

What is *Thought Insertion*?

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Based on:

Lopez-Silva, Pablo, and Tom McClelland (eds), *Intruders in the Mind: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Thought Insertion* (Oxford, 2023; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Oct. 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1093/med/9780192896162.001.0001>, accessed 6 Apr. 2024.

What terms come to your mind when you read the below?

- "Imagine a sudden interruption in your thinking process. Imagine a thought that is present in your mind, yet it is so alien that it cannot possibly be your own, and of which you have no recollection of how it connects to prior thoughts. You are certain that you did not think such thoughts and therefore they cannot be yours. Such thoughts are so real—almost visceral, as if it is felt by your entire being—yet extremely strange at the same time."

Definitions

What people commonly define as *agency* of thought

- The ineffable notion that one can perceive themselves as the 'creator' of their thought
- A property that can be summed up as whether you *asked* for the thought
- The ability to ascribe verbal, imagistic or even nonverbal utterances in one's perception as generated by experiencer, regardless of the *content* of the utterances (e.g. the ineffable ability to distinguish one's *recall* of a quote from a movie as 'created' by oneself, even if the quote originated in the minds of the movie 'creators')
- How would you define *agency* of a thought?

I'd endorse the below as evidencing *agency* of thought

- **“Thoughts can flow at my slightest whim, like the ripples on a pond just perturbed with the whisker of a cat, but can also come to a complete halt, as if an orchestral conductor was able to stop an entire symphony with just the laziest flick of their wrist.** I am able to generate massive lists of possibilities for topics I wish to think about -- in just 2 minutes while walking, mind you, and balancing a heavy backpack on my back, I was able to generate about 10 different ways of classifying mental illnesses and how this emphasized the importance of how to and how not to construct analogies. All this I was able to balance while quickly scanning my environment for cars, thinking parallelly about the time and how quickly I was walking in relation to wanting to get to the library at a certain time, and feeling like my gaze about the environment both auditorily and visually was in synchrony with the music I was listening to -- as if each little thump of the bass or melody switch in the song resonated with a change in my visual field to take in a new set of information....**I think whatever I am blessed with right now is a human luxury, and I don't bemoan the others for not spending time trying to analyze this state (*perhaps it is even their default and hence, nothing to analyze*), and more just *doing* with this state--since the thoughts move so *lucidly* and *at will* in this state. That is, to analyze the thoughts is to analyze naturalistic phenomena themselves, since the thoughts are capturing the phenomena so much more accurately”**

I'd endorse the below as *not* evidencing *agency* of thought

- “have a bit of clanging/nonsensical speech in my head where i may space out and look around for a bit... noticed in my head as i was looking around at flowers and noticing the nice colors in a picture frame, i was hearing in a subverbal way "hun bun sucker sun".. it's like a "fragmentation" of parts of the mind. there's more cracked out ness outwardly in affect but decontextualized speech in my head. I'm having to drop off the task at hand to look up how “severe” voices could possibly get and if i was experiencing a form of "proto voices". also interspersed with all this is the usual "music" going on in the head, just a stuck fragment of part of a Todd Edwards song”

What people commonly define as *ownership* of a thought

- The ineffable notion that despite the content of the thought and whether it aligns with one's values, that the thought is generated by the experiencer's mind (*even if it is not wanted*)
- A trait that may or may not coexist with *agency* of thought. But *agency* never occurs *exclusively* (no “non-owned” but “agency” thoughts exist)
- Example of a situation commonly employed to illustrate *ownership*
 - “While the obsessed patient recognizes that he is compelled to think about things against his will, he does not regard the thoughts as foreign, i.e., he recognizes that they are his own thoughts. In thought alienation, the patient has the experience that others are participating in his thinking. He feels that thoughts are being inserted into his mind and he recognizes them as foreign and coming from without (Fish, 1985, p. 43).”
- How would you define *ownership* of a thought?

