world meaningful, is integral to the development of self-identity. Klemperer’s uncertainty in the face of a ruptured cultural future is alleviated by his dialogical identification strategy: solidifying group boundaries by distancing himself from Others. In doing so, he strengthens his “I as a German” voice. We find that as this position is rendered unstable, he engages in a dialogical process designed to repair broken continuity by rejecting shared traits between self and Other. Complete rejection of the Other prevents cultural change and eases the discontinuity between the present and an unknown future. By abnormalizing Jews as “oppressed,” “repugnant,” or “dishonorable,” his Dialogical Self reiterates that he is German, they are Jewish, and he will not share their fate. In this way, continuity is repaired, maintained, and protected. Resisting challenges to his self-identity prevents him, psychologically, from falling victim to the Nazis. (O’Sullivan-Lago & De Abreau, 2010).

For Klemperer, however, it is his oppressors that embody the quintessential Other. Already in late 1935 Klemperer declares that “I am German forever, a German ‘nationalist. The Nazis are un-German.” (Klemperer, 1996e, p. 210). Provoked by the Nazis’ attempt to subvert his German identity, he utters this conviction repeatedly throughout his diary, here in a well-known passage from 1942:

“11 May 1942. I am reading aloud, with the greatest interest, something that John Neumann lent me: Sammy Gronemann, Tohuwabohu.⁴ I am fighting the hardest battle for my Germanness now. I must hold on to this: I am German, the others are un-German. I must hold on to this. The spirit is decisive, not blood. I must hold on to this: On my part Zionism would be a comedy – my baptism was not a comedy.” (Klemperer, 1996f, p. 83-84).

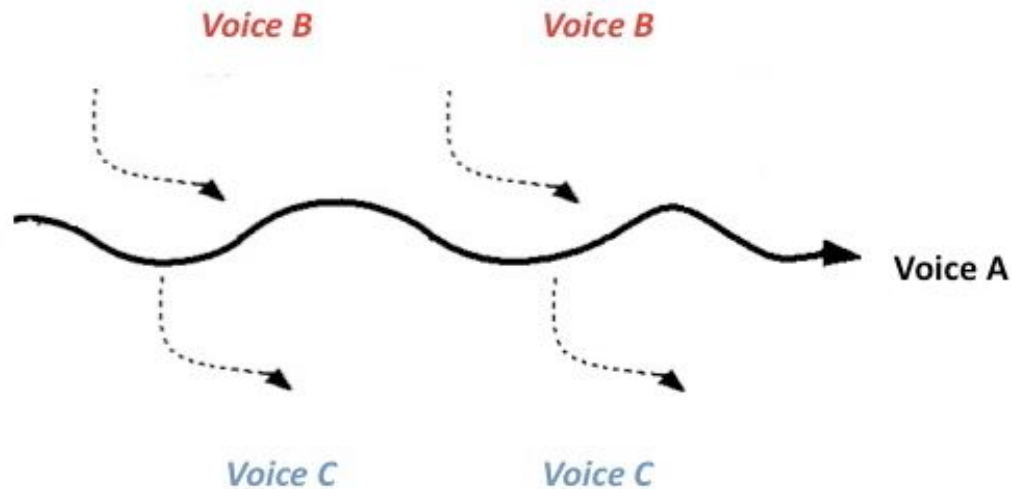
As we see, Klemperer consigns not only Jews, but the Nazis, to the role of Others. By declaring them “un-German,” he negotiates challenges to his self-identity and is able to preserve his “I as a German” voice. Klemperer’s attitude that he, not the Nazis, was German - that it was Hitler who betrayed Germanness - strengthened his determination to survive the hardships and degradations of the Third Reich. Identity – his Germanness – becomes a coping mechanism. His self-debates on the otherness of Jews, Zionists, and Nazis, and their subversion of German ideals, reveals itself as a process that reinforces his self-concept as a German. Together, they constitute what Carla Cunha describes as “a constant process of becoming that demands the construction of “sameness” and identity throughout the irreversibility of time and changing experience.” (Cunha, 2007, p. 287-288).

