INVISIBLE GUESTS

The Development of Imaginal Dialogues

MARY WATKINS
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WITH A PREFACE BY
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To

Bernard Kaplan
mentor, friend
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And when the books and pen were put aside each day, Robert Rosenthal was always ready to add his wisdom to help me think through a point, to listen tirelessly to portions of the text that worried me, and to entertain invisible guests at our table. With such a home, writing can be a happiness.
Readers of the first edition of Mary Watkins’ book, which appeared fourteen years ago, will undoubtedly recall the evocative and persuasive ways she demonstrated the autonomy of the imaginal other and the singular importance of dialogue in relation to invisible guests. Reading her book for a second time deepens those original impressions. But I would add here that this third edition offers more than another reading. It is a new book when one reads the text from the perspective of Watkins’ Afterword. In my Preface, therefore, I want to encourage her readers to begin with the Afterword, to read it carefully, and then enter the text from its perspective.

What I find most provocative in this new edition is the expansion of imaginal dialogues to embrace not only our relations with others, but also our relations with the “beings of nature and the earth, and that which we take to be divine.” Mary Watkins is quite correct to situate our dialogical relations with imaginal others as a “subtext of ‘holy converse.’” This bold move opens the imaginal field to broader horizons and emphasizes how our encounters with the autonomous psyche always have something of a numinous or sacred quality to them. As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke reminds us, language is a vocation. We are called into speech by the other, a calling which presumes that one has first heard the other because one is listening. Holy converse as a subtext of imaginal dialogue is grounded in the receptive ear, in a posture which in lending an ear to the other is capable of being addressed, witnessed, embraced, and also challenged by the other.

Dialogue as openness to the other is a radically ethical way of being and living in the world. It is no surprise, therefore, that in the
Afterword Watkins sites the work of Paulo Freire. This Brazilian-born pedagogist has consistently shown us how true education must be a liberation of consciousness from its oppression by systems of speaking and thinking, operating as monologues that enforce obedient silence. In Freire’s work we learn that the ethics of dialogue requires more than the multiplication of voices in the conversation. Such multiplication results only in an overload of information. Beyond it, what is required is that the one who speaks recognizes and acknowledges the contexts, with their unarticulated assumptions and values, of his or her words and thoughts. The presence of the other is always an occasion for this act of critical self-regard. In Freire’s terms, the other, whether it be a dream figure or the homeless person on the street, or the caged animal is always the possibility of rupture, that moment of breakdown when critical self-regard can become a breakthrough for the appeal of the other to be heard.

In the Coda to the Afterword, Watkins writes that, “In the end, the direction of this book is not inward….only.” This is the expansion I mentioned earlier, and it is this move out of psychological inwardness into an eco-cosmological relatedness which prompts me to call this third edition a new work. Depth psychology, particularly in its Jungian orientation, has always honored the autonomy of the psyche, but it too often imprisoned itself within the narrow confines of a psyche cut off from the other and the world. Watkins’ phenomenological orientation moves depth psychology into that place where the other as difference is the depth of Self. The unconscious is between us and the notion of depth is radically relational and dialogical. We need this type of depth psychology today if we are to be ethically responsible human beings and ecologically responsive to those other and different voices of creation. The third edition of Watkins’ book takes a bold step in that direction. Moreover, it traces between the first and third edition that beautiful arc which bears testimony to a mind, a heart, and a spirit which has faithfully followed its call. This is a book we need to read. But it is also one of those books where the need is also a pleasure.

—Robert D. Romanyszyn
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of poetry is to remind us
how difficult it is to remain just one person,
for our house is open, there are no keys to the doors,
and invisible guests come in and out at will.
—Czesław Milosz from “Ars Poetica”

In the Hebraic tradition human beings were distinguished from all other living creatures not by virtue of their capacity for reason but by virtue of their engagement in three kinds of dialogues: dialogues with neighbors, with themselves, and with God (Niebuhr, 1955). At first glance in our own time and culture, dialogues with ourselves and with the gods seem dim and almost silent next to our dialogues with our neighbors. These dialogues seem to flee from listening ears, hiding out in the most private parts of our solitude and fantasy. They abandon speaking aloud, or otherwise manifesting themselves, as though shrinking from the pejorative labels “pathological,” “immature,” or “superstitious.” But if we approach without such critical predilections, we can begin again to hear the voices of these other dialogues—these, let us say, “imaginal dialogues.”