What people commonly define as *thought insertion*

- A “first-rank Schneiderian symptom” (historically, meant, the presence of which invariably led to a DSM diagnosis of *schizophrenia*, but has since been found to be present in DSM diagnoses of *bipolar disorder*, *schizophreniform*, and possibly a few others)
- A delusion that an external agent has placed certain thoughts within the person's mind
- A phenomenon leading the experiencer to disavow that their thoughts have ownership and agency - often unconsciously and non-explicitly
- How would you define *thought insertion*?

Do we understand *thought*
insertion?

Is *thought insertion*...

....really a phenomenon characterized by absence of *ownership* and *agency*, relative to other types of unwelcome thoughts?

Does it make sense to you to define *thought insertion* to lack these features?

Do you think the definition of *thought insertion*, in this way, might lead to difficulty in distinguishing from *troublesome thought* phenomena in other mental conditions?

‘Absence of *ownership* and *agency*’ as **not** sufficiently distinguishing features of *thought insertion* - the case of the “end-game” treatment goals in *OCD*

- It is taught in OCD therapeutic protocols to consider disturbing intrusive thoughts as ‘just OCD’, and ‘not one’s own beliefs’
- That leads me to imagine, does this not encourage *disownership* and *nonauthorship*?
- If this were the case, why is it that clinicians encourage *disownership* and *nonauthorship* of disturbing thoughts in OCD, as to *alienate certain thoughts* for therapeutic relief? Yet *encourage ownership* in inserted thoughts for developing reasonable beliefs?

‘Absence of *ownership* and *agency*’ as **not** sufficiently distinguishing features of *thought insertion* - the case of the “end-game” treatment goals in *OCD*

- Could this be an issue with unclear definitions of *ownership* and *agency*?
- Could this be *content bias*?
 - content of disturbing thoughts in OCD considered to take on a less ‘bizarre’ or ‘implausible’ nature)
- Could this be a *functionality bias*?
 - As in, a reflection of trying to dampen down the excessive and wanting to amp up the diminished? (What’s considered “OCD” as generally being a condition with preserved self-values and sensory perception, and to discourage excessive integration of foreign thoughts as part of one’s value system? Whereas what’s “psychotic thought insertion” is nearly the opposite?)

‘Absence of *ownership* and *agency*’ as sufficiently distinguishing features of *thought insertion*

- The importance of *initial framing* of one’s thought pattern - AKA, “first blush” statement means a lot
 - A person’s statement that they own their thoughts (their own mind produces them) is significant enough evidence to separate whatever they’re experiencing from whatever *thought insertion* is colloquially thought of as
 - The fact that people who fall solely under the “OCD” umbrella *do not explicitly disown thoughts* may be related to
 - ...*lack of proneness* to the *self-serving bias* which is common in schizophrenia
 - “Additionally, the schizophrenia group exhibited a tendency towards a self- serving bias, whereas clinical controls exhibited the opposite attributional pattern (a self-blaming bias) (Wittorf et al., 2012).”
 - ...*lack of proneness* to *personification of thought*
 - Reduced concerns about “social splash” in OCD population
- Thus, explicitly verbalized absence of ownership/agency may remain relevant for clinicians based on the factors above

‘Absence of *ownership* and *agency*’ as not sufficiently distinguishing features of *thought insertion* - in fact, the tenuous definitions of these terms, once redefined, may lead to the **dual presence** of and *lack* of ownership and agency, depending on point in time, as the distinguishing feature of *thought insertion*!

Point 1: Experience of thoughts doesn't always match the outward description of the thought

- Self-reported *experience* of thoughts may not always reflect the true *nature* of the thoughts, even in a "non pathological" context
 - "By contrast, someone who has the intention to go on a holiday may experience all sorts of feelings (excitement, restlessness), but nothing of what he experiences actually constitutes his intention. While we feel or experience emotions, we do not speak about 'experiencing' intentions."
- Another example:
 - Saying "Attending this concert is going to be the best thing ever" doesn't have precision as to *what* about it is the best thing nor if it truly is going to be the "best thing"
 - Saying "I'm sad I don't get to eat ice cream today" may not at all involve sadness, but mild irritation

Point 2: Thoughts that are *agentic* belie their actual experience - which may involve passivity

- "Normal" thoughts can be at times *themselves* passive phenomena--and agency as being *passively* ascribed based on how well the thoughts accord with our values
 - If a person thinks "I am in pain", they must have been "given" the first-person experience of thinking of themselves as in pain. This is in contrast to them reasoning through explicit cognition that their thought "I am in pain" actually matches their belief about their state, through explicit evidence.
 - "On the one hand, to speak about my [...] thinking activities as things that I actively perform, is **not** a matter of describing 'experiences of voluntariness' or of **testifying** about a subjective 'sense of agency'. To do something voluntarily rather means, for example, that I acted in the way I wanted to act.."

