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TALKING TO ONESELF AS A PHENOMENON OF THE SOUL: A CORPUS-BASED APPROACH

Introduction. The question of talking to oneself in philosophy is inseparable from the problematics of the soul. If we understand talking to oneself as a particular practice, the immediate issue concerns its outcomes and its addressee: for what purpose and for whom is it carried out? Undoubtedly, its addressee turns out to be the human soul – or, in contemporary terms, consciousness and personality as a whole. Talking to oneself presupposes a multiplicity within the soul: intellectual, emotional, moral, and so forth. From a philosophical perspective, it becomes a mode of internal differentiation – the delineation of distinct voices, logics, and instances within oneself. A human being is capable of considering their own past and future as different interlocutors, of distinguishing between the voice of passion and the voice of conscience, of hearing within themselves both arguments and counterarguments. In this sense, talking to oneself proves to be not only a mode of thought but also an anthropological given: it is the mechanism through which a human being becomes human [27; 28].

However, philosophers have always emphasized the duality of this process. On the one hand, the rigidity and closedness of the self threaten to turn talking to oneself into a sterile monologue, incapable of accepting the voice of the other. On the other hand, the endless multiplication of inner voices and the blurring of the boundaries of the self carry the risk of madness and the dissolution of the subject. In this context, talking to oneself must be carried out in a delicate balance between preserving integrity and remaining open to difference [29]. This is precisely why, for example, John Dewey associated talking to oneself with the danger of privatizing social experience: voices acquired from outside can be redirected inward and turned into the private property of the personality, thereby losing their connection with the living interaction with others [15, p. 218].

It can be said that the methodological value of studying the category of the soul in the context of talking to oneself lies in the fact that it preserves a field of openness and multiplicity, which is lost when narrowed to the terms of psychology («consciousness», «self», «memory»), sociology («role», «norm», «identity»), or cognitive science. The soul is not a strict disciplinary category but rather a philosophical framework that makes it possible to think of talking to oneself as a phenomenon resistant to reduction. Indeed, the soul holds within itself several layers at once: it can simultaneously serve as a space of multiple voices, a repository of ideas and faith, an anthropological constant, a cultural metaphor, and an ontological structure of subjectivity. This is precisely why it is productive to employ the concept of the soul when speaking of talking to oneself: this phenomenon is itself heterogeneous, not reducible solely to a technique of thought, a psychological mechanism, or a social practice. It is always broader, and its breadth is most adequately captured through the category of the soul, which from the outset has been conceived as a receptacle and mediator of many things: the individual and the collective, the rational and the affective, the material and the spiritual. For this

reason, it is important to examine how philosophers who addressed talking to oneself engaged with the word «soul».

It is important to note that the problematic of talking to oneself has already been developed in considerable depth within psychology. Contemporary theories of inner speech, intrapsychic communication, and the dialogical self provide us with a language for analyzing the mechanisms through which inner multiplicity is shaped and regulated. These approaches describe the functions of talking to oneself within the frameworks of psyche, consciousness, and personality. For this reason, when considering philosophical conceptions of talking to oneself and of the soul, it is essential to take this interdisciplinary context into account.

In the theory of intrapersonal communication, talking to oneself is understood as a fundamental mechanism of the psyche, in which the subject simultaneously acts as sender, receiver, and channel of the message. This process encompasses a full cycle of operations: the perception of stimuli, their selective attention, interpretation, evaluation, integration into experience, and the formation of a response. Thus, talking to oneself turns out not to be a secondary act but the very core of self-regulation: it enables the consolidation of identity, the generation of new meanings, and the regulation of behavior. The central category here is the image of the «self» – multiple and dynamic, filtering information, structuring experience, and determining how a person will act. Yet the «self» is never unified: different roles («I as a student», «I as a parent», «I as a colleague») enter into intrapersonal conflicts that are played out in talking to oneself. Hence the ambivalence: this dialogue can be constructive (development, meditation, inner work) or destructive (compulsive self-criticism). This conception demonstrates that talking to oneself is a continual negotiation of inner experience with external stimuli and norms, an ongoing process of meaning-making within the nexus of «organism–environment», while at the same time underscoring the universally physiological basis of such processes [11; 13; 41].

The theory of inner speech, developed by Charles Fernyhough and Norbert Wiley on the basis of Lev Vygotsky's ideas, deepens our understanding of the psychic nature of talking to oneself by focusing on how exactly a person speaks to themselves, interiorizing external, social dialogue. According to Vygotsky, inner speech emerges out of external speech and is internalized, becoming faster and syntactically reduced. It often takes on a dialogical form: inner voices are distributed across roles (critic, mentor, friend), helping the subject analyze the past, anticipate the future, and regulate emotions. When shifting into second- or third-person address («You can do it»), inner speech becomes a tool of distancing and behavioral regulation. Yet this same structure also explains pathological disruptions: when the mechanism of inner speech breaks down, one's own thoughts may be experienced as an «alien voice» (hallucinations in schizophrenia). Inner speech is also linked to creativity: writers often describe the process of writing as «listening» to their characters. Wiley emphasizes that inner speech cannot be reduced to abstraction: it is a genuine speech act, albeit one that is heavily abbreviated, saturated with personal meanings and emotional nuances [17; 50].

Hubert Hermans's theory of the dialogical self conceives of the «self» as a multivoiced space. Within the person, there exist different «I-positions», each with its own voice and perspective: internal («I as a daughter», «I as a professional»),

external («my teacher», «my country»), and hybrid («I as an immigrant»). These positions are in constant interaction: they argue, support one another, form alliances, or compete. Talking to oneself in this context is not merely a cognitive process but an internal social stage on which conflicts are enacted and forms of integration are sought. Under conditions of globalization and multiculturalism, this multiplicity is only intensified: within the self, one hears the voices of different cultures, ideologies, and social roles. This theory emphasizes that talking to oneself is always already dialogical, which means that «others» – internal and external, real and imagined – participate in it. Thus, talking to oneself appears as a practice of identity construction through continual positioning and counter-positioning, through the incorporation of the other into the self [25].

