

THE DIALOGIC TRIAD IN PSYCHOTHERAPY AND CLINICAL SUPERVISION

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Abstract

The concept of the Dialogic Triad, formulated by Gerhard Stemberger within the conceptual framework of Gestalt Theoretical Psychotherapy [1], addresses the interrelationships between the way people talk “internally” to themselves and others (“inner speech”), the way they conduct their dialogues and relationships “outside” and, finally, the way they interact with their therapist. In essence, it is assumed that the development and promotion of constructive and objective “inner” dialogues contribute to differentiated reflection and that, as a result, people learn to increasingly accept themselves, which leads to them being able to shape their interpersonal relationships more satisfactorily. This article begins by highlighting the inspiration for some concepts of the therapeutic use of “inner speech” from the developmental psychological work of Piaget and Vygotsky and presents the model of the behaviorist Meichenbaum as an example of this. Based on the description of the Gestalt psychological understanding of the concept of the Dialogic Triad, the special feature in the field of clinical and psychotherapeutic supervision will be presented.

Key words: supervision, Gestalt psychology, inner speech, Dialogic Triad, Gestalt Theoretical Psychotherapy

1. INTRODUCTION

People spend a good part of their time talking to themselves or - inaudibly to others - in an "inner" conversation with other people.¹ Often it is not other people they are talking to, but things, beings, or processes that they deal with in conversation as if they were personalities of their own. They talk to their computers, but also to God and to their fate and to the weather and the lottery drum.

Talking to ourselves is such a natural part of our lives that it is reflected in phrases such as "I said to myself", "I asked myself" and the like. In literary works, it is common practice to give us an insight into what characterizes the people in these works, what moves and motivates them, by reproducing such "inner" conversations between the protagonists and themselves or their "inner" conversations with others. The term "private speech" is often used for this phenomenon because these conversations are not heard by anyone but the people themselves.

If this "inner speech" of people is such a natural part of their lives, then it is obvious to ask what function it has for them and their lives. And this raises further questions for psychotherapy and clinical supervision: Can helpful clues about the nature of people's difficulties in their everyday and professional life and possible solutions be gained from paying attention to the way people "speak internally"? Can these "inner dialogs" themselves perhaps also be a practical starting point for constructive change?

1.1. THE FUNCTION OF "INNER SPEECH"

From the point of view of Gestalt psychology, we can answer the first question about the function of "inner speech" as follows:

Humans are self-regulating, or - to use a more neutral expression - *autoregulating* and self-steering beings, and "inner speech" is part of this autoregulation and self-steering. Life demands constant fine-tuning from people - on the one hand between the phenomenal ego and the phenomenal environment which form the microcosm of their experienced world, and on the other hand between this microcosm and the physical macrocosm in which this microcosm is

¹ "Inner" and "outer" are in quotation marks due to the ambiguity of these expressions. For our topic, two meanings are to be distinguished: "inside" and "outside" as inside or outside the realm of the person within the phenomenal world of somebody, and "inside" and "outside" as inside or outside the physiological organism of somebody. For these and other differentiations of "inside" and "outside", see Bischof 1966 [2].

embedded like the microcosms of all other living beings and with which it is closely interrelated.

Part of this autoregulative and steering processes take place without our consciousness and without our deliberate actions, while another part is linked to our conscious actions in our world. Autoregulation and self-steering of life processes requires a broad variety of ways for the fine-tuning. The general basis for this is the development of the perceptual world as a "central steering organ" [3]. The internal events within this phenomenal world are organized in the form of field events, while its "external relations" via the organism are predominantly characterized by processes of the cybernetic feedback type.²

More complex orientation and coordination processes in the existential core area of a person's psychosocial life take on different forms of communication and active interaction with other people. These are usually - whether noticed or unnoticed - in close interplay with corresponding processes in the person's "inner self". They can phenomenally take the form of an "inner" conversation, among other possibilities, and they actually do this again and again in everyday life. In this way, "inner speech" belongs to the ways of fine-tuning in the phenomenal realm. Just as looking and feeling serve to ascertain where you are in which environment and what possibilities you have, "inner speech" serves to clarify the situation and your own position and everything that is connected to it and arises from it. Like every process of examination and clarification, this is also associated with a process of change - "inner speech" not only provides orientation, but it also *changes* - it may lead to a decision, solve a problem, reduce a tension, or create a new tension, and so on.