Side by side and woven through our dialogues with our neighbors, these imaginal dialogues persist. We may find ourselves speaking with our reflection in the mirror, with the photograph of someone we miss, with a figure from a dream or a movie, with our dog. And even when we are outwardly silent, within the ebb and flux of our thought, we talk with critics, with our mothers, our god(s), our consciences; indeed we do so just as steadily as we once spoke to our dolls, our
imaginary companions, the people of our painted pictures. We may find ourselves as audience or as narrator to conversations among imaginal others—others not physically present but actually experienced nonetheless. At times we may even notice ourselves playing more than one role in these imaginal dialogues—now child, now old one, abandoned one. These imaginal dialogues, their functions and lines of development, are the theme of this book.

Experientially imaginal dialogues can take several forms: conversation between a self and an imaginal other(s), between aspects of the Self such as “me” and “I,” or between imaginal others with a self as audience to the imaginal scene. One might argue that these are not distinct classes of dialogue, that the category “conversation between aspects of the Self” logically subsumes the other two categories of “conversation between a self and an imaginal other” and “conversation between imaginal others.” However, here they are treated separately so that we can begin to consider how the dramatic dialogues of thought are experienced, not just how they are conceived.

At times we argue with a critical part of ourselves; that is to say the critical voice sounds like us and is indistinguishable from that point of view we take to be our own. At other times we argue with a critic whose voice is that of a specific teacher—one known to us from daily life or perhaps from dream life, whose point of view is experienced as different from our usual one. To preserve these experiential distinctions, we shall define “Self” as the collection of different characters (or “self- and object-representations”) who can be said to populate an individual’s thoughts, feelings, and actions. In other words, the Self is that world of characters whom one entertains and/or identifies with. The “self” shall be used to designate that part of the Self one is identified with at a given moment. Hence, when it is said that a dialogue is being carried out between self and imaginal other, the self here is the experiential locus of consciousness associated with the feeling of “I.” Its identity may shift, e.g., from counterdependent adult to whiny, wanting child. Insofar as some of these identifications are relatively stable over time, the term “habitual ego” shall be used. For instance a woman may have a habitual ego identification with a character (or self representation) who is strong, energetic, and willful.
INTRODUCTION

In psychoanalytic parlance these imaginal others who are felt as presences and as ego/alien are called "introjects," while those who are closer to our self-representations are labeled "identifications." However, Meissner (1981) points out that these clear distinctions do not always parallel experience. Introjects often lose their independent quality and become merged with one's sense of self, only to return later to their previous distance from the experienced self.

Imaginal dialogues may be spoken aloud (as in children's private or "ego-centric" speech or in adults' solitude), written, or simply thought. When imaginal dialogues occur in speech, as is often the case with young children, one will observe the behaviors common to private speech: averted gaze, failure to make eye contact with any person present, distance maintained from the other, reduced loudness of speech (as contrasted to public speech) (Gallagher and Craig, 1978, 106). There is no protest from the child when a response is not forthcoming from a physically present other, since the speaker does not consider him or her to be the audience but rather the imaginal other to whom the speech was directed. There is often—though not always—manipulation of props (a doll, stone, finger) to represent the imaginal other. The imaginal dialogues of private speech—both speech used when alone and non-communicative speech when with others—can be differentiated from monologal private speech by the speakers implying an intended (imaginal) audience. Such an imagined audience can be indicated in a number of ways: by nonverbal actions or gestures (i.e., between two dolls), by change of voice or intonation, by direct reference to another, by specification of characters, or by utterance pairs which meet usual conversational constraints (i.e., question-answer, comment-acknowledgment pairs). If there is a sequence of utterances by a speaker, the conversational constraints of the first utterance are either met by the second utterance (double role dialogue),¹ or the second utterance presupposes that a response to the

¹ Example of double role dialogue: Here the child acts out first the role of the speaker and then the role of the listener-respondent. Rebecca (4:2) says the following as she plays on the floor with two boxes and wooden shapes of people and animals: (Child picks up a toy pig and has it bang on the box) "'Knock, Knock..." 'You're not coming in' [says the father doll]... 'All right I'll go back in my room....'' [says the pig] (Shields, 1979, 257). Example of single role dialogue: "(Child holding toy telephone to his ear) 'Hi.' (pause) 'No, I can't.' (pause) 'My mummy Holly.' (pause) 'Yes. Okay.' (pause) 'No.' (pause) 'Oh.' (pause)" (Gallagher and Craig, 1978, 108).
first has been imagined and not vocalized but has nevertheless served as a stimulus to the next spoken words (single role dialogue).