Point 3: Thoughts that are *owned* belie their actual experience - which may involve passivity

- Similarly, "normal" thoughts can lack "ownership", because to "own" every thought would be to have at least one of:
 - 1) have the thought's 'truth content' be excessively personal and not predictive of anything in the world
 - If a person has the thought, "I think it will rain", and they "truly own" the thought, then it **brings confusion** as to whether the person is accurately reporting *thinking* the thought "I think it will rain", or if they are making a real world *prediction*.
 - 2) be describing the thoughts in a way that *alienates oneself* from embodying them
 - Further, if we are to assume the person is somehow embedding *both* meanings in their statement (that is, that they believe their mind to have generated the thought "I think it will rain" *and* that they believe their thought to have predictive value), then this would imply treatment of one's own thoughts as an *object*
- This however, paradoxically, sounds rather similar to the objectification that "inserted thoughts" are maligned for, no?

Point 4: Thought insertion may be thought of better being alienated from *owning* and *authoring* thoughts in the *attempt* to do so

- The way out of the paradox of how to characterize features of *thought insertion* characterized by paradoxical elements
- Namely, as a phenomenon sometimes characterized by *phases* of both too much and too little *ownership* and *agency*, depending on the point in time sampled of the person's thoughts.
 - “The reflexive attempt to capture or seize upon one's own epistemological centrality, to step outside one's first- person perspective in order to see it as a first- person perspective, is but the immediate obverse of the objectification or reification of the mind. TI is then, rather than a mute or passively endured experiential loss, the epitome of a hyper- conscious mind captivated by the paradoxes of its own making.”

Point 4: Thought insertion may be thought of better as alienating oneself from *owning* and *authoring* thoughts by explicitly trying to do so - Example of Phase 1 (Too much)

- “If a thought passed quickly through his brain . . . , he was forced to direct back his attention and scrutinize his mind in order to know exactly what he had been thinking. In one word, he is preoccupied by the continuity of his thinking. He fears that he may stop thinking for a while, that there might have been “a time when my imagination had been arrested.” . . . He wakes up one night and asks himself: “Am I thinking? Since there is nothing that can prove that I am thinking, I cannot know whether I exist.” In this manner he annihilated the famous aphorism of Descartes. (Parnas and Handest 2003)”

Point 4: Thought insertion may be thought of better as alienating oneself from *owning* and *authoring* thoughts by explicitly trying to do so - Example of Phase 2 (Too little)

- “A final stage is reached when the dissolution of the intentional arcs of perception, thinking, and action is so far advanced that the remaining fragments of perception, thought, or movement take on a strange, object-like character and finally appear to be imposed on the patient from the outside: “I could no longer think the way I wanted to. It was as if one could no longer think oneself, as if one were prevented from thinking oneself. As if the ideas came from outside. . . . I began to wonder am I still that person or am I an exchanged person” (Klosterkötter 1988, 111). It is not hard to see how typical ego disorders such as thought insertions or verbal hallucinations can develop from such forms of experience.”

Is *thought insertion*...

....really characterized by lack of *insight*?

Does it make sense to you to define *thought insertion* to lack this feature?

Do you think the definition of *thought insertion*, in this way, might lead to difficulty in distinguishing from *troublesome thought* phenomena in other mental conditions?

‘Lack of insight’ **as** a sufficiently distinguishing feature of *thought insertion*

- Presence of an implausible, rigidly held belief about the origin of undesirable thoughts, is sufficient differentiating evidence in *thought insertion*. Plenty of content on such a view, nothing very new here to explain.
- However, could "delusional elaboration" be a confound for *OCD* versus *thought insertion* type distressing thoughts? Or is affectivity a confound (unusual affect presence in patients with *thought insertion*)?