1.2. "INNER SPEECH" AND PSYCHOTHERAPY/SUPERVISION

This general function of "inner speech" also provides answers to the previously asked questions for the psychotherapeutic – and in a broader sense also for the supervisory – context: Can helpful clues about the nature of people's difficulties in their everyday and professional life and possible solutions be gained from paying attention to the way people "speak internally"? Can these "inner dialogues" themselves perhaps also be a practical starting point for constructive change?

If this "inner speech" serves the purpose of fine-tuning, clarification, and orientation, then it is obvious to conclude that the way in which people conduct their "inner dialogues" and what is the subject of these dialogues can provide

² Wolfgang Metzger analyzes what this fine-tuning looks like in simple cases of motor actions in his essays "Über die Notwendigkeit kybernetischer Vorstellungen in der Theorie des Verhaltens" (1965) and "Die Wahrnehmungswelt als zentrales Steuerungsorgan" (1969). The latter has been published also in English: The Phenomenal-Perceptual Field as a Central Steering Mechanism: https://www.gestalttheory.net/uploads/pdf/archive/1961_1990/Phenomenal_Perceptual_field_Metzger.pdf

helpful clues as to the nature of their difficulties in private and professional life and the solutions they are pursuing. It is therefore worth drawing the client's or supervisee's attention to this "inner speech". Equally obvious is the idea of actively varying the "inner speech" to find and try out new, possibly more constructive, and promising approaches and solutions.

However, these ideas have an implication, namely that there is a close relationship between the structure and dynamics of "inner speech" and a person's "external relationships", perhaps even a far-reaching correspondence in certain cases. According to this assumption, how a person speaks and interacts "internally" with themselves, and their "internal others" would be related to how they speak and interact with others in "external" life and how they speak and interact with others there. In fact, many of the approaches used in psychotherapy to date to work with clients' "inner conversations" are based on such assumptions. This article aims to show and discuss that there are different possibilities and approaches to this. We assume that the Dialogic Triad also plays an essential role in this sense for clinical and psychotherapeutic supervision and will outline this in the final part. But let's lay the foundations for this first.

2. DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

We will start with the developmental psychological perspectives of Jean Piaget [4] and Lev Vygotsky [5], because most psychotherapeutic concepts of "inner speech" ultimately go back to these two approaches. They have therefore not lost their influence over the decades.

The starting point for both is the observation that young children (aged around 3–5 years) often accompany their play or other activities with vocalizations without it being apparent that these have a specific addressee or that a response is expected. Piaget introduced the term "egocentric speech" for this phenomenon in young children (speaking "for themselves") - in contrast to "social speech" (speaking for others). Vygotsky dealt with this in his own studies on thinking and speaking.

Piaget and Vygotsky agree that the "egocentric speech" of the young child is characterized by three special features, which they then classify differently, however. It is 1) a "collective monologue" (or a monologue in the context of a collective, in the presence of other people); 2) it is accompanied by an "illusion of understanding" (the child assumes that the others understand it); and 3) in its external form (volume and articulation) it certainly corresponds to "social speech".

