

# Face, Vocalisation and Violence in an Ethics of Relating

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## Abstract

Vocalisation is formed in the inversion of the face, up until it reaches the face it is a sound akin to blowing through a blade of grass, it has pitch and intensity but little shape. The shape of vocalisation is formed in the "mask", the resonant chamber at the front of the head, the inverted face. Thereby, vocalisation is the sonic manifestation of the shape of the face outside of the body.

This creates an ambiguity as to the directionality of the face, in that, when someone vocalises visibly towards me, I cannot be sure which way the face, sonically captured in vocalization, is facing. It's unclear if the other is just talking to themselves or to me or are half in half out or are rotating. The chord of vocalisation, the fact that each and every vocalisation is heard/felt as sound in the face and the face captured in sonic form outside of the body simultaneously, suggests that the interaction may be a Narcissus' story, where the face is more often or than not reflected back towards the self. This thesis is supported further if we think about vocalisation as a form of self-pleasure, in the erotic experience of forming vocals and the enjoyment of hearing one's own voice, reflected in the story of Echo.

This seems to point towards a social failure or at least ambiguity of the interaction between self and other, if the self is always talking to the self. The experience further still, starts to feel violent when we de-mute or make sonic vocalisation, rarely done in a philosophy of voice. Incorporating sound's intrusive quality on the body into this intersubjective interaction points towards a violent potentiality. The intrusion of the sound of the other on my soundscape, my extended body, is the sonic extension of the body of the other in vocalisation, commanding a piece of my hearing territory, thereby penetrating my body.

The problem is that I cannot avoid this because that bodily intrusion has a face attached. In reference to Levinas' ethics of the face, I am forced to partake in these socially unfulfilling interactions out of a sense of duty to the other's face. To not acknowledge the face in response, even though that inevitable involves an intrusion, is also to estrange the other. Hence, I agree to maintain these interactions in a conduct of consensual violence. The ambiguity of vocal presence leads to a situation where it is violent not to be violent, in my vocal intrusion upon the other.

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## Acknowledgements

*Every encounter I have on my journey to find my voice, everything I learn about the voice is magnanimous, agonizingly beautiful and painful, spiritual and life changing.*

*I feel like I am mad in my pursuit of the voice, it is the energy of madness in all its fantastical creativity. It is why I intuitively committed my life to its call, to its sensuality, its hum of nature, its eroticism, to reveal the other to me and I to them. I may never know voice in its entirety or even slightly but I will listen and feel for resonance, the voice within the voice that says, 'listen and follow...'*

*In dedication to Glen Newey, who's death inspired me to start afresh with my thesis and to Peter Encinas who's death inspired me to finish it. May this simply signify the closing of a chapter and an opening of a new one.*

*I have so many thanks but this thesis is not the place for them because it does not in any way capture the breadth of experience I have had in my voice journey thus far.*

*However, special thesis thanks to Frank Chouraqui for the amazingly patient supervision and on-going inspiration, Kristian Kristensen and Liisa Springham for the edits and all my mates, who have been giving me a kick up the backside and motivating me to just put this thesis business to rest...*

## Introduction

Echo was a mountain nymph who, in the myths of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* loved the sound of her own voice and had a chatty nature. Unfortunately, Echo incurred the wrath of the Goddess Juno by distracting her whilst her husband Jupiter was gallivanting with other nymphs. In her anger, Juno reduced Echo's voice to a reply, so while Echo always had the last word, she could not initiate an interaction with her own voice.

Echo fell in love with Narcissus but his lack of reciprocation left her bereft and a shadow of her former self. Slowly, her body fades, her flesh shrinks away from the fullness of womanhood and all that is left is a sonic reflection off stone. A similar story is then reflected in the story of Narcissus, who falls in love with his own reflection in the water, until he slowly fades and his beauty becomes captured in the face of a flower. The intimacy and tragedy of the face, presented in the masculine body and the voice in the feminine, are perhaps hinted at in the unreciprocated love that the vocal has for the face. Their intimacy is that Echo remains by Narcissus' side for the rest of her life. So much so that she is part of him, forever echoing him back to himself. The tragedy is that in his adoration for the self, he never sees her.

The story further shines light on the dissatisfaction that Narcissus has with hearing the voice of another echoed back at him and as Dolar notes, Narcissus would rather die than fall prey to the other.<sup>1</sup> The desire to be in communion with one's own voice in this way is expressed as narcissism. However, there are other reasons the

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<sup>1</sup> Dolar, M. (2006). *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge: MIT Press: 40

experience of vocalization, or talking to oneself out-loud could be pleasurable. It could be an erotic self-pleasure that comes with bodily process of vocalisation. It could also be an assertion of one's own presence in the world, a kind of echolocation. It could be a fear of being vulnerable to the other, of revealing too much to the other. Another conclusion one could draw is that vocalisation is always an echo yet not delayed, it is always self-responding in the moment, it is auto-affective.

The story of echo's decay is sadder than that of Narcissus. Narcissus' face being maintained, implies he is still acknowledged and seen, whilst Echo is forced to surrender to the other, no longer is she the self, she is the other being reflected back to the other. She is as Dolar would describe no longer auto-affective. "An auto-affection which is not reflection, since it appears to lack a screen that would return the voice, a pure immediacy where one is both the sender and the receiver without leaving one's pure interiority. In a deceptive self-transparency, one coincides in both roles without a gap and with no need of any exterior mediation."<sup>2</sup> She is a surface, stone and her vocalization capacity, her chord, is split, she is always outside of herself, always disembodied. Echo reveals the vocal as a response to the self. Narcissus cannot abide her taking his place as his muse, because he would prefer to remain auto-affective, in conversation with himself. Merleau-Ponty highlights Narcissus' fear of the other in his self-adoration, "I am torn from myself, and the image in the mirror prepares me for another still more serious alienation, which will be the alienation by others. For others have only an exterior image of me, which is analogous to the one seen in the mirror. Consequently, others will tear me away from

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<sup>2</sup> Dolar, M. (2006). *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge: MIT Press: 39

my immediate inwardness much more surely than will the mirror.”<sup>3</sup> The alienation by others, the fear of not being met by the other is this really due to lack of access? Surely the voice enacts some interior presence of the other externally? Why do we wish to stay in an immediate inwardness, what is the root of this unsociability? The face is narcissistic. Furthermore, as Echo shows, it is self-pleasure to speak. If the face is contained in the voice then when we vocalise we also reveal our own face as a conversation partner. The question arises as to what direction the face points when outside the self. Does the face look back at us or towards the other? Does the vocalisation have a back of a head or is it rotating to meet face-to-face and which face? Can we ever meet the other? Is intersubjective interaction a false promise?