The choice of the term “imaginal dialogue” anticipates the point of view on the development of imaginal dialogues that will emerge in the course of this book. In using the word “imaginal” (“imaginal other,” “imaginal dialogue”) we follow Henry Corbin’s (1972) distinction between the “imaginary” and the “imaginal.” Corbin rejects the word “imaginary” when referring to these phenomena because in modern non-premeditated usage the “imaginary” is contrasted with the “real.” “Imaginary” is equated with the unreal, the nonexistent. Our high valuation of the sensible world, the material and the concrete (what we take to be “real”), shines a pejorative light on the “imaginary.” By using the term “imaginal,” Corbin hopes to undercut the real-unreal distinction, and to propose instead that the imaginal not be assessed in terms of a narrowed conception of “reality,” but a broader one which gives credence to the reality of the imaginal.

The word “dialogue” will be used here in two senses. First, it will be used to describe the literal process of exchange between two or more parties, whether it be verbal, gestural, or some combination thereof. Second, it will be used in Martin Buber’s more limited sense as the goal of relatedness. For Buber not all verbal exchanges between two parties are dialogues; indeed true dialogue need not be verbal at all. According to Buber in true dialogue the integrity and autonomy of both self and other are preserved; one neither identifies with nor incorporates the other. Each can address and be addressed.

One finds imaginal dialogues across the life-span and in different life contexts: in children’s play, in their conversation with, their dolls and imaginary playmates, in adults’ dreams and waking dreams and fantasy, in prayer, in authors’ relations to their characters, in dialogues in private speech and thought, in literature and drama. Yet for the most part in psychology, these instances are treated separately. Here we will steal over the fences that have traditionally segregated private speech, play, imaginary companions, dreams, fantasy, prayer, the writing of novels and plays, the reading of literature, the viewing of drama...and thought itself. We do so not to pretend that there are no differences amidst these terrains, but rather to allow a different organization and differentiation of these experiences to challenge the theoretical explanations proposed for each singly. For, as we shall
see, when each is treated singly, some curious theorizing emerges that for the most part seems imaginal dialogues as either disappearing or radically changing with age.

It is not enough for imaginal dialogues to suffuse the intimacy of our talk and thought. They need a conceptual space as well, where they can exist with integrity; a place in theory where their “development” is not reduced to a change from their presence in childhood to their absence in adulthood. They need a space in theory so we can ask, “Given their presence, their diversity, enduringness, and multiformity, what might their development entail?” Only when we have accepted their continued presence can we move closer both to describing the variations in their structures and to wondering at the multiplicity of their possible functions.

But to create this conceptual space we must first gradually free some area from the tangles of other claims. As we shall see some major developmental theorists would have us believe that, with age, imaginal dialogues should become transmuted almost entirely either to communication with “actual” others or to abstract thought. If we fully yield to these claims—focusing then on so called “real” dialogue or abstract thought—we lose the ground on which to argue for a different developmental course—one closer to the dramatic and imaginific thread that runs through them. There needs to be a space reserved in theory for imaginal activities; a space where they can be respected in their own right and not treated as merely ancillary or subordinate to other activities.

Any discussion of psychological function seems bound to operate within certain limitations. The researcher’s vision of the world, of the course and endpoints of human development, determines the range of possible functions allotted to a phenomenon. Another researcher can dispute these proposed functions only by introducing new visions which are intended either to supplant or supplement the former. The difficulty of ascertaining the function of any single example of human speech or thought without a thorough knowledge of both the speaker and the context further complicates the effort to judge among proposed theories of function. And yet we cannot lay aside the question of function in despair if we wish to argue that human speech, action, and thought are not merely effects of previous causes. If we are to move beyond simply listing or describing
what is, to penetrate the question of why it is so, then we are bound
to the question of function. So we shall assume that imaginal dia-
logues are a means or a medium which serves certain ends.

When one speaks of the developmental course of a phenomenon,
the question of function is always implicitly guiding the discussion. For
instance if we view the function of imaginal dialogues as com-
munication with literal others, then we will most likely construe such
dialogues as "egocentric" speech, and hence as failed attempts at com-
munication designed to be replaced by socially communicative speech
as egocentricity diminishes. If, however, we assume the function of
such imaginal dialogues in private speech to be self-communication,
then we shall see these dialogues developing into internal speech,
gradually changing form as the demands of self-communicative speech
come differentiated from those of socially communicative speech.