The rivalry of social identities in Klemperer’s writings has thus shown itself to be dialogical in nature. The illustration, below, attempts to capture the different voices within the self of Klemperer as he responds to external challenges to his self-identity.⁵ The “dialogism”

⁴ *Tohuwabohu* is a satirical novel, or what Klemperer refers to as a comedy, written by the German Zionist author Sammy Gronemann in 1920.

⁵ See Cunha, 2007, p. 304. Model adapted and modified with permission of author.

between the multiplicity of voices brings about a process of monologization as the dominant voice (Voice A) restrains and “expropriates” the proto-voices (Voices B and C), thereby restoring its equilibrium through dialogue (Cunha, 2007; Josephs & Valsiner, 1998).



Voice A: “I as a German”

Proto Voice B: “I as a Jew”

Proto Voice C: “The *Others* are un-German, I am not” (Others used to reinforce Germanness)

Figure 1. I-Positions of Victor Klemperer

Myth

Klemperer’s “I as a German” position can only be sustained through the construction of myth. As he strives to find stability, to “be the same as I was in my past,” and reconcile antisemitism and societal indifference with his self-image as a German, he begins to make clear distinctions between the pre-1914 *Kaiserreich*, for which he had fought as a soldier, and the reality of the Third Reich. Klemperer’s oft-repeated, nostalgia for Imperial Germany as a “beacon of pride” represents an idealized, memory construct, a lens through which his self-identification as a German is interpreted. The greater his sense of ostracization, the more Imperial Germany comes to represent a pristine past, a constructed reality of a bygone Germany to which he felt he had belonged. The undoing of his world, the crisis of identities – as revealed through the dialogical struggles played out within his diary, strengthen his vision of a mythical Germany where the Nazis became aberrations of true Germanness. Klemperer’s construction of a world, where he is German and the Nazis and

Zionists are un-German, can be viewed as a complex of I-positions in a destabilized state. Through the process of repairing and renegotiating rifts in his cultural- and self-continuity, Klemperer creates a mythical past that allows him to navigate, or create meaning, amidst the present uncertainty of a radically changing social environment (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998).

Myths provide an effective mechanism to preserve continuity. They interpret reality in an irrational way and create clarity amidst ambivalence and confusion. In essence, they reorder an abstract world in concrete terms that enable individuals or groups to see a situation, and their role in it, through the lenses of “good” and “evil.” (Kühne, 2005; Williamson, 2004). The humiliation and torment endured by Klemperer at the hands of the Nazis is assuaged by the myth that it is his persecutors, not him, that are un-German. The imagined landscape of Germany in the past, where Germanness had been defined not by race, but by voluntary assimilation, becomes a “beacon of pride” that provides security in the face of crisis. The mythic Germany of Klemperer’s past, buried beneath the façade of the Third Reich, manifests itself as a believable reality, and can be regarded as an effective semiotic organizer that enables him to face the uncertainty of being a Jew in Hitler’s Germany. His “inner emigration,” arguably a response to social isolation and perceived “othering,” sustained itself through a belief that his detractors, not he, were aberrations.⁶ The construction of myth is integral to Klemperer’s self-identity. Arguably, it formed the basis for his reactions, attitudes, and coping behaviors during the Third Reich (Valsiner 2008; Simão, 2007).

If there is a continuous, discernable thread throughout Klemperer’s writing, it is his struggle to remain German: identity offers him an effective diversion, a coping mechanism, to psychologically survive Hitler’s regime. Myth allows Klemperer to detach from the environment of oppression and retreat to an idyllic, constructed past in which his identity as a German patriot, veteran, and intellectual is unchallenged. (Gerstenberger, 1997). Without this creative adaption that enables him to negotiate potential uncertainty in the future, his attitudes, reactions, and survival strategies under Nazism cannot be understood (Valsiner, 2008; Turner, 1999). Like many German Jews, Klemperer considered emigration, even suicide, during his twelve-year ordeal in Nazi Germany. Yet unlike the majority, who successfully emigrated, or those who experienced the horror of the Nazi death camps, Klemperer remained a prisoner inside the Third Reich for its duration, waging a daily struggle for existence on the periphery of the Holocaust. Identity became the sole means to cope, the limits of his agency in defying the Nazis. Through a series of repressive legal measures, harassment, and public humiliation designed to exclude German Jews from the larger community of Germans, the Nazis hoped to destroy Klemperer’s identity. In this they were unsuccessful. In the end he chose to defy his oppressors. “I am German and will wait for the Germans to return,” he wrote in May 1942, “they’re probably just in hiding somewhere.” (Klemperer, 1996f, p. 105).