As Levinas shows, inhabiting a body with a face seems to be a crucial social experience connecting us with other beings. Our body is extended in gesture, in vocalisation, in its visibility, irrespective of verbal language, and this is what I would like to give attention to in this thesis.<sup>4</sup> Levinas’ account of the face and of the face-to-face relationship captures an ethics of relating that engages my respect for the other, my recognition of the expression in the face fixed in its nudity and vulnerability is an articulation of the sentiment, “do not kill me.”<sup>5</sup> Visker describes how “Levinas calls the face of the Other which turns him into a person to whom I am linked and to whom I am obligated.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, the face predisposes a specific ethics of relating. I argue that Levinas’ recognition of the face as commanding my response, is committed to recognising vocality as part of the face. However, lack of attention to

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<sup>3</sup> Merleau-Ponty, M. (2007). *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 165

<sup>4</sup> Pereira, S. L. (2012). About the possibility to listen to the Other: voice, world music, interculturality. *E-Compós*, 15(2), 1-15

<sup>5</sup> Bergo, B. (2017). Emmanuel Levinas. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition). Stanford.

<sup>6</sup> Visker, R. (1997). The Core of my Opposition to Levinas. *Ethical Perspectives*, 4(3): 159

vocality in its sonic dimensions in the work of Levinas fails to fully acknowledge the transgressive and manipulative quality of the vocal in the body and thereby, I will argue, the inclusion of vocality within the Levinassian notion of "face" is both implied by Levinas and problematic for his ethics.

### *Thesis Statement*

**Vocalisation is the sonic aspect of the face but also a sonic excess of face as it only exists within a realm of intrusiveness and unavoidability. This implicates Levinas' ethics of relating from one of responsibility to the other based on respect, to one of obligation borne out of consensual violence. This consensual violence is enacted in vocality, a false presence of the face that repeatedly undermines the social destiny of intersubjective interaction.**

Vocalisation is formed in the inversion of the face, up until it reaches the face it is just sounds like blowing through grass, it has pitch and intensity but no shape. The shape of vocalisation is formed in the "mask", the resonant chamber at the front of the head, the inverted face. Thereby, vocalisation is the sonic manifestation of the shape of the face outside of the body. This creates an ambiguity as to the directionality of the face. The ambiguity of directionality of vocality, when it is made present in the world, means one cannot be assured that you as the other, are the addressee of the vocalisation. This is because a chord of vocalisation implies that the self is perpetually an addressee of the (other?) self. If this account of false presence is correct, then in the majority of intersubjective vocal interaction, the social destiny of the voice, the idea that voice reveals self to the other, or makes possible some form of connection or presence of the self, available to the other is not fulfilled.



It is further not fulfilling of sociality, in the sense of belonging, of having a social life as a need. If humans indeed are social animals then this interaction would fail to fulfil the social need of the individual, creating sense of estrangement and loneliness. The interaction is physically impactful, it has an effect upon the body but is void of social fulfilment. In this way, analysis of vocalisation becomes an access point to conceiving of a new ethics of relating. This ethics of relating, I will argue, is one of consensual violence. Consensual violence, this paper proposes, is the idea that violence is inescapable insofar as abstaining from it involves violence too: there is an unconscious obligation on us all, if we want to remain part of the world and honour the call of the face, to maintain relations of violence, premised on the intrusive essence of sound.

### **Relevance**

Rudi Visker's compelling critique of Levinas asks;

*"What if every human is a being who already bears within himself something which threatens to destroy him from the inside? And what if one cannot simply get rid of that something without ceasing thereby to be human and reverting to nature? What if it is this 'something' that already determines the difference between the human and the natural (perhaps not all the difference, but at least an essential part of it)? What if man is indeed a being who must take account of something that takes no account of him?"<sup>7</sup>*

For Visker this energy that threatens to destroy, is a vague relation of debt to the other. In his re-contextualisation of the face-to-face of Levinas he brings the face

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<sup>7</sup> Visker, R. (1997). The Core of my Opposition to Levinas. *Ethical Perspectives*, 4(3): 166

back into the context of culture. Is it plausible that the repeated disappointment of the social interaction is also the tension and energy that establishes, maintains and sustains culture? And if so, what is the nature of these interactions? His last question seems to denote an intuition that I explore in this thesis, what if man is indeed a being who **MUST** take account of something that takes no account of him? Where does this obligation to meet a seemingly disassociated other stem from?

The relations that I will refer to I sometimes hear described prosaically as “the game” that we supposedly play to survive but that can also be understood as a desire to belong, be part of the world and to enact and build culture, in harmony and a striving for perfectionism. We give up a freedom to belong but we also find freedom in belonging, the reciprocal relationship between freedom and subjugation, our voluntary subjugation is a well-established theme in a philosophy of culture. The ambiguity and interplay between the emancipatory and the form of subjugation that we must forever negotiate seems to be held most vividly in inter-relation with the Other. Vocalisation is an access point. In an attempt to start to microscopically examine the smallest examples of inter-relation, to understand the tension of nature and culture, freedom and unfreedom, social and asocial in the whole, this paper goes to vocalization in the face, the fleshiness of the vocal experience, the miniature moments and movements of liquid, air and muscle and bodily intelligence, tell a profound story of inter-relation. It visualizes vocalisation as a rotating simultaneously concave and convex sonic shape of the face outside of the body but always in relationship and extension to it, it is locked outside of the body in permanent response to the command of the face of the other. The sound of freedom

from this relationship can only be felt-heard in the rare and uncanny resonant vocal experience, the sustaining force of idealism and the childhood imagination.

Levinas' notes that the face commands, with no need for vocalisation, there is in Levinas' work reference to voice in the face and yet this voice is always silent. By silencing the vocality we miss out an important taste of the experience of the experience of seeing a face, and it is by the very sonic quality of the vocalisation that the inter-subjective experience of face-to-face encounters is transformed.

The presence of the face in vocalisation offers the potential for ongoing intrusion on an earlidless soundscape, the experience of that intrusion is unavoidable. Therefore, having a face and having the capacity to vocalise as a distinction becomes a matter of sounding, always temporal, immediate and urgent in the vocalisation process. It is a constant grabbing of attention. By asserting my presence on the soundscape of the other, I am not just visible but I am invasive on their extended body, I penetrate the hearing body of the other with my presence in sound. The violence emerges in my duty to constantly respond to this grabbiness because of the responsibility I have towards to the other, that is contained in the face. If I do not respond I commit a graver violence, which is to deny the presence of the individual in the world, in my silence.