One complication in examining imaginal dialogues and their
development is that one has no grounds for assuming any single or
unitary function that such dialogues might serve. The possible
functions are multiple, and the lines of development they suggest
may not be convergent. Furthermore we will not have access to the
simpler task often available in discussion of function—that of argu-
ing against one proposed function while asserting another. The task
we have set is more formidable: to work against the tendency to
reduce imaginal dialogues to the set of functions proposed by
the tradition of developmental psychology. While acknowledging
much of the validity of the present claims in this area, we seek to
reawaken another set of claims regarding function and thereby devel-
oping. By looking at the implicit structures of the prevalent theo-
ries we shall gain a sense of the larger theoretical commitments which
desire psychology's accounts of imaginal dialogues to be at best
partial, at worst distorting.

For those clinicians who work with active imagination, play
therapy, psychodrama, hypnosis, focusing, gestalt therapy, transactional
analysis, the intensive journal method, psycho-imagination therapy,
psychosynthesis, sandplay therapy, or guided imagery, this progression
from theory to practice in this book may seem unduly slow, ready as
you may be to embrace an interpretation of mind as dramatic. To
quicken your patience, think of your colleagues who have seen your
work as quackery, as encouraging split personality and hysterical dis-
sociation, remember patients who were reluctant to converse aloud with figures from their dreams, fearful of "hearing voices." These popular therapeutic techniques do reflect the accessibility of imaginal dialogues for many people, but they lack an adequate grounding in developmental theory. Developmental theory, as we shall see, hears commitments which do not allow it to accept these (often hybridized) approaches. Although this text is rife with therapeutic implications—some consistent with one or another of the above mentioned approaches, some at odds—-it leaves the explicit consideration of psychotherapy to the end. Its major task is in clearing the ground for such work to become firmly rooted within a developmental psychology rather than remaining exiled.

As a reader you will be asked to ferret out the dramatis personae who inhabit your thoughts and actions—not only those of your childhood past, but those presently involved in conversation with you. Whatever your professional allegiance, I am purposely addressing the "developmental psychologist" within you first, and the "clinician" within you last. Too consistently psychology has given imagination over to the psychopathologists, fearful of the multiplicity of voices that do not simply appear in thought from time to time but that actually characterize thought.

Developmental psychology is not only practiced in departments of psychology, schools, and learning centers; it is practiced by each of us as we choose the forms of thought that we value most or least. Whether a developmentalist or not, we set about encouraging or rejecting certain kinds of speech and thought in ourselves and others, according to our theories (formal or informal) about their value. Whether or not we are students of developmental psychology, its theories have helped shape our developmental understandings as they have been practiced on us throughout our upbringing; by parents, schools, clinics, and by the culture at large.

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2 It is beyond the task of this volume to discriminate between the various therapeutic approaches which acknowledge the multiplicity of the Self. Although some of their techniques appear similar, the underlying metapsychologies are often different, leading to conflicting views on the origin of imaginal others, their status in mind, and the therapeutic goal with respect to these figures. See Watkins' Waking Dreams (1974;1984, Chapters 3 and 4) for a critical differentiation of Jung's active imagination from various schools of guided imagery therapy.
If we are successful in our attempt to clear a conceptual space in psychology for imaginal dialogues (and perhaps through this example for other imaginal phenomena) and to underline a change in the direction of our talk about imaginal dialogues, then perhaps we will pause the next time we hear a child speaking with a doll, when we catch ourselves in dialogue with our critics, when we see someone praying. And in this pause, hopefully, will be a different sense of the possible futures of these moments.
PART I

Themes in Contemporary Psychological Approaches to the Functions and Development of Imaginal Dialogues
CHAPTER ONE

Imaginal Dialogues and Reason

Dictionaries remind us that reason, that "power of comprehending and inferring" associated with a "sane or sound mind," is "right thinking" (Webster's, 1960, 705), and some suggest that to think right is "to think logically" (American Heritage Dictionary, 1969, 1086). Nonetheless reason, or "right thinking," is not necessarily the kind of thought we each happily acquire over time, but a prescriptive and valuative notion of what thought should be like, ideally speaking. Developmental theorists are engaged as much as philosophers and poets in this prescriptive exercise. We have chosen three major developmental theorists—Piaget, Vygotsky, and Mead—to exemplify the effect of this prescribing exercise on theoretical notions concerning the development of imaginal dialogues. For in each case their observations and arguments about the functions and developmental course of imaginal dialogues, as different as they are, have been shaped by notions of reason, of what constitutes "right thinking." Other theorists could have been chosen. Our motive here, though, is not to comprehensively summarize theorists' propositions, but to explore how certain theoretical commitments have impacted our conceptions of imaginal dialogues.