While Piaget still assumed that "egocentric speech arises from insufficient socialization of originally individual speech" [5, p. 423, transl. AB], which regresses over time, Vygotsky developed this approach further by describing children's monologues as a preliminary stage in the development of adult inner speech. The Soviet neuropsychologist Alexander Luria, who adopted Vygotsky's view and developed it further, describes the associated developmental psychological concept as follows:

"Indeed, the child, physically linked to his mother when in the womb and still biologically dependent on her during infancy, remains socially bound up with her for a long time. He is linked to her at first directly and emotionally, and later through speech; by this means he not only enlarges his experience but acquires *new modes of behavior* and then *new ways of organizing his mental activities*. By naming various surrounding objects and giving the child orders and instructions, his mother shapes his behavior. Having carefully observed the objects named by his mother, after he acquires the faculty of speech, the child begins to name them actively and thus to organize his acts of perception and his deliberate attention. When he does as his mother tells him he retains the traces of verbal instructions in his memory for a long time. Thus, he learns how to formulate his own wishes and intentions independently, first in externalized and then in inner speech. He thus creates the highest forms of purposive memory and deliberate activity. What he could previously do only with adult help, he is now able to do unassisted. This fact becomes the basic law in a child's development." [6, p. 16f]

2.1. COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY BUILDING ON THIS

A few decades later, these developmental psychological perspectives also attracted the attention of behavioral psychology, which continues to have an impact in various concepts to this day. In the 1970s, the American behavioral psychologist Donald H. Meichenbaum - who is considered one of the pioneers of cognitive behavioral therapy - referred directly to the observations and interpretations of Vygotsky and Luria, however in an interpretation that neglects the child's independent, active role in these processes [7]. Meichenbaum derived the sequence of steps for his own behavior-modifying programs for adolescents and adults directly from Vygotsky and Luria's view of the developmental process in infancy. His technique consists of learning and practicing a guided form of "inner speech" - Petzold & Sieper speak of an "abbreviated Vygotsky technique" [8, p.19].

The technique consists of a guided transition from external to internal steering of behavior, in each case using linguistic means. The practical

implementation looks something like this: Initially the therapist acts as a model by carrying out a task and speaking aloud to herself, while the client simply watches. The client then performs the task too, accompanied by the therapist giving the instructions speaking aloud. In the next step, the task is performed by the client alone, first speaking aloud to oneself, then only whispering, followed by only moving the lips, until finally the task can be completed without instructions. "Thus, the subject was taught to self-instruct covertly through a shaping process involving a series of successive approximations from overt to covert self-instruction." [7, p. 277]

The concept combines Meichenbaum's conclusions from the perspective of Vygotsky and Luria with the concept of imitation learning ("learning from the model") by Albert Bandura, another pioneer of cognitive behavioral therapy [9]. The basic idea behind this concept is therefore: Verbalizing serves behavior regulation. First, the intended correct behavior is learned from others - also in verbalized form - then this verbalized behavioral know-how is transferred from an external to an "inner speech" and is then subsequently also available to regulate behavior in situations in which no suitable external guidance is available.

These ideas of learning and behavior represented a considerable step forward in the development of behavioral psychology: They moved away from the concept of the psyche as a black box and turned to the interaction of person-internal and person-external factors of behavior. However, they are still a long way from the perspective developed by Gestalt psychology. For example, the initial hypothesis that learning processes at a later age always correspond to those that are characteristic of earlier stages of development is not tenable upon closer inspection. The Italian Gestalt psychologist Anna Arfelli Galli demonstrated this impressively in her review of the results of child research in Gestalt psychology, which have since been confirmed in many ways [10]. Accordingly, learning is always a reaction of the individual to a *specific* environment (Koffka), which is why the learning processes of infants and learning processes at a later age cannot simply be equated. The fact that during human development, the new does not *replace* what has already been achieved, but rather always *integrates* what has already been achieved into the new, also speaks against Meichenbaum's conclusions from Vygotsky and Luria. In Gestalt Theoretical Psychotherapy, we try to keep the handling of "inner speech" free of such unnecessarily constricted ideas.