It's impossible to not include the voice in the face but this challenges some other parts of Levinas philosophy, that come out of his examination with face. The risk of transgressing the other is the core of my opposition to Levinas, even though

intrusion in and of itself is not violent, when I have no ability to avoid the intrusion or no ability to avoid intruding, I get caught up in a violent relationship by its very inescapability. It becomes even more disassociating when the outcome of this interaction is so unfulfilling, in that it is very hard to fulfil my social need through an interaction that inevitably entails me talking to someone who is talking to themselves also. This means I feel like I am always in false presence with the other.

The experience of consensual violence, in a mutual excuse of violence, something moral is lost and what is revealed is a sadomasochistic reality where violence cannot be judged because it takes part in a relationship of consent. Levinas hoped to separate the ethics from violence but in examining vocalisation, a new relationship between ethics and violence emerges, an ethics of consent. If we see everything as violent then violent becomes meaningless, if we see violence as maintained out of consent, then violence maintains meaning but becomes also impossible to judge. It also raises questions of how to escape such relations. The magic element of this journey of the voice is that it is my firm belief that an examination of the range of vocal-interactive experience, themes of listening, resonance, vulnerability, the ancient feminine amongst other adventures highlighted in appendix 1, point towards potential routes out of such relations.

Furthermore, exploring the voice as flesh, points towards a less well-trodden philosophical approach. For those who have an affinity for philosophy and its history, from an outsider's perspective, philosophy seems to deal largely with an abstract and bodiless universality, a never-ending process of demystifying the mystical, whilst remaining in perpetual relationship to it. In the words of Erykah

Badu, “Most intellectuals don’t believe in God but they fear him just the same.” Avoiding the lure of the siren’s song, whilst also maintaining a distanced physical admiration for the ethereal goddesses, leaves philosophy in-between, neither magical nor tangible, it is also distanced from the grossness of bodies. Lowenstam describes the distancing, less as an escape but more as form of procrastination, a disappointment of not having or obtaining the perfection of what is valued and desired in the abstract, the good and the beautiful in mortal state. The perfection of which, is only maintained in the feminine lure of Socrates, who Lowenstam refers to as a siren.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the body is increasingly being reclaimed in philosophy, largely by those whose inhabitation of a body inhibited their time and leisure to escape into such abstraction. The valuation of this somehow denotes the authority to belong in the western world’s troupe of institutionalised knowledge producers. Therefore, when I initially set out on my journey, to “find the voice” in philosophical history, the voice both in spirit and in flesh, alive and bodily, in its song, its lure, its hum, I found it difficult to locate myself, because I could not hear anything.

The voice has for too long been subordinated to speech, to abstraction, to the semantic destination of logos, to a mute signification.<sup>9</sup> One argument for an event, which may have delayed its prominence, was Spivak’s translation of Derrida’s *On Grammatology* (1976) which turned the sphere of interest from voice to text.<sup>10</sup> As Cavanero notes, “The phenomenon of speech [has enabled a focus on] voice as such without ever dealing with the singularity of each voice,” let alone its fleshiness. He

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<sup>8</sup> Lowenstam, S. (1986). Aristophanes’ Hiccups. *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 27(1): 53.

<sup>9</sup> Cavarero, A. (2005). *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: xxii and 2

<sup>10</sup> Samuels, D. W., Meintjes, L., Ochoa, A. M., & Porcello, T. (2010). Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology. *Annual Reviews*, 39: 329–345.

points to the core argument of his work on voice as a “Way in which the exquisitely human uniqueness emits its essence.” This intimate connection with a sense of ‘humanity’ or animation is one way in which the voice is rich in content. Furthermore, such a study is intimately linked to a movement to review the metaphysical tradition’s auditory history. As Ihde notes: “The inattention to the sounding of things has led to the gradual loss of understanding of whole ranges of phenomena that are there to be noted.”<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the most concentrated recent effort to bring the voice to the fore has been made by Dolar. For Dolar, a search for the voice is quintessentially a search beyond language and meaning,<sup>11</sup> and in this spirit, this paper will try to take that voice before signification further, in a more detailed examination of vocalisation, vocalisation as the fleshiest encounter with the voice.

The presence of violence politically, is a force behind emancipation in the first place, so I preserve my optimism in the people despite this somewhat existentially depressing argument. Also, I will stick fervently to the body as it is the perfect access point to studying violence because violence is a sensory experience, it is physically intimate. Violence is a transgression of integrity on the body, extended or tangible. Violence gives us unique access to the experience of living in the body as it makes us aware of our embodiedness in a very specific way through a transgression of integrity. Repeated violation can have a numbing effect, we become desensitized to it. How one experiences violence on the body is subjective but it still seems possible to be re-sensitized through conceptual and physical awareness. By analyzing the experience of being in a body with vocalising and hearing potential, we also get a

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<sup>11</sup> Samuels, D. W., Meintjes, L., Ochoa, A. M., & Porcello, T. (2010). Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology. *Annual Reviews*, 39: 329–345.

unique access point to violence present in intersubjective interaction. The physical experience of both witnessing and producing vocalisation gives us an access point to conceptualising violence. Vice versa, thinking upon and thereby feeling violence, sensitizes us to the experience of the body and its corresponding intelligence, which has, as previously mentioned, been largely avoided in philosophy. Finally, This paper will also focus on violence partly because of the brevity of the thesis does not allow for a discussion of emancipation and abolition as of yet, and partly because intuitively it feels like the medium of writing in this self-pleasuring, dialogue-esque symposium model, carries some similar violence in its ethics of relating. The emancipative experience is more easily explained through methods of feeling and hearing rather than conceptual articulation, hence artistic and listening practices, which enable us to feel things we have yet to conceptualize, seem to be more conducive to that exploration of voice.

### ***Roadmap***

This thesis starts with a phenomenology of soundscape, revealing it as earlidless extension of the body, open for the possibility of social interaction and intrusion, vulnerable in its passivity. It looks at the use of sound in the context of the soundscape as an unregulated space. It then goes on to argue for sounds intrusiveness, it's penetrative and manipulative engagement with the body, it's immediacy and urgency, described with an attention to the intimacy of sound in the body than previous examinations of sound have done.