⁶ For a more detailed analysis of Klemperer’s “inner emigration” see Raz & Gentzel (2008).
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Conclusions

Klemperer's "battle for Germanness" reveals itself as a dialogical complex of I-positions in a constantly fluctuating state. As we've seen, his established self-concept as a Protestant German, patriot, and decorated war veteran was thrown into disorientation when he suddenly found himself persecuted as a Jew by the Nazis. Thrust into a role from which he could not escape, his once stable I-position changed radically from one moment to the next. The role of Klemperer's I-positions as Others manifested as internal interlocutors, and the ongoing dialogues between his past, future, and present selves as he faced profound uncertainty, reveal a Dialogical Self in crisis. Ambivalence and uncertainty pushed Klemperer in opposing trajectories as he fought to preserve his self-identity amidst a radically changing societal landscape. Yet, despite contradictions and internal opposition, the self of Victor Klemperer did not remain in an unchallenged state of disequilibrium, rather it undertook persistent efforts to restore its integrity through dialogue. Identity became the means by which Klemperer "organized" his struggle. This is the essence of Klemperer's "battle." (O'Sullivan-Lago, R. & De Abreu , 2010; Susswein, Bibok, & Carpendale, 2007).

Through analyses of self-other dialogues, DST enables us to see how Klemperer achieved stability through self-deliberation, and how identity became a coping mechanism that helped him negotiate the ordeal of Nazi oppression. Examining the shifts in Klemperer's dialogical struggles over time reveal the immense power of Others in identity construction. Klemperer, who experienced the entire trajectory of the Third Reich from within, remained devoutly German by resisting the Nazis' attempt to define him as a Jew. As his world collapsed around him, as he witnessed his neighbors being deported, preserving his identity provided the impetus to psychologically endure the personal torment and uncertainty of the Nazi years. By juxtaposing his Germanness with Others' un-Germanness, he convinced himself that the Hitler regime was a mere distortion of the "real" Germany. This ongoing process of affirming and reaffirming his self-identity in relation to Others enabled him able to construct an imagined landscape where the real Germans had gone underground, and he waited for them to reemerge when Hitler was gone.

Diaries can yield valuable insights into the multivoicedness of the self, however, they thus far comprise a largely untapped primary source for the study of internal dialogue. A partial analysis of Klemperer's diary reveals how the Dialogical Self constructed and reinforced identity through dialogue, and how his identification strategies served to maintain continuity as his world descended into crisis. Important here is that while Klemperer's experience is certainly unique, his reactions and coping behaviors are generalizable under most conditions. Using diaries as a data source also raises important questions. Are the dynamics of writing, of transcribing thoughts onto paper, in themselves dialogical in nature? Does the process of diary writing precipitate self-other dialogue? Internal dialogue is a good lens to observe social interactions and their impact on identity development in diaries. Additional use of these sources could make a significant contribution to our

understanding of these processes and take advantage of a vast reservoir of existing source material.

Dialogical Self Theory provides a fruitful venue for the collaboration of psychology and history. Together, they can provide a cumulative perspective that broadens our understanding of how Klemperer, and others like him, negotiate and endure extreme societal change. A multidisciplinary approach can impart crucial facets of identity construction and coping behaviors to scholars and yield new insights into the habitus of people living through turbulent times. When analyzed from this perspective, the diaries of simple, ordinary people such as Klemperer – the so-called “little men” of history – are revealed to be far from simple or ordinary. As the late historian Detlef Peukert emphasized, history-writing should “avoid getting lost in pointillism and miniaturism, an approach based on everyday life must have a clear grasp of the complexity of people’s lives.” (Peukert, 1987, p. 15). These brief, selected sequences of analysis from Klemperer’s diary are but an initial foray into analyzing diaries in this context. Dialogical Self Theory, in collusion with historical enquiry, can be a valuable tool for scholars in revealing more of these complexities: how identity is created, affirmed, and maintained in everyday life under conditions of uncertainty and great duress.

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