Taken together, these approaches demonstrate that talking to oneself is not a secondary «superstructure» of the psyche but its fundamental mode of existence: from the processing of stimuli and self-regulation to the construction of identity within complex social and cultural contexts. What, then, is the specificity of the philosophy of talking to oneself in the context of the soul?

The purpose of this article is to examine how, across the corpus of philosophical texts, talking to oneself is articulated in relation to the soul – what meanings and emphases different thinkers ascribe to this notion – and to place these philosophical interpretations in dialogue with contemporary psychological theories of talking to oneself. Such an analysis seeks to illuminate both the convergences and divergences between philosophical and psychological understandings of talking to oneself, while also demonstrating how this idea provides a foundation for reflecting on the nature of the soul and the subject.

Materials and Methods. For the purposes of this study, we compiled a corpus of 7,318 English-language books and articles by prominent Western philosophers spanning 2,500 years. A search was conducted to capture lexical variants of the concept talking to oneself using the AntConc software [1]. This included wildcard queries such as (with the asterisk indicating «any characters before or after»): *sp[oke,eak]* [to,with] *sel[f,v]*; *convers* [to,with] *sel[f,v]*; *talk* [to,with] *sel[f,v]*; and *soliloq* for instances of «soliloquy». These expressions were applied with proximity constraints (1–3 words before or after the verb) to account for variations in syntactic structure and phrasing. On this basis, it was found that 132 out of approximately 800 philosophers wrote about talking to oneself (all fragments can be consulted here [26]). Of these, 28 philosophers addressed talking to oneself in either the immediate (within 25 words to the left or right) or extended (within 400 words to the left or right) context of the term «soul*», which amounts to roughly 21% of all thinkers. We then manually created a typology of these fragments, described their semantic features, and formulated conclusions, including comparisons with psychological theories of talking to oneself.

Research Results. A typology of philosophical conceptions of talking to oneself in the context of the soul can be constructed on the basis of the identified fragments. Some philosophers produced multiple passages that may be classified under different conceptions.

The psychagogical, or Stoic, conception of talking to oneself emerges as the most frequent, represented in the works of 12 philosophers. Within this tradition,

talking to oneself is understood as an exercise of the soul, a technique of living and a form of askesis, a discipline of self-observation and self-governance.

1. For Seneca, talking to oneself functions as an instrument for discerning true good and as a source of inner tranquility: not bodily pleasures bring peace, but rather the good rooted within the soul itself, accessible through continual inner work [43, 2014a, XXVII. On the Good which Abides, par. 1]. Talking to oneself, therefore, must be rigorous and «purifying», extending even to deliberate self-criticism and harsh utterances about oneself, intended to deflate pride and vanity; just as the body sometimes benefits from vomiting, so too the soul benefits from an uncompromising examination of its arrogance and attachments [43, LXVIII. On Wisdom and Retirement, par. 3].

2. For Epictetus, this technique acquires a radically active character: only talking to oneself truly persuades or dissuades us, reassigning the meanings of representations and thereby altering the state of the soul. Suffering diminishes not because external causes disappear but because the soul develops a different relation to them, discerning what belongs to it and what does not, what can be changed and what cannot – this constitutes genuine self-mastery [16, To a person who had been changed to a character of shamelessness].

3. For St. John Chrysostom, talking to oneself means beginning judgment at one's own soul: before reproaching the «unbelievers», the believer must examine personal passions – devotion to gold, indulgence, self-satisfaction. Only by persuading oneself to live righteously can one persuade others; thus, talking to oneself becomes an analysis of sin and a starting point for purification [47, par. Ver. 8].

4. For Hugh Binning, talking to oneself is a direct spiritual commission: God grants the human being the capacity to converse inwardly in order to search for oneself, to discern errors, and to return to the path of truth. The heart is the locus of this dialogue and the repository of affects in constant need of cleansing. Talking to oneself therefore constitutes not only an analysis but also a practice leading to the salvation of the soul [6, Sermon XVII].

5. For Hryhorii Skovoroda, the theme returns to antiquity: even Antisthenes's claim that philosophy teaches one to converse with oneself disciplines the soul for the reception of Scripture. Ancient exercises become a prelude to the transformation of the soul into the dwelling of God, where detachment from the external turns into attentiveness to the internal [45, Letters to Mykhailo Kovalynsky, 8, Kharkiv, Second Half of September – beginning of October 1762].

6. For Søren Kierkegaard, talking to oneself is grounded in silence: when noise ceases, the soul itself seeks dialogue with itself; silence is not a mere external backdrop but a conduit to self-knowledge [32, p. 20].

7. For Carl Gustav Jung, talking to oneself is the dialogue of the «I» with the voice of its own shadow: as long as this voice is accepted, it is a friend and advisor; if rejected, it becomes an enemy, returning through symptoms and obsessions. The task is not to subjugate the unconscious but to establish a productive alliance with the inner shadow, thereby sustaining inner balance [31, Archetypes…, p. 236].

8. For Giovanni Gentile, talking to oneself acquires an anthropological dimension: language is given not only for communication with others but also for self-governance. The human being is a «speaking animal» also because self-conversation

unfolds in a historically concrete language, engaging with one's own ideas, habits, and actions; thus, talking to oneself becomes a practice of self-control and self-understanding for the concrete soul in its national and cultural body [23, p. 79].

9. For Karl Jaspers, talking to oneself exposes the dividedness of the soul: within it contend the voice of genius (order, law, logos) and the voice of daimonion (chaos, disorganization). Talking to oneself becomes the stage of their encounter and struggle, where human existence undergoes its ultimate ontological tensions [30, pp. 80–81].

10. For Hannah Arendt, talking to oneself unfolds in three interrelated registers. First, as inherited from the ancient tradition, it is a pause from action that attunes the soul to truth lying beyond language; talking to oneself here serves as preparation for truth and godlikeness through detachment [3, p. 41]. Second, in the Enlightenment it becomes the arena of conflict between «cold reason» and empathy (Rousseau): out of this struggle arises attentiveness to the other, to the poor, and a new social sensitivity [4, ch. 2, §3]. Third, following Socrates, Arendt insists that to speak with oneself is to be «a friend to oneself», avoiding inner division and contradiction; logic and ethics converge here, as concord with oneself enables concord with others [2, III.18].