The second part of the thesis focuses on vocalization. It first shows how vocalization operates as sound, commanding the same qualities of sound in the same

soundscape. It then points towards more distinctive features of vocalisation that differentiate it from other sounds present in the soundscape. It describes how vocalisation carries the face within it and also has an intimate connection with the entirety of the body. It describes the uniqueness of vocalisation, its relationship to presence, to eroticism and emotion, extension, to animate experience in general.

The third part analyses the chord of the voice as revealing an ethics of inter-relation that is disturbed by the auto-affective quality of the voice. It describes vocalisation in relationship to space and other. Vocalisation's capacity to take space and to reveal the presence of the self in the space of the other. Through Levinas' it examines how this implicates an ethics of relating in the soundscape based on intrusion. It proposes a situation of consensual violence, establishing a curious conundrum in terms of ethical judgement, while also revealing a possible connection with the establishment of culture.

If vocalization were the ball, then the field would be the soundscape on which the political game of presenting oneself and interacting in world is played. It would be as if we are all playing our own games on ourselves on our own fields and through vocalisation, amongst other interactions, we discover we can play on other people's fields but the disruption in this metaphor, is one would assume that we thereby play with the other, but because of the chord of vocalization and its false presence, we are still playing with ourselves on our own field whilst still being sonically and thereby physically present on the field of the other.

I will start by describing some of the features of the fields, the soundscapes, through an analysis of the ear. What is shown is there is a vulnerability in the



soundscape due to a lack of ear lids, making hearing particularly more vulnerable than sight, the culturally dominant mode of describing experience. Vulnerability offers both positive and negative possibilities and one of them is violence. Vocalisation's penetrative nature results in intrusion, coupled with a desire to belong, a matrix of seemingly violent interactions start to appear to be present in the soundscape.

### *Definitions*

In this paper, when I refer to vocalisation, I refer to vocalisation precisely, previous to verbal language, meaning or signification, emotion, voicing and any possible interpretation such as gender performances or accents. This is crucial to the distinct nature of the argument. This is a vocalisation prior to language, already containing the structure of the body and face, so it is not neutral and that is why it requires more detailed enquiry, removed from its association with voice or any other significance we give to the vocal experience.

Few texts make a distinction between vocalisation and voice but in this thesis I will do so for these reasons. Thomaidis and Macphearson say, "The voice does not exist." I would not go as far as to deny its existence, it is a phenomenon but what they distinguish is that it is a phenomenon but it does not exist in the flesh, it is a disembodied experience, it is connected to what to the experience of being a 'sayer' in the world, purpose and external product or legacy of the self. I believe the voice is more distant from us, but nevertheless to have one is very important to us, even though a very prevalent desire in our lives, it remains disembodied and permanent whilst vocalization is embodied and impermanent. Vocalisation is the unique shape

and presence of the face sonically manifested outside of the self in chord with the self. The experience of vocalisation and voice are intertwined but the subject of voice is more mysterious than the fleshiness of vocalisation and implies more content than vocalisation. Hence, I make a clear preference to talk of vocalisation here, to help the reader really strip the voice back to a sonic production of the body. In terms of contextualizing vocalisation in any previous metaphysics of ontology of voice however, there has to be some recognition of inter-changeability of the terms in the literature. I have yet to read a text that purely focuses on vocalisation as distinct from voicing. Hence, if it is the sonic voice being referred to in a quote I will indicate such by adding [vocalisation] and if not I will leave it. As an added caveat, although vocalisation does not necessarily have to be meaningful, take sneezing for example, or contentful in terms of speech, vocalisation is never neutral, as it always contains the face (and a vision of the body) within it. It presents the presence and internal shape of a unique body partially revealed externally.

This paper further refers to violence. It is not a revelation that vocalisation can carry content that is easily recognizable as violent. For example, if I were to shout at a dog, without even saying what I am shouting, we can get a sense that the brutality insinuated in the 'shout' over the 'call' for example. The potential language used, whether comprehensible to the dog or not, the potential emotion that is being transmitted in the shout, such as anger, could all point towards violence. However, what I am arguing is that stripped of all these meanings, vocalisation precisely, has an intrusive nature and that this intrusive nature, coupled with an awareness of the vulnerable soundscape and the chord of the voice, points towards a relationship of

violence between self and other and a code of conduct of consent in the ethics of relating.

## Section 1: Phenomenology of Sound and Soundscape

### *1a Soundscape*

The soundscape is the bodily extension made possible by experience of hearing, its nature is a phenomenology of hearing. So as to understand the soundscape, we first have to reorient ourselves towards the world of sound. Any attention given to the soundscape delves into the metaphysical tradition's auditory history. As Don Ihde notes: "The inattention to the sounding of things has led to the gradual loss of understanding of whole ranges of phenomena that are there to be noted."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, to explore such phenomena one has to become better acquainted with the structure of the ear, the entire hearing mechanism, the body as a hearing body and its relevant phenomenological features and interactive possibilities.

There is an empirical bias towards visually accumulated data over auditory. Ihde cites this back to Heraclitus in his statement, "Eyes are more accurate witnesses than ears." This sentiment seems to have been maintained to the point that the eye has been given predominance in all sciences as a means of empirically examining the nature of things.<sup>13</sup> Although Ihde goes on to note that, "Experientially it is not at all obvious that eyes are more discriminating than ears."<sup>14</sup> Features of auditory life are

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<sup>12</sup> Ihde, D. (2007a). In Praise of Sound. In *Don Ihde, Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*. New York: State University of New York Press: 13

<sup>13</sup> Ibid: 7

<sup>14</sup> Ibid: 7

not as fully addressed as visual life, we have considerably less vocabulary to describe auditory experience than we do visual and we tend to give greater credibility to visual stimuli or data, over auditory, grounding our references to the world, most of our “metaphors ... in visually oriented epistemologies.”<sup>15 16</sup>

Like all sensory experiences, hearing is a subjective experience. Sensitivities differ so all soundscapes differ but there are some more or less consistent features, that are distinctive from that of sight and offer a significantly different experience of the world. The soundscape is in part a protective sensory experience. Like an auditory halo, it is all surrounding and its shape is unrestricted. Its 360-degree is distinct from the forward directionality of the eye as there is no hearing blind spot. The soundscape can make us feel safer because of its 360-degree scope, it can travel around corners and even pass through walls. If a bicycle is coming up behind me, my body can still respond by moving out of the way when my ear hears the bicycle bell ring. This is one example of how the ear can be protective.