Despite all the criticism, what remains remarkable about Meichenbaum's approach is that he adopts from developmental psychology the view of the role and function of "inner speech" and "outer speech" *in their context and their reciprocal effect* (instead of an isolated view of "inner speech") and that he assumes - albeit in a very restricted way - a *control function of "inner speech" in person-environment relationships* (instead of assuming only person-internal

functions such as dissipation of inner tensions and the like). We certainly recognize this as a strength of Meichenbaum's concepts.

3. THE "INNER CONVERSATION" IN GESTALT THEORY

Among the Gestalt psychologists, it was Mary Henle who dealt most thoroughly with the phenomenon of "inner dialogs" [11; cf. 12]. With her approach, Henle also goes beyond how the "inner" conversation had already been addressed earlier by other authors in Gestalt psychology.

Here we are thinking primarily of Karl Duncker, one of the first generation of Gestalt psychologists: in his studies on productive thinking and problem solving [13], he instructed his test subjects to "think out loud". This instruction, which we have also adopted in Gestalt Theoretical Psychotherapy as an invitation both in psychotherapy and supervision, is obviously based on the idea that people often verbalize their steps and procedures "internally" in the process of solving problems.

"This instruction 'think aloud' is not identical with the usual request for self-observation in thought experiments. While the self-observing person makes himself the object of thought, i.e. - in terms of intention - is different from the thinking subject, the person who thinks aloud remains directly focused on the object, just letting it 'have its say'." [13, p.2; transl. GSt]

This invitation to "think aloud" therefore stimulates behavior that is similar to the "egocentric speech" or "collective monologue" already discussed. It has a twofold direction: On the one hand, verbalizing supports the clarification process; on the other hand, verbalizing aloud fulfils the task of integrating this process into a collaborative event with another person. While Duncker deals with the specific question of the relationship between "collective monologue" and the improvement of problem-solving skills, other Gestalt theorists like Kurt Lewin and Kurt Koffka deal with other, more general aspects of the dynamics of the person's internal relationships, i.e. the interrelationships between different parts or functions of the person. This usually remains without direct reference to "inner speech".

Mary Henle went far beyond these questions in the early 1960s. She sees "inner" conversations as the phenomenal form of the interplay of various ego functions that are of existential importance for the orientation and steering of behavior of the phenomenal ego in its phenomenal environment. Henle sees the frequently observed human tendency to personalize such functions of the ego ("my inner friend", "my inner critic", etc.) as an important moment for the close interrelationships between the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships of humans. Her proposal is one of applied personality theory, with which she

anticipated much of what the Dutch psychologist Hubert Hermans later attempted in his theory of the *al* self [15].

Henle examined a series of everyday statements that contained a "self-reference", i.e. in which I_1 said something *about* I_2 or *to* I_2 , so to speak. Examples: "I don't know what got into me." - "I wonder if I'm really doing the right thing." - "It's an idea of mine that I don't take very seriously myself." Henle's approach comes close to the situation of psychotherapists and supervisors in that they also have to develop an "ear" for the occurrence of such dialogical expressions and sequences in the flow of conversation with clients or supervisees.

By examining everyday statements of the type quoted, Henle quickly realized that although they had self-reference in common, they differed significantly in the *nature* of this self-reference. Apparently, they express different *functions* that this self-reference has for people in their lives. In a preliminary compilation, Henle lists several such *functions of the self*, as she calls it (she uses the terms *ego* and *self* synonymously). To some of these functions she also adds corresponding personalizations that people often use for them - the fact that such personalizations such as the "inner critic" or the "inner friend" also appear in psychotherapy concepts should not make us forget that they have their origin in everyday experience.

Henle names the functions of acting and observing (actor and observer), critical evaluation (critic), accepting or rejecting ("inner friend" and possibly "inner denier"), impulsive functions (ego as tool, means, victim), protecting / decorating / embellishing (facade self), the functions of realistically assessing vs. imagining, dreaming (realist vs. dreamer). She emphasizes the relationships between these functions (for example, that of observing is often closely linked to that of critical evaluation but is therefore not identical to it). And she points out that the human tendency to personalize at least some of these functions, i.e. to experience and treat them as if they were independent persons ("the inner child"), obviously has a function of its own: These are apparently functions that are not only relevant to a person's "inner life", but which their "inner life" seems to mutually coordinate with their relationships to other people.