11. For Michel Foucault, the theme returns to ancient techniques of care of the self. The self-sufficiency of the sage who practices talking to oneself parallels divine self-sufficiency: to live «with oneself» is to cultivate ataraxia, affirming the kinship of the soul with the divine [20, pp. 458–459]. Written practices of hypomnemata – reading, note-taking, letters to oneself and to friends – transform talking to oneself into a discipline of subjectivation: the soul records and surveys its impressions and thoughts in order to govern itself [20, pp. 359–361; 18, 1997, pp. 210–211]. Foucault notes, moreover, that for the Stoics the divine is disclosed in the very practice of self-care: talking to oneself functions as participation in divine life through exercise, not through contemplation of an external object [20, pp. 457–458].

12. For Peter Sloterdijk, this technique is transposed into an anthropology of conscience: within each subject there is always polyphony – the voices of conscience, passion, memory, and expectation. Morality arises not as an external law but from the living clash of these inner voices, where the subject learns to cool impulses, to weigh positions, and to make decisions. Philosophy, as dialogue of the soul with itself, thus becomes a model for the formation of moral autonomy [46, pp. 102–103].

Conceptual Synthesis. Talking to oneself thus emerges as a practice of moral self-formation: it teaches how to live with oneself in order to live with others, and how to govern oneself so as not to be governed by passing affects and external circumstances. The dialogue of the soul with itself orders the affects, restrains passions, establishes a hierarchy of goods, and shifts the center of gravity from the transient and external to the enduring and internal. In this way, moral priorities are formed, a connection with the eternal and the true is grasped, and reason becomes an instrument of purification and salvation. The Stoics conceived of such dialogue as a method for cultivating autonomy and resilience, a method later adopted and reworked by Christian thought as a practice of conscience, repentance, and spiritual discernment, and in the modern and contemporary periods as a subtle technique of self-formation and inner freedom. The soul, therefore, must be educated and attuned to values that transcend the bodily, the material, and the chaotic.

A special role in this context is played by the division between the «friend» and the «critic» within the soul. The friend is the inner guide, the voice that supports the soul in its striving toward the good, while the critic is the inner accuser, reminding of weaknesses, errors, and misguided orientations. Both voices must be heard: the friend strengthens, the critic disciplines. For this reason, talking to oneself in the psychagogical perspective constitutes a continuous school of self-critique, through which the human being learns to distinguish what can be governed from what cannot, to structure emotions, passions, and affects, and to bring them under the authority of the higher moral law.

From this follows another key feature of psychagogy: the demand for inner concord and identity. The human being must not remain in a state of chaos and contradiction, where values, goals, and emotions move in anarchic and uncoordinated directions. Care of the self, in this conception, consists in acknowledging the multiplicity of voices and positions within the soul – emotional, moral, social, rational – and integrating them into a certain hierarchy, a subordination. Only by ordering them can equilibrium and inner tranquility be attained. In other words, within the psychagogical conception the soul is literally that which is placed in priority, cultivated, and brought into being through specific exercises performed upon it.

Next follows the *psychointellectual, or Platonic, conception of talking to oneself*. This conception encompasses a wide range of authors – from antiquity to modernity – and posits talking to oneself as the very essence of thinking occurring within the soul. A total of nine authors can be classified under this conception, making it the second most frequent.

1. According to Plato, to think is for the soul to enter into conversation with itself. Talking to oneself requires consistency and inner honesty, forming the capacity to hold an object of reasoning and to preserve semantic distinctions. If the soul confuses meanings, baser things can be taken for noble ones and life can be lived in accordance with this substitution [38, Theaetetus].

2. Alexander of Aphrodisias clarifies this idea by demonstrating the processual character of thought. Knowledge exists, but it cannot be given all at once: time is required in order to express everything known to the soul. Talking to oneself is precisely the unfolding of knowledge that makes thinking an epistemological process. In response to skeptics who doubt the existence of knowledge on account of its gradual disclosure, Alexander insists that knowledge and thinking are distinct, and that the process of talking to oneself merely uncovers, interprets, and refines it [9, p. 129].

3. For William of Auvergne, the soul appears not as the object but as the subject of speech: it is the soul that speaks and thinks, without the mediation of the body. When the statement is made «I converse with myself», the meaning is that the soul conducts the dialogue. Talking to oneself, therefore, does not automatically lead to the good but depends on the quality of the soul itself, diverging from the Stoic notion of talking to oneself as inherently beneficial [51, 2000, pp. 139–140].

4. For Thomas Aquinas, talking of the soul with itself is linked primarily to the activity of reason. The soul encompasses different faculties – reason, will, and memory. Talking to oneself here operates as the act that orders knowledge: an object is fixed in memory, then reflected upon, and subsequently joined with other content. The

transition from consideration to synthesis is particularly crucial: it is this movement that requires dialogue of the soul with itself. Aquinas maintains that this is not merely a form of comprehension but also a preparation for transmitting knowledge to others. Even the «angelic intellect» requires such dialogue with itself to arrange intelligible content [42, Whether one angel speaks to another?].

5. For Hans-Georg Gadamer, talking of the soul with itself is not a fixed act but a process of unfolding thought. Thought does not exist as an instantaneous snapshot; it requires a sequence of questions and answers, an endless refinement and development. This process unites the individual and the universal: the soul, in dialogue with itself, opens itself to infinity. Moreover, such talking to oneself anticipates external dialogue: it prepares the soul for encounter with the other and for understanding [21, pp. 421–422, 547; 22, p. 31].

6. For Paul Ricoeur, talking of the soul with itself attains the status of a unique philosophical experience irreducible to psychology. Talking to oneself here becomes a mode of forming the inner self. It is a practice of self-understanding that allows correction of perceptual errors, analysis of actions, and consideration of them from multiple perspectives. Through talking to oneself, the soul not only forms but also disciplines itself, acquiring clarity and an understanding [10, pp. 68–69; 40, pp. 14-15].