That reason and imagination should be considered side by side is, of course, no novelty. Through the history of ideas they have struggled against each other, the winner fixing the light in which the other was seen. The particular question afoot, however, is how developmental theorists presently conceive of their relationship, and how this conception affects the discourse about imaginal dialogues.
Piaget

In Piaget’s developmental psychology imagination and reason are most often seen as incompatible bedfellows, the latter pushing the former under the bed as ontogenesis proceeds. If imagination is seen as retained by reason it is taken only as subordinate to reason, not as intrinsic to it. This conception leaves imaginal dialogues in a vulnerable position—when present, destined to be superseded by, or transformed into, abstract thought; when absent, little cause for concern.

Piaget discusses imaginal dialogues in three contexts: in children’s egocentric speech, children’s symbolic play, and adults’ rehearsals of future conversations. Both egocentric speech and symbolic play are viewed pejoratively by Piaget for their failure in accommodation, or the child’s adjustment to “reality.” Both are seen as symptomatic of the young child’s profound egocentricity. Piaget approaches the imaginal dialogues of egocentric speech from the viewpoint of socialized speech, and those of symbolic play from the viewpoint of abstract thought.

One would expect Piaget to discuss imaginal dialogues in his volume, The Language and Thought of the Child. Here he differentiates all speech of the young child into two categories, egocentric speech and socialized speech:

When a child first utters phrases belonging to the first group, he does not bother to know to whom he is speaking nor whether he is being listened to. He talks either for himself or for the pleasure of associating anyone who happens to be there with the activity of the moment. This talk is egocentric, partly because the child speaks only about himself, but chiefly because he does not attempt to place himself at the point of view of his hearer. (1955, 32)

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3 Piaget does not use the term “egocentric” in the colloquial sense of “self-centered,” but in the cognitive sense of not differentiating one’s own point of view from those of others, of not decentering.

4 In Piaget’s system, adaptation consists of a balancing between two processes: assimilation and accommodation. In assimilation the organism changes objects in its milieu in such a way that they can become incorporated into the structure of the organism. In accommodation, the organism adjusts itself to the demands of the object (Flavell, 1963). With respect to the child, a preponderance of assimilation over accommodation can be exemplified by play behavior, a preponderance of accommodation over assimilation by imitative behavior.
In drawing these distinctions, Piaget, as he later acknowledged (1962a), did not separate (a) speech incapable of rational reciprocity from (b) speech that is not intended for others. In his view the child always thinks he is talking to others and making himself understood.

So where would spoken imaginal dialogues fall in this division of child language? In his 1955 volume, Piaget offers only one example. A child addresses a tortoise and a salamander, as follows:

“Now then, it's coming [a tortoise]. It's coming, it's coming, it's coming. Get out of the way, Da, it's coming, it's coming, it's coming... Come along, tortoise!”

A little later, after having watched the aquarium, soliloquizing all the time: “Oh, isn’t it [a salamander] surprised at the great big giant [a fish]!” he exclaims, “Salamander, you must eat up the fishes!” (39)

He uses this example to illustrate the child’s primitive thinking, i.e., his attempt to command both animate and inanimate beings.

What are the positive functions allotted to the three kinds of egocentric speech Piaget addresses? Repetition or echolalia is seen as producing pleasure in talking in and of itself, without communicative intent. Monologues—in which the child talks to himself as though he were thinking out loud—are seen as marking the rhythm of, accelerating, supplementing, and sometimes supplanting actions. Finally, collective monologues “where an outsider is always associated with the action or thought of the moment, but is expected neither to attend nor to understand” are seen as creating the feeling that one is interesting to others (Piaget, 1955, 33). Piaget mentions in passing the way in which the child can “use words to bring about what the action of itself is powerless to do.” An analysis of the role of egocentric speech in this “romancing and inventing,” this “creating reality by words and magical language” (36-37) is not developed in this volume.