Another feature that we gain in the sound world that we don't have in the seeing world, is eavesdropping. It is the way that ears can be intrusive. Eavesdropping could be used as an act of self-defence, enabling the body to prepare itself for any kind of unwanted transgression. Eavesdropping further highlights how sound gives us the ability to see through walls and round corners, it is not limited by material barriers. Similarly, listening also gives us an ability to sense more

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<sup>15</sup> Schneider, D. (2005). A Personal Experience of Unfolding Self through Singing. *Subtle Energies & Energy Medicine*, 16(3): 221.

<sup>16</sup> Rodgers, T. (2010). *Synthesizing Sound: Metaphor in Audio-Technical Discourse and Synthesis History* (Ph.D. Thesis). McGill University, Montreal.

expansively than sight, the act of hearing does not create edges upon the world, one might say it reveals the world as edgeless.<sup>17</sup>

It is difficult to capture in language the broader sensory nature of sonic experience. The world of hearing does not necessarily indicate touch but how one experiences sound is very tactile. This speaks to a broader problem of the restriction within the five or six senses. To really capture sound experiences, ideally one would rapidly expand what constitutes a sense and as a starting point at least assume touch, and feeling the touch of sound as imbedded in the sensory experience of hearing.

The hearing mechanism is also protective in the way it creates the possibility for echolocation. Ihde further notes the denial of a quality in the metaphysical tradition of spatiality in listening.<sup>18</sup> He discusses echolocation as an experience that reveals the complex attribute that space has within auditory experience. The soundscape is used as a means of orientation. Echolocation is a way one may feel in the world when what appears, through sight, to be an empty space, is compressed in the form of sound, up against our body in a way that physical objects are not.<sup>19</sup> I am sitting in the middle of a football pitch and I feel like I have space surrounding me but when I close my eyes I can hear that I am intimately surrounded and engulfed with sound.

Sound in this way is received more broadly than just hearing, it is also experienced as a kind of touch, one can feel texture, fricative surfaces for which I can

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<sup>17</sup> Casey, E. S. (2008). Edges in the In-Between. *PhaenEx*, 2: 1-13.

<sup>18</sup> Ihde, D. (2007b). The Shapes of Sound. In *Don Ihde, Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*. New York: State University of New York Press: 59

<sup>19</sup> Ihde, D. (2007c). The Auditory Field. In *Don Ihde, Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*. New York: State University of New York Press: 76

auditorily locate and manoeuvre myself, sensing my body as contained in, rubbing up against and wading within sound. This feeling of locating oneself in a sense of fullness rather than emptiness, in sensuality or as Kierkegaard may have referred to, the musical dimension, helps provide a sense of subjectivity because one can feel oneself in position of something greater than oneself, as a sensual being, navigating a way through the world.<sup>20</sup> As the ear takes in this all this information captured in a sensory fullness of the soundscape, it implies a possible link between consumption of sound and its output. The vocalisation, always on an exhalation, can then be imagined as a response to the inhalation containing and defined by sensory inspiration.

A vocalisation in itself is echolocative as it makes a claim or marks a territory over what we experience in something like a Kierkegaardian musical dimension, “The dimension ... indicated as ‘the sensual’, something which can and should only be expressed in its immediacy.”<sup>21</sup> Vocalisation can support this form of spatiality and presentation of one self in its echolocative quality it has a sound. For, example, Team Bat, a team of Blind cyclists led by Daniel Kisch in the USA, use the clicking of their tongues to navigate through the dark whilst mountain biking. This further reveal echolocation as a multi-sense that combines experience of hearing and seeing, spatiality and touch.<sup>22</sup> What is further captured by Kierkegaard, is the immediacy in which we receive sound, as a transient burst of presence. It is this immediacy that makes it possible for the cyclists to have an ongoing means of orientation.

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<sup>20</sup> This does not mean that sound does not affect us in outerspace, there are still vibrations upon the body it just moves slower.

<sup>21</sup> Kierkegaard in Cobussen, M. (2012). “What Is Music?” Thinking Sounds. Retrieved from <https://cobussen.com/teaching/what-is-music/>

<sup>22</sup> Jarret, C. (2014). Psychology: How many senses do we have. *BBC*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20141118-how-many-senses-do-you-have>

I vocalise because I can. I am part of and I witness and respond to, by locating myself, articulating my “space” and this is one way vocalisation is linked so closely to affirmation of presence and marking of territory, which I shall come on to later. Mutedness or prevention of vocalisation, does not inhibit your capacity to express, but it inhibits the capacity to make a verbal trace in this sensual dimension. It would be like the experience of someone who was not able to leave a footprint as a marker of the existence/past or future presence of something.<sup>23</sup> Or Hegel’s example of the boy skipping a stone across the water, it’s a foundational marker that demonstrates our agency, our impact, contrasted to the mute experience. This material transformation is essential to an understanding of voice, it is textural, it transforms, it has the capacity to alter and manipulate the space/world around oneself and the conception of oneself in it.<sup>24</sup>

Political life is also intimately linked with movement (maybe some source recommendation) and soundscape, like any other landscape, offers a pathway for that movement, this could be analogous to the small toy with a contained maze and a ball that rolls through it. The sound has surfaces, which directs the movement of the ball but there is still some space between the surfaces for a variety of flexibility.

These examples help to elucidate how the soundscape, and the sound it in, has similar yet different phenomenology from a landscape, creating the possibility for interactions and reactions such as protection, intrusion, direction, location and

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<sup>23</sup> Walker, A. S., & Tobbell, J. (2015). Lost Voices and Unlived Lives: Exploring Adults’ Experiences of Selective Mutism using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12(4), 453–471.

<sup>24</sup> Kain, P. J. (2005). *Hegel and the Other: A Study of the Phenomenology of Spirit*. New York: State University of New York Press: 72.

orientation always in the context of an immersive body-world experience with a sensory intimacy of hearing and touch combined.

This next section examines the openness of the soundscape due to the quality of earlidlessness, our inability to fully block out sound, which allow the possibility of social interaction and intrusion yet is vulnerable in its passivity. This is to conceptualize the stage upon which sound performs. Vulnerability is not negative per se, it is in vulnerability that connection is made possible. Vulnerability is a crucial line when purposeful, it is a nakedness that allows for expression of the self, when forced it is a stripping, leaving us open to humiliation. The exposure of the self allows for recognition and resonant experiences to be shared most intimately but that exposure is also subject to potential transgression of integrity. The earlidlessness of the ear coupled, the vulnerability of the soundscape that feature entails, also points towards a possible necessity of vulnerability in interaction. However, vulnerability and lack of awareness of our inherent vulnerability can also be taken advantage of and it is through vocalisation that it is perhaps taken advantage of most frequently because of the nudity of the ear, like a socially accepted form of intrusion ingrained in everyday social interaction.