'Lack of insight' as **not** a sufficiently distinguishing feature of *thought insertion* - Lived Experience Account

- How an *inserted thought* can be appraised to be perceived *only* by the individual experiencing it and not others, yet carry personal significance
 - "All of these phenomena—the voices, the broadcasting, the Rules, the Space Aliens—were completely real to me. No one could talk me out of owning memories of them. At the same time, I realize they were not real to any other being that I know about. I have heard this called 'double awareness', and I think that that is an accurate way to put it in words. I want to make the point here that double awareness is a comfortable state of being when I'm psychotic. (Whenever I lecture medical students on the subject of schizophrenia, I invariably find that this simultaneous awareness is unfathomable to most of them. I tell them that they may simply need to take my word about its existence.)"

‘Lack of insight’ as **not** a sufficiently distinguishing feature of *thought insertion* - Lived Experience Account

- Aren’t many thoughts *borrowed* from the *de jour* idioms and turns of phrase? If so, could it sometimes be the case that the person with supposed *thought insertion*, be too “honest” about the chain of influences that led to them having a thought?
- Is framing of the *chain of influences*, to clinicians, artificially encouraging skepticism of insight?
 - “So, when is a thought mine and when is it not? Because thoughts are often expressed in words, and grammar and vocabulary are largely received from society, it’s hard to see exactly what’s mine. But through the years, I’ve observed that if the thoughts inside my mind are kindly towards me and towards the rest of the world, they’re usually mine. If the thoughts inside my mind are obsessed with ‘evil’ and ‘bad’ and cause me psychological pain that can’t be reconciled logically with real events, they’re usually not mine.”

'Lack of insight' as *not* a sufficiently distinguishing feature of *thought insertion* - Presence of *Stilted Speech*

- Could lack of attribution of the *thought inserted* labeled person, that *they*, a "human", with all of their emotional totality, are generating thoughts, be a protective mechanism?
- That is, is *stilted speech*, when present, a false flag for *lack of insight*?
 - In certain individuals, could *stilted speech* be an overzealous attempt to employ the skills of "watching thoughts" encouraged for relative psychonormals in *CBT*, be employed to an *excessive degree* and result in *schizophrenic roboticization*?
 - "The phenomenological psychiatrist Binswanger (1957) observed that individuals with schizophrenia may sometimes refer to themselves in the most inhuman, thing-like terms', e.g., as a 'machine', 'computer', or 'apparatus' whose sole function is to 'register' impressions (Binswanger, 1957). This concretization of metaphors of self is nevertheless an implicit way of preserving a (minimal) self in its now compromised ability to transcend the present perspective (Mishara, 2007)."

‘Lack of insight’ as **not** a sufficiently distinguishing feature of *thought insertion* - Presence of *Harm from a Distance*

- Could *thought insertion* be so distressing in individuals, that they compare it, however distantly causally chained, to something universally empathized to be bad, like assault?
- Is the labeling of the severity of disturbance of *thought insertion*, albeit with “misunderstood elaboration”, be a false flag for *lack of insight*?
 - “The individual often reports these experiences to be highly physical, imposed with considerable force, including ‘being sexually raped’ from a distance (Schneider, 1939). That is, the individual is barred from ‘negotiation concerning the conditions under which the patient remains at the disposal of others’ (Kendler & Mishara, 2019).”

Is *thought insertion*...

....really indistinguishable from *hallucinations*?

Does it make sense to you to define *thought insertion* to be defined in this way?

Do you think defining *thought insertion* as a type of *hallucination*, leaves out important parts of the experience in its description?