Henle proposes the following assumption as a starting hypothesis,
"... that the phenomenally present inner figures here described may give us a clue to the kind of person an individual seeks and the kind of person he is able to relate to outside himself. Thus, we may seek the outer friend - or many outer friends - in place of the inner friend who is not sufficiently developed. Of course, outer friends are essential, but they cannot replace the inner friend. In fact, without some development of the inner friend, it seems that we cannot relate to the outer one. If we do not like ourselves enough, we will not believe that the other likes us; if we do not accept ourselves enough, we will not let the other accept us." [11, p. 401]

Similarly, she suspects that a dreamer will perhaps look for his realist outside himself, that a fair, objective and just "inner critic" will also bring with him the willingness to accept criticism from outside and to learn from it if it is justified and objective, whereas an unfair, inhuman "inner critic" only ever makes us experience criticism from outside as an attack, makes us run away from it or go on the counterattack.

Henle formulated these and related assumptions as a starting hypothesis, so they require examination, differentiation, and further development. Studying literary works can also contribute to this, as they like to use "inner speech" as a stylistic device to reveal the "inner" lives of their characters, their aspirations, and motives.³ Under what conditions do such interdependencies actually exist and what forms do they take in everyday life? What do they contribute to coping with life under some conditions and what do they contribute to life's difficulties under other conditions?

4. THE DIALOGIC TRIAD IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

The concept of the Dialogic Triad in Gestalt Theoretical Psychotherapy [1] is based primarily on Mary Henle's approach [16]. The concept starts from the assumption that the clients' inner-personal relationship with themselves (1), as revealed in their "inner" conversations, interacts closely with their interpersonal relationships (2) and that the therapeutic relationship (3) is not exempt from this - even more so: due to its immediate accessibility for both parties "in the here and now", it can offer special opportunities for understanding, re-evaluation and restructuring of the situation. This also enables new interactions with the client's inner-personal relationship to herself and her most important interpersonal relationships.

In Gestalt Theoretical Psychotherapy, this concept of the Dialogic Triad is of course not limited to the client. It also includes the therapist, for whom there is an equally close interaction between their "inner" conversations and their "outer" communication and relationship life, which will also manifest itself in one form or another in the therapeutic and supervisory relationship. Accordingly, in Gestalt Theoretical Psychotherapy, attention is not only focused on the Dialogic Triad in the client, but also on that in the therapist, on how the interplay between the two takes shape and what possibilities arise from it.

Let's look at this more closely using an example.

³ For example, the Gestalt psychologist Andrzej Zuczkowski and his colleague Ilaria Riccioni at the University of Macerata examined the "inner monologues" in the novellas "Sun and Shadow" by Luigi Pirandello and "Lieutenant Gustl" and "Miss Else" by Arthur Schnitzler [15].

4.1. USING THE EXAMPLE OF THE "INNER CRITIC"

The "inner critic" has now also arrived in everyday psychology. In all kinds of contexts, people say of themselves that they have an "overly harsh inner critic", that they shouldn't be so hard on themselves, and so on.

The way in which the "inner critic" is usually understood and treated in everyday psychology reveals two serious biases. Firstly, the "inner critic" is usually viewed in isolation from the person to whom the criticism is directed - but there is no "inner critic" without an "inner recipient of criticism", as we would like to call this position for the sake of argument.⁴ And secondly, criticism is usually seen exclusively as pointing out mistakes and shortcomings, i.e. again in isolation from the other task of critical assessment and evaluation, namely to identify what is successful and what not, and what are the conditions for this or that.