Comprehending the phenomenon of earlidlessness is our doorway into comprehending an ethics of relating. The soundscape has doorways in the form of ears but there are no ear-lids, those doorways are always open. A door however, insinuates that there is a distinctive 'inner' and an 'outer' experience but the experience of the soundscape is better understood as a more fluid and interconnected whole of world and body. If a sound is made present in the vicinity of the ear that is



sensitive enough to pick it up, it will be heard. This makes the experience of noise in the soundscape, harder to avoid, more immediate, a more immersive experience and potentially invasive. The physicality of these features influences the way we interact with other animate creatures by our very physical intimacy with the other. As Ihde describes, one cannot avoid being a witness to sound, we are drowned in sound rather than bathing in it, as it is a full-body experience.<sup>25</sup>

Earlidlessness may, perhaps mistakenly, imply permanent “up-for-ness” in interaction, or implies consent for someone to interact with you or you them, and ongoing open access to social life. The lack of ear lids could be understood as a lack of defense and a social opening, it is hard to ignore someone or something in your soundscape. In this way, all senses give us the opportunity to experience the Other. The social opening they accommodate essentially contains the opportunity for social life and interaction. The ears and eyes have a particular extension, giving us landscape and soundscape, but unlike the eyes, the features of the ear shape experience in such a way that it leaves an individual’s soundscape unprotected and accessible.

Despite its openness, it is worth bearing in mind that the soundscape is not politically neutral, although perhaps it is less regulated than landscape, there is still a high level of sonic regulation. Whilst living in The Hague, it was incredible how creative the police were with routing protesters out of visible sight and into areas where their chants would be de-amplified in large open spaces or where there was considerable foliage, which baffled and dampened down the noise. Official attempts

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<sup>25</sup> Ihde, D. (2007). *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (2nd ed.). New York: State University of New York Press.

in both Amsterdam and The Hague at controlling street performance and particularly the amplification of music in public space is another example of sonic regulation. The regulation of sound is well depicted in Walter Benjamin's reference to the 1830 July Revolution in Paris, when during a skirmish the city clocks were shot at, "To stop the day." Clocks, like the call to prayer, regulate the activity of the citizens of the city with an aural cue in the chimes and tick-tocks. When that aural cue falls silent it acts to simultaneously deregulate the surrounding area both symbolically and practically.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, sound cannot be entirely regulated. The state, in a broad sense of the word, cannot avoid entirely something making a sound, it cannot prepare for the potential of a sound to disrupt proceedings and this gives sound a unique use in activism as it has this level of disruptive, uncontrollability that can create gaps for alternative voices in spaces where there visibly appear to be none.

Thereby, sound is always playing on the body. The soundscape, is an open, vulnerable, immersive and politicized extension of the hearing body. The next section looks into more detail at the intrusive quality of sound. Over time, we become partially numbed to sound's intrusion but when the spell of disassociation from body-world barrier is broken, when the skin is sensitized, sonic violations can be felt. Unfortunately, sound is an energy that does not disappear only transforms. This means that in the body, it is not something we can rid ourselves of, the imprint of the shouting of our parents are caught in the flesh. How we navigate this depends on how well we are aware of this phenomenon and how well we enact oral self-care,

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<sup>26</sup> Benjamin, W. (1940). On the Concept of History. In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 4 1938-1940*: 389-400.

whilst participating in vocal life. For now, however, the situatedness in sound in the spatiality of soundscape, can be experienced as an un-freedom that makes us somewhat stiffly exposed to intrusive acts of sound whilst also enabling us to act and interact in sonic space and belong part to part of communities of sound makers.

### ***1b Features of sound***

Sound is intrusive which opens up the possibility for vocalisation to be intrusive. Sound is penetrative in the body and in this way as a receiver of sound, one can think of the body as a hearing body. Sound exists by the interaction that sound has upon the body. The hearing mechanism typically refers to the tools of the body specifically working with hearing, such as the ear but more accurately the hearing mechanism extends throughout the whole body, as a receiver of sound both as a sensory combination of touch and music. This is different from the way we experience landscape, made possible by the existence of the eye and the capacity for the eye to see. We do not see an image in our toes but sound vibrations can stimulate us. As Schneider describes, "Suddenly inner and outer and objective and subjective all became one. I was making the sound and the sound was making me. I was sound. I was vibration."<sup>27</sup> Sound is therefore an all body experience in its sensuality. The soundscape extends out of a hearing body, like an auditory halo, the body and its surrounding auditory halo are both one and separate. The soundscape is an experience of the world received within the body, the cavernous spaces and surfaces of the body are a sound-box for the vibrations of the world, received through the hearing mechanism. This points towards the potentiality that as the whole body

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<sup>27</sup> Schneider, D. (2005). A Personal Experience of Unfolding Self through Singing. *Subtle Energies & Energy Medicine*, 16(3): 222

receives sound, as sound is material and comes in contact with a material body, the question arises of what kind of impact sound has upon the body. There is probably that is not commonly explored on this particularly topic, although sound the therapeutic use of sound does point to a greater focus on such relations, there is an implication that the whole body can be manipulated by the sound it receives.

To examine sound as manipulative, one again has to think of sound as a penetrative touch, an intrusive touch that affects the kinetics of a material. However, the soundscape is a subjective experience. There are coherent physical features based on creative foundations and the functional role of sound in the universe. The soundscape has density and the experience of sound is in the movement, in the fluctuations and events that are part of existence. We cannot escape sound even if we are not hearing beings because it is present physically, independent of us in the form of vibration. Even though deafened to it, vibration is still functionally in relationship with the body, any vibrations felt through or within the body have an impact, as they create movement and distortion. Most experience we cannot hear or sense but we still experience it more broadly, any sound present in the soundscape, that is audible enough to be picked up by the ear and even sounds that are not audible, are in effect upon the body in the form of vibrations. Ihde notes how he is, "Auditorily immersed and penetrated as sound "physically" invades [his] own body."<sup>28</sup> In reference to Bekesy's experiments of hearing in 1960, Ihde comments on the experience of the soundscape as embodied yet exceeding the limits of the physical body. To have the world act upon us through hearing in correspondence with its extension of the body,

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<sup>28</sup> Ihde, D. (2007c). The Auditory Field. In *Don Ihde, Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*. New York: State University of New York Press: 79

means that sound always has a force upon the body. This is the idea behind sound therapy. Sound acts upon and shapes mucus, muscle and soft tissue by performing a corporeal transformation in the body. Every hearing animate body has a soundscape, their own personal world of sound experience, both shaped by its embodiedness and shaping of the embodied experience, both acted upon and acting. Therefore, sound in the body is manipulating, it physically transforms the body, it moves, tweaks and alters the flesh, transforming the density of the muscle, the tension, the quality and movement of liquid and mucus. It is physically intimate with the fleshiness of the body.