The challenge of distinguishing *thought insertion* from *hallucinations*

- The suggestion of clearer criteria for labeling inner experiences, lending themselves to better separation of intrusive phenomena, regardless of the label
- Potential axes are reviewed on the next slides and explained as to why the criteria can get fuzzy between *thought insertion* and *hallucinations*, but are listed below:
 - Linguistic vs imagistic
 - Type of speech act - command vs remark
 - Direct vs indirect mode of address
 - Transparency/opacity
 - Contextual coherence
 - Agentive representation
 - Condensation/expansion

Linguistic vs imagistic criteria

- Definition: Whether the thought takes on a verbal or imagery form
- Linguistic *soundless voices*
 - "It's hard to describe how I could 'hear' a voice that wasn't auditory; but the words used and the emotions they contained (hatred and disgust) were completely clear, distinct and unmistakable, maybe even more so that if I had heard them aurally. (Ratcliffe & Wilkinson, 2016, p. 53)"
- Imagistic *inserted thoughts*
 - "I look out of the window and I think that the garden looks nice and the grass looks cool, but the thoughts of Eamonn Andrews come into my mind. There are no other thoughts there, only his . . . He treats my mind like a screen and flashes his thoughts into it like you flash a picture. (Mellor, 1970, p. 17)"
- Is there really a difference between these two things?

Type of speech act - command versus remark criteria

- Definition: Whether the thought is presented like a command or an observation
- Perhaps *voices* tend to take on a *command* nature more than *inserted thoughts*, though this isn't necessarily carefully shown yet in the literature.

Direct versus indirect mode of address criteria

- Definition: Whether the subject of the thought is oneself or not
 - "(‘Do this!', ‘Your granny is bad!'), whereas an indirect mode of address is more likely to be interpreted as a thought (‘The grass looks nice’/ ‘Granny is bad’)."
- Perhaps *voices* tend to take on a *direct mode of address* than *inserted thoughts*, though this isn't necessarily carefully shown yet in the literature.

Transparency versus opacity criteria

- Definition: *transparent* thoughts as providing lens through which the world is perceived, whereas *opaque* thoughts becoming fodder for further associations based on the words/images contained in the thought
- Are *inserted thoughts* generally more *opaque* than *voices*? Something to explore.
 - “It seems like a transparent episode of inner speech is more likely to be described as thought-like (the focus is on what you came upstairs for, or whether Granny is bad, not on the words that were spoken), whereas an opaque episode of inner speech is more likely to be described as a voice (recall: ‘the words used, and the emotions they contained’ (Ratcliffe & Wilkinson, 2016, p. 53)).”
- Can *opaque thoughts* lead to more *disorganization*?

Contextual coherence criteria

- Definition: How much the thoughts "mesh" subjectively with the environment
- Paradoxically, it *may* be the case that even though *coherence* may be *higher* in *inserted thoughts* versus *voices*, that this may make it *more* difficult for a person to exactly identify the thought as *inserted*
- E.g. You hear a voice saying "harm your X" versus have an *inserted thought* of a hypothetical image of yourself harming X, leading to more ready attribution of the first statement as "not you"
 - "Well, a voice is often experienced as another agent speaking (represented with varying degrees of richness (see Wilkinson & Bell, 2016)), and so the idea that the voice (the agent behind the voice) might say something that is incongruent, or not in keeping with one's self-image wouldn't come as a surprise. Of course the voice wouldn't say something that is in keeping with my personality, because it's not me. In contrast, it seems like an inserted thought is sometimes experienced as a thought, and subsequently (even if immediately) disowned. Hearing a voice (soundless or otherwise), in contrast, might not need to be disowned, because it was never 'owned' in the first place."