Let us first turn to the counterpart of the "inner critic". If we see the "task" of the critical function of the human being as being to accompany themselves and their movement in the world with critical assessment and evaluation in order to be able to make appropriate corrections in good time and "stay on course", then it is clear that this requires not only a good development of the function of critical accompaniment, but also a good development of the function of receiving, processing and responding to this critical accompaniment, even if this involves errors or shortcomings.

However, criticism in such a factual sense will only be accepted and used as such by someone who *understands* it as such. Someone who only knows criticism as a personal put-down, on the other hand, will not be able to accept and use even the most objective criticism as such. And it will only be understood and used as such if it is entirely appropriate to the situation and not a case of unobjective criticism aimed at personal belittling and humiliating.

Finally, there are also many other varieties of criticism that lie "somewhere in between" or take on special forms. If, for example, *self-criticism turns into self-abuse*, metaphorical comparisons can come into play, whose function in "inner speech" Giuseppe Galli describes as follows: "In this transfer of negative characteristics from an object to the self, a pejorative treatment of the self seems to take place. In fact, however, it can also be a form of self-pity that is intended to evoke compassion in the speaker himself - the person doubles himself, so to speak." [17, p. 25; transl. GSt]

If an "inner critic" comes into play, one must always ask the question: Who is the counterpart of this "inner critic" and what happens when the two meet? It

⁴ It is not at all easy to find a suitable expression for this position. The expression "the inner criticized", for example, would imply that the criticism was either directed against him or that he always experiences criticism as directed against his own person, even if it objectively refers to a certain action. The expression "the person processing the criticism", on the other hand, would imply that the person in question processes the criticism heard in some way, but this is not always the case - they can also "cover their ears". And so on and so forth.

makes little sense to commit to a specific pair in advance, such as the "top dog" and "under dog" pair known from Perls' Gestalt therapy. The same argument that Henle already put forward against the lumping together of different functions in the concept of the Freudian superego applies here [cf. 11; 12]. Whether the "inner critic" appears as a "top dog", as a rigid, narrow-minded rider of principles, and his counterpart as a slyly sabotaging "under dog", should be by no means a foregone conclusion.

However, critical evaluation does not only consist of identifying errors and deficiencies that should be rectified. It also consists of identifying what has been successful and understanding the conditions that are decisive for success. Here, the difference between the "good inner critic" and the "bad inner critic" is no less pronounced. The "bad inner critic" only recognizes the successful in the form of an unobjective hymn of personal praise and this in an exaggerated measure based on the glory of the person. Wolfgang Metzger, in agreement with the individual psychologists Adler and Künkel, has repeatedly pointed out (mostly - but not only - in connection with child rearing) the damaging effects of this type of "positive criticism" as a de-education of genuine interest in the matter and the natural capacity for objectivity [cf. 18; 19].

This brings up a very important point: These are *functions in specific given situations* and not a fixed, situation-independent inventory of the person's characteristics or abilities. People do not "*have*" a good or bad "inner critic", but rather the function of critically accompanying their movement through life comes into play better or worse in certain situations and overall constellations (with other functions). In terms of developmental psychology, Metzger, together with Adler and Künkel, identifies anything that undermines the child's tendency and ability to be objective as particularly unfavorable boundary conditions - this includes constant belittling criticism as well as constant unobjective praise. Other circumstances can come into play in terms of the actually existing situation - for example: an existentially unsettling or frightening situation that puts the ego at the center and thus makes objective critical observation more difficult; or a particularly strong identification of the person with the matter, which tends to make every critical evaluation of the matter always become a critical evaluation of the person at the same time.