7. For Michel Foucault, by contrast, the dark side of this practice is exposed: language may turn pathological. The soul, in conducting dialogue with itself, produces its own language that constitutes madness. Such dialogue deprives the soul of contact with the external, enclosing it in a closed truth that generates hallucinations and delusion [19, p. 100].

8. Jacques Derrida revisits Plato's theme of the soul as a book and radically reinterprets it. For Plato, the dialogue of the soul with itself and writing were secondary to the voice, which guaranteed truth. Derrida, however, demonstrates that no pure voice exists: the soul is always already permeated with writing, with archive, with cultural traces. Talking to oneself in this context could be interpreted as not the living speech without the other but an interaction with signifiers, with the materiality of writing, in which truth is born from differences and traces [14, p. 132].

9. Bernard Stiegler distinguishes between bad and good soliloquy. The former is destructive conversation of the soul with itself, culminating in madness due to social isolation. The latter is disciplined dialogue, sustained by writing and reading. Work with texts allows the soul to conduct dialogue with itself without collapsing into chaos, thereby making the process a philosophical practice of self-formation. For Stiegler, writing becomes the saving technique that preserves talking to oneself from pathological extremes [48, pp. 21–22].

Conceptual Synthesis. In all authors except Foucault and Stiegler, explicit reference is made to Plato (with Socrates in William of Auvergne broadly aligned with the Platonic tradition). The psychointellectual conception of talking to oneself thus demonstrates that the dialogue of the soul with itself is the locus where thinking takes place, truth is apprehended, and identity is formed – yet always with the attendant risk of losing rationality. Talking to oneself is explained through reference to the unfolding of thought content, the precise definition of concepts, the correction of impressions, and the orientation toward self-understanding. Importantly, several authors emphasize the intersubjective dimension of talking to oneself: (1) it cannot

occur without the assimilation of shared intellectual content, and (2) it serves as preparation for dialogue with others. The soul engages itself through talking to oneself, reasoning about concepts, and entering into dialogue that unfolds dialectically. Without such conversation, the soul is deprived of thought, order, and the ability to articulate its knowledge, thereby hindering both self-knowledge and the possibility of being understood by others.

Whereas the psychagogical perspective emphasizes the value orientation of the soul and its ascetic cultivation, the psychointellectual conception demonstrates that talking to oneself is above all a logical-discursive practice of thinking, through which knowledge is formed and made conscious. At the heart of this dimension lies a fundamental distinction between what is thought and what is spoken. Thought and word never fully coincide; one may intend one thing yet express another, or believe oneself to serve the good while in fact conceiving of the good in ways that are false or destructive. This distinction reveals that talking to oneself is directed toward overcoming the risks of error and misunderstanding, since the contents of thought are multilayered and their lexical realization does not guarantee clarity. For this reason, continual clarification to oneself is required.

Another important point concerns the processual nature of thought. Talking to oneself does not record ready-made knowledge but produces it. Existence unfolds in a continual dialectic, where one idea leads to another, one concept generates the next, and the movement of meaning is infinite. Through talking to oneself, the soul situates its thoughts in time, connects disparate contents, and renders explicit what previously remained unexpressed. In this sense, talking to oneself is the very form through which thought acquires life, duration, and clarity.

The psychointellectual conception also demonstrates that the content of talking to oneself is never autonomous: it draws nourishment from the cultural archive accumulated by humanity. Reasoning does not occur in a void but within the logic of already established concepts and traditions of thought. The cultural archive is continually de-archived in individual thinking, while the individual in turn re-archives personal thought – in speech, in writing, in records. Thus, talking to oneself in this dimension is always at once a dialogue with oneself and with the preceding culture, its categories, and its logic.

Yet it is precisely here that the danger highlighted by Stiegler and Foucault arises. If connection with the broader cultural discourse is lost and the individual retreats into a private world, there is a risk of generating a personal language, a discourse unlinked to others. In such cases, talking to oneself ceases to be an instrument of understanding and instead becomes a site of isolation, loneliness, and, in extreme instances, madness. The psychointellectual dimension thus carries both its greatest potential – logical discipline, the formation of knowledge, the opening of thought to infinity – and its greatest threat: a rupture with reality and with the culture that anchors the soul within the shared rational world.

The third most frequent is *the psychocritical conception of talking to oneself*, identified in the works of five thinkers. Unlike the psychointellectual (Platonic) and psychagogical (Stoic) approaches, this conception does not so much affirm the value of talking to oneself as expose its ultimate risks: the closure of the subject within autoreferentiality, the displacement of the Other, and the reduction of God to a

product of intrapsychic projections. The psychocritical line underscores that the «self-sufficiency» of talking to oneself is not merely a methodological stance but an entire anthropology: it renders the soul the sole source of criteria, whereby the Other ceases to be an event and becomes a reflection of the self. Hence the central conclusion: talking to oneself readily degenerates into a technique of domination over reality, into a tyrannical, colonizing monologue.

1. For Martin Buber, the object of critique is named the «philosophy of monologue»: the tradition from Plato to Nietzsche, in his view, offered a limited understanding of faith, since it conceived of it as the soul's conversation with itself. Such an approach deprives the subject of alterity, substitutes interpersonal experience with intrapsychic explanation, and ultimately produces the thesis of the «death of God» as the disappearance of transcendent reality beyond the self. Genuine faith, by contrast, is the event of the I–Thou relation, a movement beyond self-construction and an acceptance of the Other, irreducible to inner projections [7, pp. 58–59; 8, 2. Religion and Reality].

2. Martin Heidegger radicalizes the distinction: in antiquity, talking to oneself was not confined to the consciousness of the subject; the soul was attuned to the opening of Being, to the «clearing» of the world. Modern reflection, beginning with Descartes, shifts self-conversation into the mode of autoreferential consciousness, which objectifies all that is other – nature, animals, social differences – subordinating them to a colonizing concept. Talking to oneself thus ceases to be a dialogue of the soul with Being and becomes the «self-report» of consciousness, a practice that loses both the ecological and spiritual fullness of the world [24, Elucidation…].

