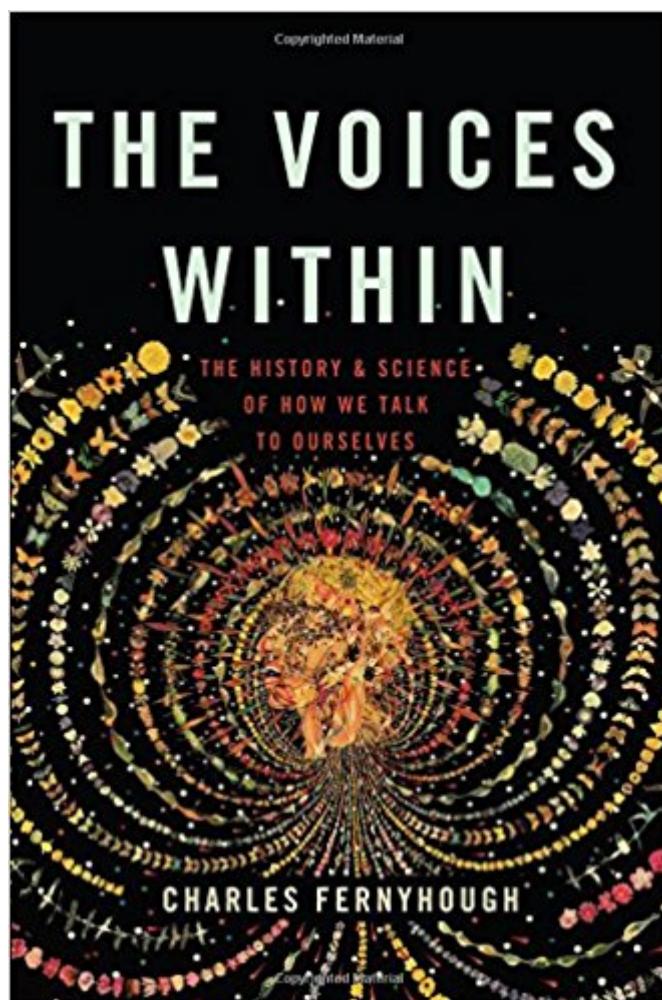


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# The Voices Within: The History And Science Of How We Talk To Ourselves



## Synopsis

A luminous exploration of the nature of thoughts, from daydreams to the voices in our headsAt the moment you caught sight of this book, what were you thinking? Was your thought a stream of sensations? Or was it a voice in your head? Did you ask yourself, "I wonder what that's about?" Did you answer? And what does it mean if you did?When someone says they hear voices in their head, they are often thought to be mentally ill. But, as Charles Fernyhough argues in *The Voices Within*, such voices are better understood as one of the chief hallmarks of human thought. Our inner voices can be self-assured, funny, profound, hesitant, or mean; they can appear in different accents and even in sign language. We all hear them-and we needn't fear them. Indeed, we cannot live without them: we need them, whether to make decisions or to bring a book's characters to life as we read. Studying them can enrich our understanding of ourselves, and our understanding of the world around us; it can help us understand the experiences of visionary saints, who might otherwise be dismissed as schizophrenics; to alleviate the suffering of those who do have mental health problems; and to understand why the person next to us on the subway just burst out laughing for no apparent reason.Whether the voices in our heads are meandering lazily or clashing chaotically, they deserve to be heard. Bustling with insights from literature, film, art, and psychology, *The Voices Within* offers more than science; it powerfully entreats us all to take some time to hear ourselves think.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Basic Books; 1 edition (October 4, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465096808

ISBN-13: 978-0465096800

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 1.1 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 24 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #385,829 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #95 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Mental Health > Schizophrenia #203 in Books > Medical Books > Psychology > History #229 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > History

## Customer Reviews

"Talk to yourself? We all do, all the time, and the voices persist even when you'd rather they shush.

The 'inner voice' is becoming a prime-time topic in brain studies, and Fernyhough's book is a solid entry in the discussion. It provides enough science to ground the argument, but the real achievement here is the writing. The author is a psychologist and a novelist, and his prose has a narrative feel that separates it from most books on the psych shelf. The subject is one of the tough brain conundrums that's far from settled; we'll be trying to figure out the role of the inner voice long from now, but Fernyhough's book is a readable take on what we know and where the questions may go next."-David DiSalvo, Forbes.com, Best Brain Books of 2016" "Fernyhough has built up an interesting picture of inner speech and its functions."-Jerome Groopman, New Yorker" "In *The Voices Within*, [Fernyhough] has rendered complicated mental experience without losing its human texture, as so often happens when psychological questions are addressed in the lab.... [It's] an intriguing and deeply humane book."--Casey Schwartz, New York Times Book Review" "T]his book is a must-read for those seeking to understand the voices in their heads."--Discover" "The author's investigations, at once scientific and humane, represent the discipline of psychology at its rare best.... That Mr. Fernyhough is a novelist as well as a psychologist is evident in his illuminating discussion of the polyphonic art of fiction and the way in which writers such as Virginia Woolf, Muriel Spark and William Golding unpack characters from the voices they generate in those characters' heads.... Some of the most compelling pages in Mr. Fernyhough's book describe how hearing voices may be a response to traumatic, sometimes repressed, memories, rather than merely being the result of the atypical processing of inner speech. The voices carry messages that cannot otherwise be spoken.... After reading *The Voices Within*, you may never again be quite as thoughtless about the fact that you think."--Raymond Tallis, Wall Street Journal" "The *Voices Within*...intriguingly challenges conventional assumptions about the self as unified and coherent, while also posing the question: how might that which we deem pathological be shaped by the mores of our times?"--Christine Gross-Loh, Guardian, Best Books for Summer 2016" "[A] fascinating and elegantly humane book."--Guardian" "[Fernyhough's] account is fascinating, not only for the ideas he raises but also for his vignettes of historical thought and research."--Lancet" "The psychologist Charles Fernyhough, who became interested in the manifold ways in which we commune with ourselves, decided to investigate the phenomenon and his book, *The Voices Within*, is the intriguing result of his research."--Observer" "This sophisticated and appealing work scrutinizes a tangled topic with aplomb and will leave readers permanently observing their own thought processes differently. Perfect for readers of Oliver Sacks and Malcolm Gladwell."--Booklist, starred review" "Fernyhough's book is a valuable addition to the literature surrounding the unending human quest to understand the location--and the creation--of the self."--Publishers Weekly

Charles Fernyhough is a writer and psychologist. He is the author of the critically acclaimed *Pieces of Light*, shortlisted for many prizes, and *A Thousand Days of Wonder*. He directs *Hearing the Voice*, a project on inner voices based at Durham University. He lives in County Durham, United Kingdom.

This book blew my mind, literally. So many great insights that I had to stop reading for a while and process what I had learned. I will resume reading this now..., I think I'm ready again.

The humanity and care this author took with his discussion and normalizing of all our behaviors that rest on the same continuum is delightful. I learned so much.

I am really enjoying this book. Haven't finished, but learning a lot.

Very interesting...but a lot is technical and requires background knowledge or re-reading to be able to keep things clear as going on. Thought more work could have been done with creative people ...like poets, painters, choreographers, script writers...we talk to ourselves and with ourselves all the time.

Fascinating topic. Self talk is what I have used in the past to quit smoking and to lose weight.

Excellent read and now I know I'm not crazy or alone in hearing my voice!

Do not be afraid of or ashamed of your internal dialogue. This book explores the many types of internal speech, and tries to understand why we often think by talking without making a sound.

Very well written and comprehensive, would recommend to all my friends

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