Agentive representation criteria

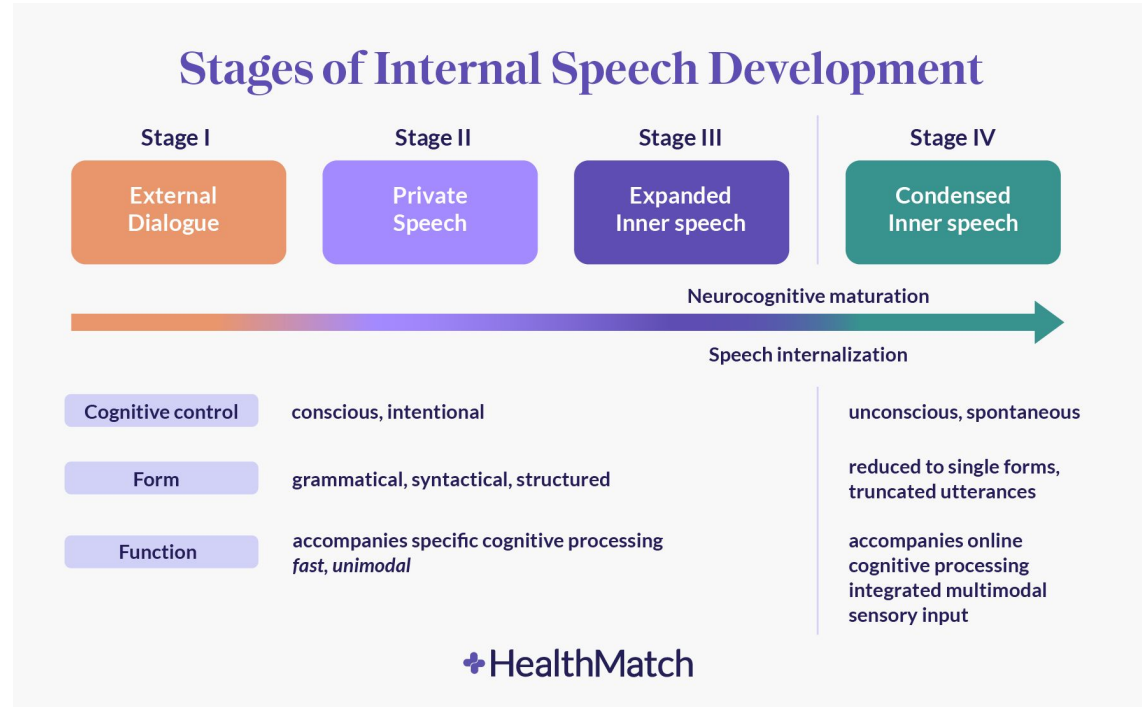
- Definition: How crystallized of an *agent* one perceives is behind a thought.
 - "I feel as though some thoughts that pop up in my mind are definitely not mine, and that they are being put there by someone else but I can't identify who. Is it still regarded as thought insertion if you don't know who is doing the inserting? (Gunn, 2016, p. 563)"
- Perhaps *voices* tend to take on a *agentive representation* than *inserted thoughts*, though this isn't necessarily carefully shown yet in the literature.

Condensation versus expansion coherence criteria

- Before we jump into what this criteria is..
 - Can you do logical reasoning while having too much *inner speech*?
 - Are your thoughts pretty *condensed* to enable efficient thinking
 - Does the way you speak to yourself when doing logical reasoning involve proper grammar? Is it *image* based and *nonverbal*?
 - Can you compose music (however simple) without having any *inner speech/inner music*?
 - Can you do imitate a person's accent without having any *inner speech*?

Condensation versus expansion coherence criteria

- Definition: how verbose/"speech like" the thoughts (builds off of Vygotsky's theory of the most developed state of thoughts as being *condensed inner speech*)