A further quality of sound crucial to later comprehending is the intrusive nature of vocalisation, its unavoidability and its ability to literally grab the attention of the other. Its sonic hands lure us to turn towards us and, in the context of vocalisation, forces the face of the other to face us. Sound therefore, presents a more immediate and urgent experience than a visually perceived presence. It can be experienced without warning and it is fleeting. Fisher-Lichte calls this a state or permanent impermanence, reflected in Yo-Yo Ma's thoughts on music, as an identification and location of something in time, in a certain space with a certain type of energy, and in this case transfused through the experience of the vocalizing being.<sup>29</sup> Thomaidis and Macphearson suggest that Barthes "grain of the voice" implies that the aural space is transitional whilst "the grain might be permanent." However, this permanence is a bit permanent. Permanent impermanence of vocality is a simpler explanation. The body is in a constant state of flux by its very organism

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<sup>29</sup> Walter, M. (2005). Interview with Yoyo Ma, Part 1 - CCTV News [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBOUoZPfxS0>

and this means that vocalisations will never be the same twice. They are temporary in that they are unrepeatable, which gives them a certain urgency, like going to see a play versus a movie. There is an urgency for the theatre-goer to capture the moment as it will never be repeated in exactly the same way. At the same time, the experience of Roland Barthes' "grain" is a reference to the lineage of one vocalisation always shaping and forming the space for the production of the next, meaning that as long as there is breath, every vocalisation one emits is always in relationship with the previous one and the potential for the next vocalisation. The urgency is also manifested from the permanent impermanence as its impermanence makes it also unpredictable and roguish. The immediacy that is implied in its unpredictability in a social context also contributes to the unavoidability of sound's presence in the soundscape, coupled with its "grabbing" quality, its ability to seek and trap attention.

To round off this section, the soundscape is an extension of the body, it is a subjective experience that runs like a 360-degree halo around the listener. The features of the ear and hearing mechanism mean that the soundscape, although not entirely, has an openness that leads it open to potential vulnerability in the way that sight does not. In this way, sound is a fully penetrative experience in the way that vibrations manipulate physically the body, the water the tissue etc. The soundscape can be actively penetrated by the other, making it an intrusion into the body in sonic form, like a sonic weapon so to speak, distanced from the user but still an invasion of the extended body of the other, an invisible intrusion in historically frequent acts of sound-making. This becomes more intimate when we introduce vocalisation, as

vocalisation is an extension of the body also, the features of the soundscape offer up the potential for the extended body of the other, through sound, to invisibly invade.

## Section 2: Phenomenology of Vocalization

### *2a Vocalisation as Sound in Soundscape*

The face and the vocal experience are intimately linked. When a vocalisation is emitted, by the time it is released from the vocal chords the sound one would hear, if you could isolate that structure, would be akin to blowing through a piece of grass. It is not a neutral vibration, it has pitch and intensity, perhaps captures an echo of the body but it is also relatively indistinguishable from one piece of grass to the other. However, by the time the vocal force (exhalation, vibration, whole bodily preparation) reaches the face and the whole facial cavity of the mask, tongue, teeth, hard and soft pallet, mucus, membranes, nasal passages and so forth, our unique vocalization is formed and emitted, both unique in its immediate emission, as no vocalisation is the same twice due to the organic transforming state of the body, and unique to us as an individual body, shape and face in the world. It is commonly taught in formal singing training that to sing into the mask captures the full potential, the full resonance of the vocal. The more the fullness of the mask is captured in the vocalisation, the more self is revealed outside, this also implies there is an intensity of revealing but there is always some shadow of the face. Therefore, vocalization is the sonic capturing of the inverted face outside of the body but also heard within the face.

There are two ways that vocalisation carries somewhat more content than face. The first one, stems from its intimacy with the body in movement of sound, and in its lack of fixedness and two-dimensionality. Secondly, it is the fact that vocalisation is sonic, and this creates a sonic excess. Levinas' assures us that the face commands without need for being heard sonically, however, by de-muting the face,



the sonic repercussion distorts his ethics. I will briefly summarise vocalisation's relation to the intensity of the body before describing the core of my opposition to Levinas' in the transgression of the face on the body of the other in the form of a sonic vocalisation.

In the most physical sense there is no vocalization without the face. However, unlike face, vocalization, carries with it the full shape of the body. It is this quality that the vocal has over the face, that gives us a primary sense of potential access to the internal experience of the other, that is not just a performance of consciousness, but rather it maintains the possibility of inter-relating beyond visual recognition. However, the event of recognition<sup>30</sup> in the meeting of two faces, is also a barrier, a unique vision of the other also makes reductive the vocal's uniqueness, it neutralises the vocal to become simply a sonic performance of the external face rather than the three dimensionality of the inner walls and activity of the body that capture vocalization's unique shape and intensity.

Vocalisation carries with it a face that is also a sonic intrusion on the body. I will now offer two examples to start the implications these features have for vocalization. While I am writing in an art gallery, a man walks in, he fills the space with his voice in an otherwise silent environment, making his presence known without addressing the four of us quietly working. This is an intrusive act. In this case, it is not that he is specifically vocalizing, he could have come in playing music off his phone or banging a drum, (however, vocalization does add a unique presence, (which described further in the second example), the overall consequence for me is I

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<sup>30</sup> Recognition is also in a choice to actively reject the other as it is a choice not to recognize implying there is always recognition.

cannot avoid this man, I am forced to hear his sound, even if the vocalization is not visibly directed towards me, it is invisibly an assertion of territory and domination of the space by the man, making his presence known. "It is a singing that is both directional and encompassing, such that I may be (auditorily and attentionally) immersed in the other's presence."<sup>31</sup> Another example is I am currently in an executive office, all the doors are open whilst people are on conference calls, this is supposed to symbolise that there is a level of transparency to their operations but the experience of being in it feels more like being in a sonic panopticon, sound has eyes because the voice is also face. The employees vocalise to show that they are here, present and working in the space. It is not unnoticeable that the more senior executives' vocalisations are louder and carry particularly far, helped by the amplification of their office spaces. In this way vocalization as a simple sound making process is being used as means of commanding space and asserting presence. I cannot see the face of the executives but I get a sense even at the other end of the corridor that these men watch me. In this way the voice is also the face, particularly the male vocalisation, which owns the most watching power.