These few positive remarks, however, pale by contrast with Piaget’s steady derogation of egocentric speech. The very name given to speech that does not have communicative impact on actual others—egocentric speech—is of course our first hint of what is to come. Piaget stresses how such speech reveals that “the child is constantly the victim of a confusion between his own point of view and that of other people” (1955, 39). The monologue is described as a “primitive and infantile
function of language,” of which “we shall naturally see the gradual disappearance...as we pass from early childhood to the adult stage” (40). When Piaget treats collective monologues, he compares them to the thinking aloud present in hysterical subjects. He sees the child’s talking as failed communication—as “socially ineffectual”—because the child does not succeed in making his audience listen and because he is not really addressing himself to that audience. He is not speaking to anyone in particular. And though “he talks almost incessantly to his neighbors,” the child “rarely places himself at their point of view” (60).

For Piaget this inadequate speech is reflective of the child’s unsocialized thought. He parallels thought’s change from egocentricity to “communicated intelligence” with speech’s change from egocentricity to communicability. This comparison brings us to the one example Piaget gives of an imaginal dialogue in adulthood. Piaget mentions how an adult, when pursuing thought in an inquiry, imagines himself speaking with his “collaborators or opponents, actual or eventual, at any rate members of his own profession to whom sooner or later he will announce the result of his labours” (1955, 59). Piaget does not see this imaginal dialogue as a later development of the dialogues of egocentric speech, but contrasts the adult, who even in thinking is socialized, with the young child, who even in speaking is not; the adult, who even while alone thinks socially, with the child under seven who, even in the society of others, speaks egocentrically (60).

This theme of the inadequacy of the child’s thought and its implicit impact on a consideration of imaginal dialogues can be further developed through an examination of Piaget’s discussion of symbolic play in _Play, Dreams, and Imitation_ (1962b). In this volume Piaget records many examples of imaginal dialogues in the context of symbolic play. As in his treatment of egocentric speech, he does attribute positive functions to these dialogues—once again, in an overall atmosphere of negative evaluation. He proposes that the child introduces an audience because she takes pleasure in imagining becoming the object of the other’s attention. He further suggests that the child at times chooses to converse with an imaginary other rather than a real other because the imaginary other provides no resistance to the child’s intentions or needs; there is no real other to accommodate to. Intentions and wishes are fulfilled with this release from the demands of
accommodation. For Piaget such liberation is synonymous with pleasure. The dialogues are seen as part of the child's overriding desire to be the center of attention and to have reality conform to individual wishes. Traumatic interactions are also played out in these dialogues, with the implicit purpose of controlling or surpassing the particular life experience being represented. It is striking that although Piaget's chief claim for symbolic play is its role in cognition, the functions he ascribes are affective in nature and are presented without clear cognitive corollaries.

Piaget, while granting these positive functions to what we have called imaginal dialogues, has one eye on his conception of the intellectually developed adult as he scrutinizes the actions and speech of the young child. Symbolic play and its imaginal dialogues are considered a form of thinking, but an inadequate one where the "sole aim" is believed to be "satisfaction of the ego, i.e., individual truth as opposed to collective and impersonal truth" (Piaget, 1962h, 167). Piaget (1962a, 4) directly compares the child's thinking which is involved in the genesis of games to the "nondirected and autistic thought" Bleuler spoke of with regard to schizophrenia. This kind of thought, according to Piaget, wanes as the child becomes the socialized adult who is able to think abstractly—except in states of psychopathology. Imagining is seen as a "transitional moment in the development of the child's full cognitive capacities" (Casey, 1976b, 13). While the image is seen by Piaget as persisting in adulthood, its role in relation to conceptual thought changes radically: the image becomes merely a "symbol of the operational schema, and no longer as an integral part of it" (Piager, 1962h, 244).

From Piaget's perspective the imaginal dialogues of egocentric speech develop into adequate communication with actual others. When imaginal dialogues are still present in adult speech, the adults who engage in them are described by Piaget as "certain men and women of a puerile disposition (certain hysterical subjects, if hysteria be described as the survival of infantile characteristics)" (1955, 40).