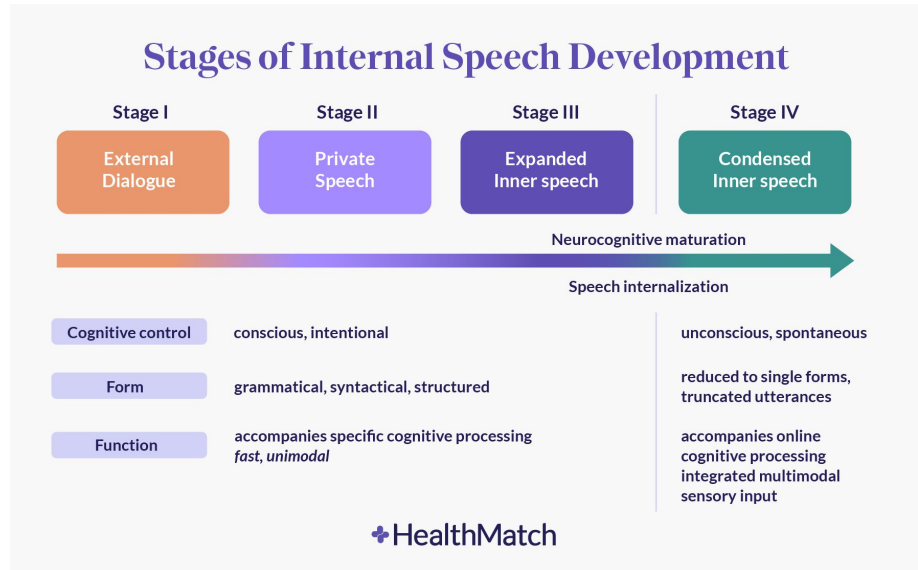


Condensation versus expansion coherence criteria - more details

- “Vygotsky thought that inner speech is the end point in a developmental trajectory that starts with the capacity for social speech, for external dialogue. Then, what emerges is overt private speech, namely, speech that is only produced for the benefit of the speaker (e.g., for the purposes of reasoning, attentional focus, emotional regulation, etc.).”
- “Then, inhibitory capacities develop, and it becomes ‘internalized’, first in fully expanded form, and then becomes condensed. This ‘condensation’ occurs since, as individuals become skilled at, and accustomed to, inner speaking, they can leave parts of the inner speech out (phonology, syntax, etc.) and getting ever closer to what Vygotsky called ‘thinking in pure meanings’ (Vygotsky, 1934).”

Condensation versus expansion coherence criteria - more details

- “If we think of **soundless voices** in terms of **expanded inner speech**, and **inserted thoughts** in terms of **condensed inner speech**, **soundless voices could tend to be experienced in conditions of relative stress or cognitive load, compared to inserted thoughts, which are condensed.**”
- However, this is only a hypothesis, and not one I’d agree with.
- Instead, based on the diagram, what if certain instances of *thought insertion* could be thought of as an attempt to exert excessive *conscious control* in a state lacking *form*? Whereas *voices* may be the opposite, as in having *form* but lacking *cognitive control*?



Thought insertion as **not** a type of hallucination

- A possibility that *thought insertion* rather than *hallucination*, is more specific to whatever we term *schizophrenia*
 - “Thoughts ‘be coming sensory’ cannot be simply heard through one’s auditory capacities but are absorbed into the very basis of their self, with an immeasurable level of immediacy and salience. **These ‘soundless voices’ (Ratcliffe & Wilkinson, 2015) might actually be more clinically useful than ‘actual’ AVH as indicators of schizophrenia**, as they precisely capture the paradoxical, unstable, and unsustainable ‘in- between’ states of thought, perception, and volition that lie at the core of the experience of a schizophrenic (rather than broadly psychotic) disorder.”
- May tie-in to the concept of *disorganization*, of which *thought insertion* may contribute to, being more pathognomonic of “true” *schizophrenia*
 - “Bleuler renamed dementia praecox “schizophrenia,” reflecting his perception of the disorder as a fragmentation of the mind.² He considered that certain fundamental symptoms, most notably flattening of affect and loosening of associations, persist throughout the illness. Thus, both Kraepelin and Bleuler recognized persisting disorganization and impoverishment of mental activity as core symptoms of schizophrenia, and delusions and hallucinations as accessory features.” [Quantifying the Core Deficit in Classical Schizophrenia | Schizophrenia Bulletin Open | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#)

Why this matters?

Why it matters to really understand *thought insertion*

- Our understanding of *thought insertion* impacts patient-clinician rapport - that is, if we think *ownership/agency* as unilaterally good or bad, or that we have confidence in assessing *insight*, hallucinatory aspects, or specificity to condition X, Y or Z, we can bias reported outcomes of treatment success
- Understanding the nuances of *thought insertion* can help to therapeutically address the role it is serving for the patient
- Finally, humility about the complexity of *thought insertion* can at the minimum, not undermine patients' confidence in their own self-knowledge