5. THE TRIAD IN PRACTICAL APPLICATION

With the concept of the Dialogic Triad [1], Gestalt Theoretical Psychotherapy attempts to take the phenomena of "inner speech" into account appropriately in therapeutic practice. As in other areas, the therapist's first task here is to pay attention to what is happening in the client and in themselves, even

without active intervention. If, for example, they notice signs in the client that they are controlling their experience and the communication about it with one or other form of "inner speech" (keeping it flowing or inhibiting it), they make the decision as to whether the situation suggests that they actively address this observation. They may then share their observation and, if it resonates, suggest letting this "inner speech" be heard aloud in the therapy session or to formulate self-referential statements in an explicit dialog, perhaps even acting them out. The expectation associated with this is that the experienced event and its meaning will become more differentiated, more vivid, and more "perceptible" to the client herself and to the therapist.

This first step can be followed by a second exploration of the relationship between the content, structure, and dynamics of the "inner dialogues" and dialogical relationships in the client's life. This will not only be about similarities and differences, which may be the first thing that comes to mind, but also about the conditions that determine whether things are similar or completely different. For example, those who have just noticed that in the "inner dialog", the tone of voice of their "defense speech" against critical reproaches expressed a tendency to play down and offer as few areas of attack as possible, may subsequently remember everyday constellations in which they experience something similar. But also, other situations in which they experience something different. The conditions decisive for the one and the other can then be investigated.

However, the second step often consists of exploring the relationship between the "inner dialog" and the experience of the corresponding event in the therapeutic situation between client and therapist - the third side of the Dialogic Triad. What must not be overlooked are the particularities of the psychotherapeutic situation, which differ in essential aspects from everyday situations and the associated relationships [cf. 20]. Only when these particularities are considered can the joint comparative exploration of the differences and similarities between the experience and behavior in the "inner dialogue" and in the dialogue between client and therapist become fruitful.

Working with the Dialogic Triad is not limited to the client. A therapist who has learned to pay attention to their client's "inner speech" will, in a successful case, also have an attentive ear for their own "inner speech". If it fits the given situation, they will also use the opportunity to let their own "inner speech" be heard and make it available to the client and themselves in the ongoing process. ("I'm just realizing that I'm feeling sad - but what about? - and that I would like to talk myself out of it straight away...") But even if this doesn't happen because there are good reasons not to bring it up, it remains important for the therapist to become aware of their "inner dialogs" again and again during the therapy sessions.

5.1. CONSEQUENCES FOR SUPERVISION

The explanations on the concept of the Dialogic Triad [1] suggest that they can also play a fruitful role in the field of clinical supervision. Within the framework of a sustainable relationship between supervisor and supervisee, the discussion of the "inner dialogues" and the "inner dialogue partners" described above can be put to meaningful use in such a way that they serve both the process of supervision and the process of working with the client.

The way in which dialogs are conducted is always embedded in the family, cultural and social environment. It therefore also influences our form of "inner dialog". Inner speech" supports processes of (self-)clarification and offers orientation in a wide variety of life situations and one's own position in them. In this way, it is also useful in supervision to pay attention to how someone speaks to themselves (friendly, assertive, strict, etc.). This can provide information about how someone deals with themselves (loving, self-accepting, rejecting, ...). Encouraging an objective and constructive dialog with oneself is worthwhile because it can go hand in hand with the development of a more realistic and at the same time more loving way of dealing with oneself. In successful cases, this leads to better self-acceptance and a more stable self-esteem, which in turn has a positive influence on one's own experience in contact with others and thus improves the quality of interpersonal relationships [cf. 21].

As a supervisor, paying close attention to what is going on inside the supervisee and yourself, allowing inner conversations to be heard when it is beneficial to what is currently happening, can therefore also contribute to a more differentiated perception of the topic being dealt with in supervision. What's more, it not only encourages the supervisee to reflect on their own thoughts and actions but can also shed light on the experience of their clients.

For example: If a psychotherapist has not developed an objective "inner critic", this can manifest itself in various forms during therapy: She may tend to openly or covertly devalue her client's behavior or views; she may, on the contrary, avoid making any critical comment to the client because she finds criticism generally inappropriate; she may constantly scrutinize the client's behaviors and statements to see if they involve criticism of her, the therapist, etc. What all these forms have in common is that the therapist is not in a position to exemplify and provide her client with an objective, critical attitude and instead exacerbates any problems the client may have in dealing with criticism objectively and constructively.