3. Jacques Lacan places the Platonic thesis (erroneously attributing it to Aristotle) into the psychoanalytic register: the subject does not converse with the «self» but with the ego – the mirror instance of the Imaginary. Hence the illusory completeness and narcissistic closure of «empty speech», which never reaches the symbolic Other and still less the «full speech». In extreme cases, the collapse of this imaginary self-sufficiency manifests as psychotic alienation: «the ego speaks to me» and resounds as a foreign, hallucinatory voice. Talking to oneself, therefore, is not a path to truth but a symptom of imaginary self-enclosure that severs access to the transsubjective order of the signifier [33, p. 14].

4. Emmanuel Levinas critically rereads the ancient tradition: Platonic maieutics, according to which truth is «drawn out» from the depths of the soul, secures autarky and monologism; the Other is replaced by reflection, and novelty by universals with which solitary reason «infects» reality. Yet even the differentiation produced by thinking «with oneself», Levinas argues, is possible only after the fact of encounter: the material for inner unfolding is always imported from outside, from dialogue and the intrusion of alterity [35, pp. 49–50; 36, p. 146; 34, p. 71].

5. Jacques Rancière, finally, highlights the socio-political consequences of the «soliloquizing dialectic of conscience»: a subject fixated on guilt and self-reproach collapses into the depressive self-destruction of the «beautiful soul», withdrawing from the world of labor, poverty, and conflict. The way forward does not lie in deepening self-conversation but in a turn outward – to the conditions of material life, to the political. Transformation begins where conscience ceases to be a private stage and

confronts the real relations and violences that cannot be reduced to an internal tribunal [39, p. 139].

Conceptual Synthesis. The psychocritical conception underscores a central point: talking to oneself is valuable only insofar as it remains open to encounter and to the world; when closed, it reproduces structures of domination. Its place, therefore, is not at the center but at the threshold, where the soul ceases to function as a self-sufficient stage and admits the Other, Being, and the political as sources of novelty, meaning, and justice.

Whereas in the Platonic and Stoic traditions talking to oneself was construed as a productive technique of soul-division – student and teacher, speaker and listener, critic and friend – the psychocritical line demonstrates that such division remains locked within the subject. No external dimension arises. The soul may «split», yet this splitting never transitions into a genuine encounter with the Other. Division remains a form of talking to oneself in which the subject speaks both for itself and for the «other» already conceptualized and constructed in its own categories. Critics thus reveal the problem: within the self, endless dialogical models can be built, the presence of an interlocutor imitated, yet in the end no movement occurs beyond the bounds of the ego. Here lies the danger: such a soul can persuade itself of anything, precisely because no one stands in opposition. This recalls how Epictetus and St. John Chrysostom pointed out the human capacity to convince oneself of anything through talking to oneself. Yet this observation can be read critically: the subject is capable of constructing any internal argument and believing in it without ever confronting a genuine challenge from outside. The psychocritical conception therefore insists: it is not enough merely to register the inner division of the soul. What matters is that such division be grounded in the possibility of encounter with a true Other, with genuine exteriority – whether another person, God, or the very alterity of Being. Without this, talking to oneself collapses into a pure illusion of dialogue, a monologue in which the subject «plays» both parts and ultimately reinforces its own closure.

An intriguing insight emerges in connection with the psychocritical conception. The central problem may be posed as follows: are talking to oneself and the soul to be treated as invariants, or rather as culturally and historically specific forms? On the one hand, it can be argued that the psychointellectual and psychagogical conceptions constitute a powerful invariant: from Plato and the Stoics through patristics, the Middle Ages, modernity, and even into the twentieth century, one can trace a stable semantic core, a recognizable pattern. Talking to oneself is construed as a positive, disciplining practice of the soul – either as a condition of thinking (the intellectual function) or as a technique for shaping and correcting affects and moral dispositions (the psychagogical function). In this light, the psychocritical conception appears as merely a form of self-critique internal to the invariant.

At the same time, the psychocritical conception may be interpreted as a rupture – not only within philosophical tradition but also across cultural-historical epochs. In this register, talking to oneself is no longer regarded as a «natural resource of the soul» but as a symptom or consequence of particular cultural regimes of subjectivity. The authors associated with the psychocritical line effectively demonstrate that the practice of talking to oneself functions differently in the ancient and modern

horizons, in theistic and atheistic worldviews, in systems where the «soul» remains open to the Other and in systems where it becomes hermetically sealed within itself. From this perspective, multiple formations of talking to oneself and of the soul can be distinguished, such that the psychointellectual and psychagogical conceptions are themselves internally divided into strands subject to psychocritical challenge and those capable of sustaining it. This interpretive conflict shall be left unresolved in this study.

The psychosocializing conception of talking to oneself reveals the social nature of this practice. Only two thinkers can be assigned to this type. This conception may be understood as a kind of response to the psychocritical perspective. Talking to oneself is not a private or isolated act but a mode of existing within society, even when direct communication with others is physically absent.

1. Henri Bergson illustrates this through the figure of Robinson Crusoe: the protagonist, stranded on a deserted island, continues to preserve the habits, the «gaze», and the moral demands of society. He talks to himself as if addressing another, reproducing social dialogue in solitude. His activities – crafting tools, organizing daily life, structuring time – become materializations of this conversation. Crusoe's talking to himself is, in fact, a conversation with the social «Soul», as Bergson puts it: within it resound the voices of culture, morality, and customary norms. For Bergson, this demonstrates that the human being never exists in absolute isolation: the soul is always interwoven with the collective, and talking to oneself serves as a way of maintaining connection with society, even in solitude [5, pp. 15–16].

2. Bernard Stiegler links talking to oneself with material and cultural practices of memory. In his interpretation, talking to oneself is not confined to voice or mental reasoning: it is carried out through reading, writing, and archiving. These practices reveal that individuality never exists on its own. The subject internalizes the social, translates it into personal experience, and then returns it to the transindividual, enriching the collective. Talking to oneself through text and memory thus becomes a process of circulation between the personal and the collective: the pre-individual becomes individual, and then once again transindividual. Thought unfolds as self-conversation, but within this process cultural and social codes always resound, and the outcome is a contribution to shared knowledge and collective memory [49, p. 155].