Why it matters to really understand *thought insertion*

- **"To us, we are not so interested in the judgements of agency or ownership when it comes to TI— in a way, judging TI as one's own or attributing to an external agent makes little difference to the underlying experience— the vital aspect is the raw feeling and basic sense of a breach in one's first- person authority, which is often indescribable.** An attempt to articulate such an experience can by itself give the appearance that it holds some sort of belief status, and the further the patient 'formulates' their experience in commonsensical terms, the more deluded the patient will sound to the one doing the clinical assessment. We do not at all suggest that concepts such as delusions and hallucinations should be abolished; **we urge clinicians to stay open- minded in their own judgements, as words like 'delusion' or 'hallucination' carry strong epistemic weights to the patient."**

Analyzing an example

Let's give an example of analysis of *thought insertion*

- What comes to your mind when you read this?
- "I have witches in my belly. It hurts and is full of wounds. They often talk. When I eat and want to take a fifth spoon, they say no. Sometimes when some of them annoy me, the others tell them to stop. They use my thoughts. It happens that I think, but the thought does not belong to me. I notice this because of the way I think in such moments. But often I think the way the witches think. They also take my thoughts away when someone addresses me from the outside. And when I am in my village, the witches can communicate with the villagers. When I read a book, it is not me, it is them who read the book. If I want to read myself, I have to say very loudly: 'I want to read!' It is all because of them. When you touch your belly, a human can become afraid. There is a direct connection between the human and the belly"

Let's give an example of analysis of *thought insertion*

- "I have witches in my belly. It hurts and is full of wounds."
 - Person perceives the thoughts to be either heard or sensorily felt near the belly
- "They often talk. When I eat and want to take a fifth spoon, they say no. Sometimes when some of them annoy me, the others tell them to stop. They use my thoughts. It happens that I think, but the thought does not belong to me. I notice this because of the way I think in such moments. But often I think the way the witches think. They also take my thoughts away when someone addresses me from the outside."
 - Person is reporting feeling like their thoughts are being preempted by either a visual or sound

Let's give an example of analysis of *thought insertion*

- "And when I am in my village, the witches can communicate with the villagers. When I read a book, it is not me, it is them who read the book. If I want to read myself, I have to say very loudly: 'I want to read!' It is all because of them."
 - I identify with the experience of trying to read and having this distinct sensation that imaginations of people in my head were distracting me with the following thought process: me I do a nice social gesture -> I remember the opposite, of being shamed by a person for bothering them -> think to myself "wait I don't have to accept shame" -> hear in my head, "you're mentally ill" fragmented, thinking on which grounds do I not need to change the definition of bothering others or how do I accept the shame peacefully -> ok I'll do a nice reasonable logical yet prosocial thing -> think "wait am I a logician or not", parallelly -> do the logical prosocial thing anyway under an artificial veil of agency -> run the loop again

Let's give an example of analysis of *thought insertion*

- "When you touch your belly, a human can become afraid. There is a direct connection between the human and the belly"
 - I see this as treating the body as a machine and speaking about oneself as if it were an automaton, in order to mechanize the unpleasant interactions going on and removing ambiguity (maybe of a similar form to what I mentioned on the previous slide)
- Do you have any comments or feedback on this interpretation?
- Do you think such passages can be interpreted, given sufficient dialogue with the patient?

What's next?

What's next for '*Thought Insertion* talks'?

- Explain the neural circuitry involved in whatever is involved in the syndrome we call *thought insertion*
- Understand cultural factors on *thought insertion*
 - Isn't demonstration of culturally a-relativist opinions one of the criteria used for distinguishing the level of bizarreness in a person's behavior as to suggest psychosis? So then, how is it that cultural influence can also contribute to the framing of a psychotic patients' beliefs? **Is it an uncanny valley-ness of cultural beliefs that is at play here, to distinguish psychosis?**
- Discuss creative and novel treatment strategies proposed in the “Intruders in the Mind” text
- Open to suggestions and ideas as well?

Let's end with something, perhaps, we can *all* relate to...

- “[...] The mere act of questioning whether the thoughts in one’s mental space (which does not have to be a physical demarcation of inside/ outside the head) are one’s own in the literal sense indicates a kind of subtle change in a person’s subjectivity that cannot be easily explained away by whether one believes in it or not. **Sometimes a person does not need to actively believe in something for it to bear truth or feel real.**”