5.2. A TRIPLING OF THE TRIAD

This might at least hint at the fact that there is a special feature of the Dialogic Triad for supervision. The relationship triangle of supervisor - supervisee - client leads to a threefold triad:

1. Firstly, it is of clear interest for the supervisor to listen to his or her "inner conversations" and to use their content (or excerpts thereof) where appropriate if they are useful to the supervisory process in a particular situation or on a particular issue. For example, they could listen to their inner critic, who is careful not to overlook anything. "I wonder whether I have understood you correctly", "I am not sure whether you really feel understood by me", can be sentences that are introduced and thus address the relationship between supervisor and supervisee. The supervisor's inner conversations can also focus on the client and thus encourage the supervisee to approach their case from a different perspective.

2. However, the supervisor will also draw attention to whether and in what form "inner conversations" are perceptible in the supervisee and, in one case or another, if this could be helpful for the current discussion, will also address this. In this way, the supervisee is repeatedly encouraged to listen to their "inner conversations", to identify the respective counterparts of these conversations and to reflect on how they deal with themselves and others. The aim here is also to achieve a more differentiated perception of one's own experiences, thoughts, and actions.

On the one hand, reference can be made to the "inner conversations" in the here and now of the supervisory situation; on the other hand, the focus can be on which "inner conversations" arise for the supervisee in the context of their work or with their clients. Relating structure and dynamics in dealing with oneself as a supervisee, as well as in dealing with oneself in the role of a psychotherapist or employee in a professional context, can be a good starting point for taking a closer look at one's own behavior.

By the supervisor setting an example of listening to their own "inner conversations" and guiding the supervisees to take their own "inner conversation partners" seriously, the supervisees are given the opportunity to experience first-hand how fruitful it can be to engage with their own "inner conversations". This encourages them to share this experience with their clients and to pay attention to how they deal with themselves "internally" in their work. The supervisee will then also invite the clients to pay attention to their "inner conversations" and be able to use them for the development process. The supervisor serves as a model in the sense of living and experiencing. The aim is not merely to imitate the supervisor, but to demonstrate and enable an "exploratory dialog" [22, p. 10] with themselves and their clients.

3. It is clear from this that in supervision we are dealing with the special feature that a third field is added in which the triad is effective and must be considered. The "inner conversations" of the client of a discussed case can also be

the subject of supervision. This may be because the supervisee is encouraged to pay attention to the interactions between "inner" and "outer" dialogues in their work with clients, or because the client's possible "inner interlocutors" can be explored by identifying with them to gain a more differentiated understanding of their experience and behaviors. Clients who are personally unknown to the supervisor also become the subject of the Dialogic Triad.

In conclusion, it can be said that the concept of the Dialogic Triad can be of great practical benefit in that it is helpful in accompanying our supervisees on the path to becoming their own supervisor. It even offers the opportunity to train their own "inner dialog partners" who reflect on, question, and positively influence the work process with clients. In this sense, the supervisees can then also support their clients in becoming aware of their "inner interlocutors" and getting to know themselves a little better, accepting themselves better and improving the way they interact with others.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The concept of the Dialogic Triad developed within the conceptual framework of Gestalt Theoretical Psychotherapy [1] can also be applied very fruitfully in the field of clinical supervision. Paying careful attention to "inner conversations" can be of great benefit to the supervisor, the supervisee, and their clients in terms of reflection, differentiation, and expansion of their own options for action. Making the interaction between dealing with oneself and dealing with others a topic not only offers a very useful tool for us, our supervisees, and their clients in the process of self-exploration and self-efficacy, but also contributes significantly to obtaining a more differentiated, reflective view of dealing with oneself and others.

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