Thus, the psychosocializing conception of talking to oneself affirms that the soul is never closed in upon itself, and that talking to oneself is always already socially conditioned. In conversing inwardly, the individual is in fact conversing with society – its norms, traditions, texts, and cultural structures. Even in situations of physical solitude, the human being remains a social creature, and the inner voice is always an echo of the collective. In this register, talking to oneself becomes not only a means of self-understanding but also a way of reproducing and transforming the social whole.

Attention may now turn to typologies represented by a single thinker.

The psychotheomorphic conception of talking to oneself opens yet another dimension of interpreting this phenomenon – namely, as a form of imitation of God and participation in divine action. In Joseph de Maistre, the dialogue of the soul with itself acquires a theomorphic meaning: it renders the human being similar to God. According to de Maistre, God in essence is an eternal dialogue – His Word, uncreated

and self-sufficient, is God's conversation with Himself. The human being, created «in the image and likeness», inherits this capacity to engage in talking to oneself. Here, talking to oneself ceases to be merely an instrument of thought or moral cultivation and instead becomes an ontological privilege: it aligns the human being with God and affirms within it the same capacity for self-sufficient speech that in God is eternal and perfect [12, 1993]. De Maistre's insight resonates with the ancient tradition – in Epictetus, the self-sufficiency of the sage is likened to that of Zeus.

The psychoaesthetic conception of talking to oneself opens a new dimension of this phenomenon – the sphere of creativity, art, and aesthetic experience. In Mary Wollstonecraft, talking to oneself becomes the source of poetry, its hidden origin. When the poet remains alone, what nature directly offers is fixed in words – the freshness of impressions, the beauty of landscape, the play of light and color. Yet this is never a mere «description of the external»: the perception of nature is inevitably intertwined with personal memories and experiences. Grief over a friend imbues the harmony of the landscape with melancholy; tenderness heightens the contemplation of the world's beauty; inner wounds and joys, memory and imagination, enter into dialogue with one another and with what is perceived. In this tension the soul opens itself to subtle emotional shades that unconsciously shape the fabric of poetry [52, On Poetry, and Our Relish for the Beauties of Nature].

Reflections on Frequency in the Typology of Conceptions. One of the most revealing outcomes of the analysis concerns the distribution of frequencies among the various conceptions. Among the major conceptions, the most frequent is the psychagogical, or moral, conception, followed by the psychointellectual, with the psychocritical appearing only in third place. This immediately indicates the following: whenever the soul is at issue, philosophers throughout history have regarded not intellectual apprehension but the cultivation and formation of the soul as primary. This is the teleology of talking to oneself. The second place of the psychointellectual conception is entirely predictable: without thinking, neither moral reasoning nor the very process of talking to oneself is possible. Intellect thus appears as a kind of instrument of the instrument, the tool through which the soul's work is carried out in pursuit of moral ends. It is noteworthy that even in purely logical constructions – for instance, in Plato and Arendt – the law of noncontradiction could acquire a moral dimension, woven into the broader context of interpreting the Socratic legacy. Finally, the third place occupied by the psychocritical conception is particularly significant. Its lesser frequency does not imply lesser importance; rather, it highlights the need for a more nuanced reading of historical distribution. The psychocritical conception arises in the twentieth century and is thereby marked as a result, the culmination of the long development of earlier traditions. It synthesizes and reinterprets the Stoic and Platonic lines, situating them within the horizon of modernity – within the consequences of a self-sufficient subject operating under Western, modern rationality, a subject listening primarily only to itself.

Types of the Soul. Considered through the lens of the identified conceptions, three stable types of interpretation of the soul can be distinguished. In one type, the soul is conceived as a source (11 authors). It appears as an origin and initiating force, from which arise both talking to oneself and the capacity for thought, as well as the striving toward the higher. In this register, the soul is understood as an initial given,

the root of rationality, contemplation, and faith: it is present in the psychointellectual conception – as the beginning of coherent thought and self-understanding; in the psychotheomorphic conception – as a divinely endowed origin; and in the psychoaesthetic conception – as the ground of creative and aesthetic experience. In another type, the soul is interpreted as a result (12 authors). It is not given in advance but rather formed in the process of talking to oneself and of socialization. In this understanding, talking to oneself becomes a practice of becoming, in which the soul is «worked out» through the labor of self-criticism, moral askesis, self-instruction, and also through the assimilation of cultural forms and collective meanings. Here belong the psychagogical conception, which understands the soul as the outcome of moral work upon oneself, and the psychosocializing conception, which emphasizes transindividual connections and the cultural milieu. Finally, a distinct position is occupied by the interpretation of the soul as a cultural-historical object (5 authors). In this case, the soul is conceptualized not from within, as origin or result, but from without, as an object of analysis and critique. This approach is characteristic of the psychocritical conception, which regards the soul as an abstraction crystallized within specific historical formations and at the same time subject to deconstruction in order to expose its limits and constraints.

Taken together, these three types of soul can be said to form a certain integrated procedure, in which the soul simultaneously initiates thought and self-understanding, is formed and transformed through the practice of talking to oneself, and is also conceptualized as an object – from the outside, within the perspective of critique, history, and culture. Talking to oneself thus emerges not only as a program of self-transformation but also as a program of reconfiguring one's orientation in the world and of reshaping relations with the other.

Attention may now turn to reflections on structural features of how talking to oneself functions in the context of the soul.

The Question of the Platonic Legacy. In Plato one encounters for the first time the definition of thinking as «the soul's conversation with itself». Around this Platonic fragment, however, two diametrically opposed lines of interpretation begin to diverge. On the one hand, the psychointellectual conception arises: from Thomas Aquinas to Hans-Georg Gadamer, talking to oneself is understood as the very core of intellectual activity, as the soul's work with conceptual content and the eternal unfolding of knowledge. In this case, talking to oneself is treated as a positive technique of analysis and clarification, a path toward truth and the divine. On the other hand, the psychocritical line emerges, which holds Plato responsible for enclosing the subject within the monologue of the soul. Here talking to oneself becomes a trap of autoreference, in which the subject converses only with an imaginary double, with the «little other» (Lacan), with the mirror-ego that never opens onto the genuine Other. Plato can thus be interpreted both as inaugurating thought's movement toward the infinite and as enclosing the human being within the circle of its own ego.