Vygotsky

Unlike Piaget, who sees egocentric speech as developing into communicative speech, Vygotsky sees it as developing from social speech. It is a stage in the development of inner speech, that is, in the
inner verbalization of thought. For Vygotsky (1962, 43), thought and language arise independently, and only around age two do the curves of their development intersect with speech beginning to serve intellect and thoughts beginning to be spoken. Egocentric speech is seen by Vygotsky as "speech on its way inward." For Vygotsky (as for Mead) private speech is thus not an extension of the child's egocentrism, as it is for Piaget. Indeed, for Vygorsky the beginning of communication with oneself already presumed communicative ability and intent with others. He focuses on how the child begins to use speech to guide his own actions, to communicate with himself. Vygotsky comes to view such speech as not only accompanying activity, but as aiding in the direction, planning, and execution of action, and as serving mental orientation.

Although this is a more positive construal of private speech than Piaget's, Vygotsky also regards private speech as reflecting the young child's inabilities, i.e., to differentiate self-guiding speech from social speech, to differentiate self as auditor from other as auditor. As Kohlberg, Yaeger, and Hjortholm (1968, 969) point out, Piaget's and Vygorsky's viewpoints, while different, inevitably lead to a construal of private speech as "un economical and inefficient," having neither the economy of speech intended for self-guidance during performance of an action, nor the communicative value of speech intended for a differentiated other.

Vygotsky's interest is not in how thought preserves the dialogues of social discourse as a form with which to think, but rather how the form of speech used in communication to the other undergoes radical changes in structure as the function shifts to self-communication. He states: "While in external speech thought is embodied in words, in inner speech words die as they bring forth thought," "omitting the subject of a sentence and all words connecting with it," "leaving an elliptical, highly predicative syntax" (Vygotsky, 1962, 149, 139).

Vygotsky describes not only the decrease in quantity of egocentric speech with age (that Piaget also notes for different reasons), but a gradual change in its structure, such that by age seven egocentric speech looks radically different from social speech. According to Vygorsky, as egocentric speech is internalized, its structure shifts from dialogue to monologue. This is because the demands of self-communicative speech differ from those of both egocentric and social speech.
The one exception Vygotsky gives when inner speech approximates social speech in form is when inner speech prepares one for external speech, as when thinking over a lecture to be given. Vygotsky argues that predication is the natural form of inner speech because we “know what we are thinking about—i.e., we always know the subject and the situation” (1962, 145). Whereas in some social speech partners may be so intimate with each other’s thoughts that predication alone is necessary for communication, Vygotsky claims that this is always so in inner speech. It is always so because in thought, for Vygotsky, speaker and auditor are always the same—namely, the self—and thus share the same knowledge of referents.

In inner speech, the “mutual” perception is always there, in absolute form; therefore a practically wordless “communication” of even the most complicated thoughts is the rule. (145)

Thus for Vygotsky inner speech is necessarily monologal, and he claims that “psychological investigation leaves no doubt that monologue is indeed the higher, more complicated form, and of later historical development” than dialogue (1962, 144). The imaginal dialogues in children’s private speech are seen as disappearing as speech becomes internalized and the more advanced monologal form is mastered. For Vygotsky,

Dialogue implies immediate unpremeditated utterance. It consists of replies, repartees; it is a chain of reactions. Monologue, by comparison, is a complex formation; the linguistic elaboration can be attended to leisurely and consciously. (144)

Vygotsky compares the monologues of thought to the dialogues of social speech. He fails to compare the former monologues of thought to the dialogues of thought, an issue we shall explore in Chapter Four.

There appear to be three primary influences leading Vygotsky to hold monologic inner speech at the apex of verbal thought: the functions he ascribed to both egocentric speech and verbal thought; his implicit conception of the self as unitary; and his consequent lack of focus on the presence of imaginal others in thought. These topics will be taken up in Part II. For now, let us rest with seeing that the valued form of verbal thought, the monologue, which is elliptical
and highly predicative, leads to an implicit view of imaginal dialogues in thought as inefficient and inferior.

**Mead**

For Mead, monologal thought does not hold a position developmentally superior to dialogal thought, as it does for Vygotsky. Nor does Mead, like Piaget, place imagination in opposition to reason. The imaginal dialogues present in children's play and speech are internalized without threat to reason. Indeed, from Mead's point of view, they are constitutive of reason, as thought for Mead is essentially dialogical.

