

Talking to yourself and hearing others' thoughts: why neither means you are insane

Two related problems are of perennial interest to philosophers of mind and language: (1) how to understand the relationship between discursive utterances and thoughts, and (2) how to understand the boundary between the 'internal' realm (where thoughts presumably reside) and the 'external' realm (in which utterances occur).

It is widely taken for granted that there is a tight connection between the structure of thought and the structure of language, although philosophers differ on their order of priority, with Fodor, Chomsky, and others arguing that language is parasitic on thought, and Sellars, Brandom, and others arguing that thought is parasitic on language. Meanwhile, there is an intuitively clear sense in which the realm of thought is 'private' and the realm of speech is 'public'. But this distinction has typically been seen as tracking two others. First, it is assumed that the private/public distinction maps onto an epistemological distinction - in its starkest form a distinction between a realm that is directly empirically accessible to the individual alone, and one that is empirically available to others. Second, it is assumed that the private/public distinction should be accounted for in metaphysical terms; thought and language are, as it were, different kinds of things - an explanatory assumption that survives the 20th century turn toward materialism. Instead, we argue that the private/public distinction must be understood in pragmatic and normative terms that neither underwrite a simple epistemological dichotomy nor call for any metaphysical distinction between inner and outer.

Thus we argue that the distinction between thought and speech is best understood as pragmatic rather than metaphysical. Speech is indeed public, in that it is of the essence of speech that it is *addressed to an audience* and seeks uptake. It is part of the normative structure of speech that it contains a second-personal call for acknowledgment and appropriate inclusion in the intersubjective space of rational discourse. Thought, on our account, is conceptually linked with speech - it is, roughly, speech minus the second-person call. In *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Sellars tells a story - the myth of Jones - that is

designed to explain how an inner realm of private thoughts can be a theoretical artifact of discursive practices. For Sellars, to understand an episode as a thought is to understand it in terms of its role in the production of public utterances. Building on this idea, we argue that discursively structured thoughts only have the content and force that they have insofar as we can assess what their place in epistemic and social space would be *if* they were expressed as speech acts - for instance, a thought can only be true or false insofar as it could be subject to assessment, objection, agreement, etc, if it were spoken.

A central point for us is that the metaphor of 'internal' vs 'external' is fundamentally misleading, and that the *privacy* of thought should not be thought of as somehow residing in its *internality*, even in an extended sense of the term - thought is not distinctively 'internal' in either being especially hidden from view, or being the sort of thing that is the special resident of the inside of the head. A species whose members' thinking processes happened to be externally visible or audible rather than hidden away in the cranium would not thereby be speaking every time they thought. Indeed, if we eventually become adept at using neuroimaging technology to see what people are thinking it won't turn their thought into speech. Conversely, we do sometimes genuinely talk to ourselves without making any externally detectable sounds or movements, and this (we argue) is different from merely thinking, although it is an inherently quirky type of speaking. On our account, we should understand the difference between thought and speech as one of normative structure. Thought, by nature, is not addressed to anyone, and hence contains no demand for acknowledgment, as part of its success conditions. However, we argue, the thought of language-users is *proto-linguistic*: it is more helpful to understand discursively structured thought as *missing* the addressing function than to understand speech acts as *adding* the addressing function to a thought.

This recasting of the thinking/speaking distinction has implications for the recent vigorous debates over whether minds should be thought of as 'extended' so as to include the body and perhaps parts of the world beyond the body. We argue that these views have

appeared radical because they plant some of thinking in the 'external' world, rather than in the internal realm in which it traditionally belongs. On our view, there is genuinely no residual version of the internal/external distinction left to save, and hence the extended mind hypothesis is both transformed and rendered less mysterious.