The Question of the Other. Another fundamental issue concerns whether talking to oneself opens the soul to the Other or, conversely, closes it off. Here again a polarity is evident. The Stoic conception interprets talking to oneself as withdrawal from the world, as a practice of distancing from contingent influences and of focusing

on what is chosen – reading, writing, turning toward the eternal. Dialogue in this sense is a deepening into oneself, but for the sake of approaching truth. By contrast, in Buber, self-conversation represents a form of self-enclosure; therefore, one should cultivate genuine dialogical openness to the Other within the I–Thou relationship. Other fragments can likewise be grouped within the framework of this opposition.

The Problem of Madness. It is equally important to acknowledge the extreme, borderline forms of talking to oneself, in which it ceases to function as a technique of thought or a spiritual practice and instead becomes a source of the subject's rational disintegration. Particularly striking is the fact that several thinkers – Lacan, Foucault, and Stiegler – explicitly note the connection between talking to oneself and madness. According to their observations, talking to oneself may serve not only as a means of ordering thought but also as a mechanism of psychotic closure, in which the subject withdraws ever more deeply into a private discourse, receding from the shared symbolic field. At this extreme, talking to oneself ceases to be an instrument of understanding and becomes a mechanism for producing a private world and a private language. Here a dangerous conflation of boundaries occurs: between self and other, between self and world. In both cases, talking to oneself ceases to be an open intellectual practice and is transformed into a trap of total subjectivism. From this arise depressive, paranoid, and absolutist thoughts characteristic of psychotic experience. It is significant that such a perspective appears only rarely in the philosophical corpus: far more often thinkers have been inclined to describe talking to oneself as a resource rather than as a threat.

The Relation between Philosophy of Talking to Oneself in the Context of the Soul and Psychology of Talking to Oneself. Talking to oneself, analyzed in philosophy through psychointellectual, psychagogical, psychocritical, and psychosocializing conceptions, finds direct parallels in the theory of inner speech. The psychointellectual conception corresponds closely to Fernyhough's observations on the «re-externalization» of inner speech in adulthood. Here the adult returns to a behavior seemingly characteristic of the child – speaking aloud to oneself – but now does so within a different semantic, logical, and grammatical structure, modeled on external speech addressed to another. Such practice serves functions of planning, behavioral regulation, and the retention of complex thought contents. For psychology, this is primarily a universal cognitive instrument; philosophy, however, perceives in it something greater: not only a means of managing everyday tasks, but also a path toward existential self-understanding, the unfolding of one's own logic, and beyond. Philosophy, in other words, expands the field of inner speech to its limit, where it becomes the arena of supreme self-knowledge rather than merely an operation of cognitive control.

The psychagogical conception resonates with the theory of the dialogical self. Here talking to oneself is understood as a stage upon which different voices and positions confront one another and must be ordered. Psychologists working within dialogical theory emphasize the multiplicity of identities – social, gendered, cultural, and so forth. This multiplicity produces an internal polyphonic dialogue that requires subordination and harmonization. The philosophical tradition, by contrast, has historically tended to reduce the number of such voices, privileging the spiritual and moral dimension over the bodily, material, and worldly. The difference lies here:

philosophy seeks to discipline the soul toward the elevated and metaphysical, whereas the theory and psychology of the dialogical self acknowledge a broader spectrum of positions and identities, allowing greater room for vulnerability, empathy, and the everyday. Only Rousseau, as interpreted by Arendt, approaches this proximity to dialogical models of selfhood, criticizing rationalist self-enclosure and insisting on the necessity of empathy toward the poor. Yet even here philosophical psychagogy remains less encompassing than the psychological framework of dialogical personality.

As for the theory of intrapersonal communication, its technical elements – such as schemes of perception, signal processing, and stimulus formation – resonate with certain notions found in Thomas Aquinas. Yet the divergence here is even more radical: philosophy insists that talking to oneself cannot be reduced to cognitive or physiological operations. Paul Ricoeur rightly observes that it is not merely the operationalization of the human being but an act of subjectivation, one that carries the person beyond psychological models of adaptation. In this sense, philosophy preserves the transcendent potential of talking to oneself, refusing to confine it within the circle of regulatory or behavioral functions. Nevertheless, the theory of intrapersonal communication elucidates the mechanisms through which talking to oneself operates, and this clarification must be taken into account within the framework of a philosophical account of talking to oneself.

Finally, the psychocritical conception diverges most sharply from psychological theories: whereas the latter tend to describe talking to oneself as an adaptive instrument, psychocritique maintains that it is precisely adaptation and self-enclosure within a given model – whether cognitive, social, or cultural – that constitute the source of danger. Here talking to oneself becomes entangled in the field of critique of modernity, which colonizes subjectivity, rendering it closed to the Other and confining the human being within an egoistic, autoreferential world.

Nevertheless, the philosophy of talking to oneself ought, in our view, to seek the most active dialogue with the psychologies of talking to oneself, since the insights of both domains of knowledge are in many respects mutually complementary.

Is the Soul, in the Context of Talking to Oneself, Broader than the Psyche? At first glance, a deep affinity between the two may be affirmed. In both cases, the issue concerns the individualization of experience and the construction of an inner space of subjectivity subject to regulation and formation. For this reason, the philosophical practices of Stoicism – directed toward constant self-work, the restraint of affects, and the strengthening of autonomy – prove closely aligned with contemporary psychotherapeutic practices, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy. In both, the human being turns inward and must labor precisely upon the soul or the psyche, without stepping beyond this internal horizon. In this sense, a direct line can be traced linking ancient techniques of the soul and modern psychological practices of psychic self-regulation within the era of neoliberal capitalism.

