Response to Markova

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Being brief and written for a broad audience, my paper could not deal with every important issue. By her sensitive, incisive, and clear statement of some of the issues I did not treat, Ivana Markova has given me an excellent opportunity to suggest some of the more subtle implications of my position. I am grateful to her for this.

She raises four main issues:

1. I wrote that in order to be socialized, we must in our natures be something more than a capacity to take up social roles. For there are some social role-networks that are alien to our humanity, in that however vigorously we may pursue them we will be tormented in doing so, while being assimilated into certain other role-networks fosters serenity of spirit. In other words, socialization is more than the acquisition of roles. It is a matter of internalizing expectations that are, in a broad sense, moral expectations. Therefore, as a condition for being assimilated into the moral order of a community, we must, in ourselves, be moral sensibilities—beings with agency to appreciate, internalize, and even violate such expectations.

Markova asks, if it be true that our agency stands prior to and independent of society's influence, then what effect can that influence have upon the exercise of our agency, except a negative, oppositional one? On the other hand, if our actual moral commitments at any one time are *only* internalizations of preexisting social expectations, and there is no moral nature apart from the socialized person, we cannot be said to contribute *anything* to the exercise of our agency, except for the trivial fact that it is we rather than some others who are exercising it. Apparently we are left to choose between a picture of the individual as an autonomous being potentially pitted against an intrinsically alien society and a picture of the individual as wholly a product of society. Markova intimates that I have given reasons for accepting both of these irreconcilable pictures as well as reasons for rejecting both of them.

One way to clarify the issue is to say that although the moral commitments we form in the process of socialization are ways of acting out roles that are dictated to us by our tradition, we become individuals only by actively taking up that tradition for ourselves. The influence of society is possible only by means of this active exercise of

agency, just as the exercise of agency is possible only by way of desires, emotions, and fears that are mediated through others. Hence, the character of the individual being socialized is neither autonomous nor dictated. It is mediated. The *We* that is society is the *I* in which it is incarnated: Hegel is right, and so is Markova for endorsing him on this issue. Equally, the *I* is the *We:* there can be no possibility that the emerging individual is autonomous and possibly thwarted by an independent society. If thwarted at all (and this does not necessarily happen), it is because the attitude by which the individual regards society as opposing him is a collusory one: he is accomplice to his own stultification. Even what threatens agency manifests agency.

2. I wrote that self-betrayal is a lie that is lived, in that the agent retains no residual or ''unconscious'' sense of the truth. Lacking this, he cannot evaluate himself and thereby overturn the lie; he has no leverage against his capacity to transform his world totally by the lies he lives.

If then we have no way of knowing we are self-deceived, Markova asks, how can we put an end to self-deception? My answer, which I develop at length in a forthcoming book, is that there is an emotional bondage in self-deception. We pursue our own misery systematically, *as if* we cannot help it. One way to try to explain this compulsivity, which is by no means limited to clinical cases, is Freud's way, in terms of the absolute unacceptability both of facing up to the dark side of our natures and of hiding them from ourselves by self-deception. In this view, we are forever conflicted in our personalities as a condition of our humanity; psychological peace is impossible. I think I have a more adequate way to explain the self-deceiver's compulsivity: since the lie that is lived is global, every conceivable way out of it is a cul-de-sac in the labyrinth: it leads only into other regions of the self-deception. This does not mean that we cannot extricate ourselves from our self-deceptions, but only that we cannot do so by analysis, or with the help of a plan, or through reflection. The path we must take is not one we can see in advance.

What then is the path? For one thing (though there is no room to discuss this in the present paper), even though we retain no access to the truth when we are self-deceiving, there are telltale signs that something is wrong. In particular, we are anxious to prove that the emotions we are suffering are genuine and not mere pretenses, for we feel assailed from every side by challenges to our claims that we are victims. So the possibility that we are not being truthful is a constant preoccupation for us. It may seem, therefore, that we have a secret access to the truth and are vigorously covering it up. But I maintain it isn't the truth that we are thus defensive about, for if we were to ''admit'' it we would not arrive at serenity of spirit but would beat

our breasts self-condemningly and remain as agitated about justifying ourselves ("'At least I am not a hypocrite anymore!'") as we ever were. Even for one who pays attention to the telltale signs, the conceivable ways out are cul-de-sacs.

How then may we stop deceiving ourselves? Just because something cannot be done in steps, it does not follow that it cannot be done at all. From observation of many cases, I have come to believe that escaping self-deception is an absolutely simple act that is ever within our power (given the spiritual resources I mention in the last section of my paper). We are able simply to be honest, to "get off it," to stop the self-insistence. A self-deception must be renewed in every moment by attentive pursuit of our self-justification; equally, it is within our power at every moment to abandon the effort. After all, deceiving oneself in the first place cannot be accomplished by taking thought either. (If anyone doubts this, let him try it.)

3. Markova writes that I seem in my paper to suggest that by means of emotional honesty we may return to our childhood condition of pristine spontaneity, whereas this is clearly impossible since it would require undoing the socialization that has made us what we are and what we must be in order to be capable of that kind of honesty. For me there is a difference between a child's kind of innocence and the innocence possible for people who have become accountable for their acts. By repenting of the lies we have been living, we become like little children in openness and straightforwardness but without the child's kind of innocence. We come to our adult kind of innocence after complicity in the world's sorrows, and when we do, the oppositions between ourselves and others that we may have nurtured in our lifetimes are at last reconciled. For little children, those oppositions do not yet exist. To mark the difference between the two kinds of innocence, we might call the child's kind *innocence* and the adult's *virtue.* Virtue consists of overcoming evil by love, and so the path of virtue is a way through the world's troubles, not a way back. Little children are naive, not virtuous in this sense.

4. Markova raises also the issue of self-knowledge. I think she and I would agree that there is no self independent of knowledge of the self. The self is not an entity but is *only* the object of self-knowledge. Therefore, what we think we are when we are engaged in living a lie is a very different sort of thing from what we would think we are if we were free from self-deception. The self we conceive self-deceivingly is a creature replete with emotional needs, hungers, anxieties, and vulnerabilities that simply do not exist in the self we conceive when we are more self-forgetful, less self-involved, more concerned about others.