While Piaget tends to see play and its imaginal dialogues as reflective of the autism of childhood, Mead sees such dialogues in play as reflective of the essentially social character of all psychical processes, those of children included. Thus, although Mead and Piaget would probably agree on some of the functions of such dialogues, Mead's commitment to the social nature of the self from infancy does not lead him to propose the disappearance of imaginal dialogues. These dialogues, rather than being construed as evidence of the child's inability to communicate with actual others or to deal with the demands of a social reality wcrc for Mcad—as they are for Vygotsky—evidence of exactly the opposite: the internalization of the social nature of reality.

Mead sees the child's early dialogues in play as gradually becoming the inner conversations of thinking. The dialogue as a form is central to Mead's thought, as he believed that it is through the reflexivity of the dialogue rhar the self arises. For Mead, all speech and thought are implicitly dialogical. The dialogue form establishes for the child the meaning of the self and her actions. Awareness of the self, according to Mead, arises through adopting the perspective of others toward oneself. This is achieved first through describing one's activities to another, or as though to another, and thereby evoking the response of the other to oneself. At first the self is the reflection of others' attitudes toward it. Thus, where Piaget's example of a child describing what she sees to her doll is taken by him to be expressive of the child's pleasure in being a focus of attention, for Mead this perpetual describing—which can strain the patience of those around children (“Now I'm putting on my hat. See me putting it on!”)—marks the
beginning of the child's transition to the role of the other, from which indeed one sees and becomes aware of oneself and others. As the child begins to take on all the roles of others toward oneself—policeman, parent, sibling, etc.—the child's own self is created. Indeed, for Mead, the self is an organization of perspectives. "When playing at being someone else, the self comes to realize its own nature at the same time it realizes the nature of the person whose role is being played" (Pfuetze, 1973, 83).

From this perspective, Mead argues that the importance of the novel and the newspaper is that they create the self by allowing the reader to adopt other perspectives. When one reads an "admirable novel...he feels in some sense enriched... His life has had content added to it. He has been given a new point of view, a new approach, a new way of looking at things; and the novelty involved in it leads to a richer experience..." (Mead, 1936, 410).

While Vygotsky argues that social speech and speech to oneself are essentially different in structure due to their divergence in function, Mead stresses the similarity between thinking and talking to somebody else. Thinking for Mead involves the ability to both assume one's own perspective, and to take the attitude of the group on it, being able to shift between these with ease.

There is a field, a sort of inner forum, in which we are the only spectators and the only actors. In that field each one of us confers with himself. We carry on something of a drama. If a person retires to a secluded spot and sits down to think, he talks to himself. He asks and answers questions. He develops his ideas and arranges and organizes those ideas as he might in a conversation with somebody else. He may prefer talking to himself to talking to somebody else. (Mead, 1936, 401)

While Mead understands the dialogal form as persisting in thought once it is developed, he proposes that the nature of the interlocutor changes.

Thus the child can think about his conduct as good or bad only as he reacts to his own acts in the remembered words of his parents. Until this process has been developed into the abstract process of thought, self-consciousness remains dramatic, and the self which is a fusion of
the remembered actor and this accompanying chorus is somewhat loosely organized and very clearly social. Later the inner stage changes into the forum and workshop of thought. *The features and intonations of the dramatic personae fade out* and the emphasis falls upon the meaning of the inner speech, the imagery becomes merely the barely necessary cues. But the mechanism remains social, and at any moment the process may become personal. (Mead, 1978, 180)

Whereas in childhood thought one speaks to specific others, in adulthood, Mead maintains, one usually converses in thought with a “generalized other.” For Mead (1924-25) this transition from specific to generalized other, while never complete, is part of development “to the levels of abstract thinking and that impersonality, that so-called objectivity that we cherish” (272). The generalized other arises from the multiplicity of roles one has assumed in the past and appears to be a homogenization of these. It represents the attitude of the whole community, posing the hypothetical viewpoint of a “greater objectivity” against the “personal wants and attitudes” of the individual. Thus the function of this generalized other is the universalizing of thought (Mead, 1924-25, 90).

Finally, for Mead the transition from the multiple roles the child takes on in play to the unitary presence of the generalized other in adulthood reflects a more stable and mature development of self and, most importantly, is also seen as a development in thought. Although Mead does not characterize the dialogical form itself as at odds with “right thinking,” his notion of good thought does lead him to propose a change in the nature and number of interlocutors in imaginal dialogues. The child’s pantheon of particular presences who grace her play and fantasy, who join her in conversation, are seemingly reduced to one. The many names and faces, the particular intonations and voices merge, leaving a single voice, a homogenized unity.