Yet within the psychocritical tradition a radical distinction emerges. Philosophy regards the soul not only as an instrument of individual self-regulation but also as a means of reflecting on modern subjectivity itself – the form of consciousness shaped in the early modern period, which positions itself over against a world conceived solely as object. Philosophical thought, from Descartes through

Heidegger, marks this rupture between consciousness and world, subject and object, a rupture accompanied by the expulsion of God and the transformation of reality into a mere object devoid of its own inner dimension, stripped of consciousness, soul, subjectivity. In this regard, the philosophical question of the soul is broader: it makes possible the recognition of diverse historical and cultural formations of soulful experience, distinct ways of human existence in the world, and different modes of situating the human being within the structure of Being.

Unlike the psyche, which in modern science is conceived as an object of study – fragmented, operationalized, positivistically described – the soul in the philosophical tradition is never reduced to an object. It is conceived as a subjective, existential, and spiritual dimension of human being, always linked not only to inner autonomy but also to relation with the Other, with culture, with God. For this reason, the concept of the soul always retains a religious and spiritual dimension, making impossible its complete reduction to the psyche. In this respect the distinction is fundamental: the psyche in psychology is almost inevitably objectified, whereas the soul in philosophy remains the domain of subjective and existential relations, extending beyond objecthood and opening the human being toward subject-to-subject dialogue. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the theory of the dialogical self approaches very closely this understanding of the psyche as soul.

In Lieu of a Conclusion. The following reflections do not claim to offer a definitive conclusion, but rather propose one possible interpretation of the tradition, extending its critique into the terrain of social and political thought. Throughout nearly the entire history of Western thought, philosophers have treated talking to oneself almost exclusively as an individual practice of the ruling classes, the intelligentsia, and similar elites, severed from material and social conditions. In these interpretations, talking to oneself remained the privilege of those eager to underscore their separation from the masses, their elevation above the affective, the bodily, the everyday, and thus, the world of necessity and work. What continually emerges here is class contempt: the denial of the common, the tendency to pathologize the habits, desires, and modes of existence of the majority. In this way, the mythology of individualism is constructed – a mythology that presents the soul and thought as if they were constituted self-sufficiently, without reliance on the life of the masses.

Yet Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as Hannah Arendt astutely observed, was the first to radically shift this perspective: he permitted himself compassion for the dispossessed, suspending the relentless priority of reason over feeling. This shift makes clear that talking to oneself cannot be understood apart from its social and political conditions. From this follows an important insight: individualism in the philosophy of talking to oneself is not merely a methodological stance, but the product of a class position – a conscious or unconscious effort by elites to seal the soul within itself, to turn it into an object of self-sufficient enjoyment and self-cultivation.

Extending this line of thought, it may be argued that revolution requires the working class to develop its own mode of talking to oneself. The worker experiences in consciousness the tension between bourgeois and proletarian subjectivity, between internalized disdain for one’s class position – the voice of the bourgeoisie or middle class – and the discovery of class solidarity with other oppressed peoples [37]. The

proletarian soul here is not whole but fractured and contradictory, and it is precisely this multiplicity that can be transformed into revolutionary force. In this context, talking to oneself becomes not an instrument of individual refinement but a site of class struggle within the subject: resistance to self-marginalization, resistance to the voice of embourgeoisement, and the capacity finally to hear the voices of others – comrades, «brothers and sisters in class», the collective itself. Only in this way can talking to oneself be transformed from an instrument of lofty, self-enclosed self-knowledge into an instrument of revolution: a labor of consciousness that unites individual minds into a collective awareness and directs it toward the overcoming of a world of private property, a world that reproduces the mythology and philosophy of individualism, that fabricates individuals who appropriate social and natural goods for their own enrichment while refusing to acknowledge or hear the voices of those who actually create and reproduce these goods.

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ДУША В МЕЖАХ НЕСВІДОМОГО І ПІДСВІДОМИХ БАЖАНЬ

Поняття душі впродовж всієї історії філософії слугувало ключем до розуміння внутрішньої цілісності людини. Незважаючи на різноманітність метафізичних та психологічних інтерпретацій, душа постає як принцип, що об'єднує досвід, надає йому смисл та забезпечує самосвідомість. У цьому контексті душа виступає не лише як абстрактна сутність, а як жива реальність внутрішнього життя людини, основа єдності досвіду. Людське життя складається з безлічі вражень, подій, думок і переживань, які самі по собі є фрагментарними. Душа забезпечує зв'язок між минулим, теперішнім і майбутнім, інтегруючи різні аспекти досвіду в цілісну історію особистості. Саме завдяки їй людина здатна впізнавати себе як ту саму істоту в різні моменти часу.

Однією з особливостей сучасної епоху є нейронаука, яка намагається «розчинити» душу в біохімії мозку, а цифрова реальність обіцяє людині віртуальне безсмертя. Проте ні алгоритми, ні сканування кори головного мозку не дають відповіді на просте запитання**:** чому людина робить те, чого не хоче, і хоче того, що її руйнує? Проблема душі в сучасній науці трансформувалася з теологічного дискурсу в площину глибинної психології та нейрофілософії. Якщо класична філософія ототожнювала душу зі свідомістю та розумом, то після появи психоаналізу стало очевидним, що поняття «душа» охоплює значно ширші, часто ірраціональні сфери несвідомого та підсвідомого.

Душу слід розглядати не як статичну «субстанцію», а як динамічну напругу між трьома полюсами: полюсом темних сил, про які писав Фройд, де душа є заручницею біологічних програм [5]; полюсом архетипів (Anima), за Юнгом, де індивідуальна душа дихає повітрям колективної історії людства [6] і, нарешті, полюсом духовного несвідомого, про яке нагадував Віктор Франкл, тією глибинною інтуїцією сенсу, яка прокидається навіть тоді, коли розум мовчить [3]. Людина часто боїться свого несвідомого, вважаючи його «звалищем» витіснених травм, але можливе інше сприйняття несвідомого, не як в'язниці, а фундаменту власної ідентичності. Саме там, у підсвідомих бажаннях, ховаються не лише персональні демони, а й найбільші творчі сили.

Як підсвідоме стає об'єктом маніпуляцій і як почути голос власної душі за шумом нейронних імпульсів? У психоаналітичній парадигмі душа постає як