Although vocalisation is face, to completely estrange it from the shape of the body is also a little too drastic, it is more than face. However subtle, the vocal also carries the entire intensity, the activation of the individual internal chamber of the body in it, meaning that a sense of individuality beyond face, in that minute differentiation between grass-like vocalisations, enacted in the womb of the vocal chords, but in carried into full articulation through the mask, can be heard even if not

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<sup>31</sup> Ihde, D. (2007c). *The Auditory Field*. In *Don Ihde, Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*. New York: State University of New York Press: 78

seen. In other words, the minute possibility of individuality is presented in the vocal irrespective of face. One of the most vivid examples of this was presented to me in my experience of VocaliD, the Human Voice Bank. Individuals with severe vocal impediments predominantly due to degenerative diseases were offered unique computer generated voices. Any sound they could emit, captured a shape of their own vocalisation and was recorded as a basis on which to make up a new individual voice. They inserted a combination of the internal shape of any remaining vocalisation of the donee with the speech filled vocalisations of the donor and thereby created a computer-generated voice that blended one body shape in contact with another body shape to create a new shape from which a unique vocalisation that was as close as possible to the donee's as possible.

Levinas' face is stripped of from, it is naked. This move enables Levinas to create a universality in his theory of the face but this denuding comes a problem that not directly relevant to my thesis but definitely relevant if one was to go one and write a politics of vocalisation, with the stripping is also neutralizes the face, removing the role of the individual it generalizes experience between people's whose face might very well change their relationship to violence. Visker, critiques that it fails to recognize the potential distress of being decontextualized. The external face has a hierarchical politics gender and colour and other visual identifications, pronounced demarcations that differentiate the intensity of which individuals experience violence over time, all caught up in a politics of face that the vocal cannot fully remove itself from. However, the vocal does have access to the internal body, pink flesh, grey bone, blood that bleeds red, white mucus, translucent saliva, in a way the face does not, and so has contained in it a somewhat more emancipatory

vision of society that the face could never offer. This may be why singing is so integral to activism, the civil rights movement being a particularly vibrant depiction of the potential of the vocal to reveal an alternative way of living together, in modern western political history. It gets further complexity still. The vocal emission typically is also false. True resonance has a universality that ties all human and animal voices together. This is why the vocal chords are biologically so well protected, the true vocal chords, the home of our unique resonance, the house of chaos in the vibrato, a utopic self-presence and spiritual communion (possibly universal), this vibration is protected by the false vocal chords, the world, which we use in the majority of vocal interaction, biologically this bridges with false presence in interaction.

Vocalisation operates in a soundscape that is open, vulnerable and unprotected due to the lack of ear lids protecting the soundscape. Furthermore, as a sound, vocalization is penetrative and manipulative of the flesh. However, vocalisation has other distinctive features to the variety of sounds in the soundscape.

Vocalisation is first and foremost a sound, it has the same intrusive, immediacy that was previously mentioned as other sounds. The distinctive feature of vocalization is its enacting of the face sonically. To fulfil a definition of vocalisation, one must recognize the inversion of the internal body that takes place, the internal shape of the vocal mechanism reflected outward. Otherwise the sound of someone's distinctive shoes walking across the corridor, the experience of knowing who is coming around the corner based on the sound of their footstep, would also be a vocalization. These sonic markers are interesting to examine however as they do highlight the ambiguity of presence in vocalization, or vocal trickery, also relevant to

the ambiguity of presence in the vocal experience. Like vocalization, the weightedness of a footstep can imply or indicate a potential shape of the body, such as heaviness or in the case of some shoe stereotypes, such as high heels. In the same way vocalization can be deceiving, the 'taboo voice' for example refers to the vocalisation that presents itself as different than the visual presentation of gender, so a male presentation sounding female and vice versa. Vocal can also be tricky, in the case of voice actors and also in witnessing a ventriloquist which is an active disassociation of the vocal and face. In the previous case, the example of vocal trickery or taking on voices, shows how the vocal can also be distanced from face, face and vocalization are somewhat disconnected.

In contrast, the manipulative potential of the vocalisation, the malleability of it also enables someone to reveal themselves in a different identifications. Chris Chapman's piece on Voice and Identity in 2016, was a feature film about two trans people who took speech and language classes to re-mould their vocalisations to better fit with their gender. In this case the face and vocal are brought into closeness. Both of these examples show the malleability and fluidity in vocalisation that is connected to face but also had a looseness to it that creates space for fluidity in identification and also in deception, it can create some suspicion towards the vocal which also contributes to an experience of false presence, of the individual not really revealed in the reception of the vocal experience.

All vocalisations indicate the presence of a body at the end of it, distinguishing them from technologically produced vocalisations. Finer does not distinguish voice-vocalization as markedly as I do but still there is a similar

conclusion in that embodied and disembodied experience, encountered in harmony is a hall-mark of vocal experience. She says the voice “carries a body and no body simultaneously: existing as vibrations through space and simultaneously as the aural promise of a somebody.”<sup>32</sup> This aural promise is the promise that we can get a long in our shared somebodiedness. This somebodiness Simone De Beauvoir would say always “implies strictly that there exists a body which is at one a material thing in the world and a point of view towards the world.”<sup>33</sup> This shows how vocalization is never neutral, at the same time, it is also false to think we without doubt can identify any features of someone’s being through vocalization or attribute to any single character, to any particular speaking body. Such an array of possible vocalisations can be emitted from one body, voice actors demonstrate this most profoundly. So this means that vocalization always reveals a somebodiness and although that somebodiness is never neutral it is also never distinctive or reliable. Therefore, when we say vocalization always points to a presence, it again affirms that vocalization before language, accent, pitch, intonation etc. has its own unique animate quality in the very fact it is embodied and thereby can also be many vocalisations, but not anyone and not no one.

This human animal presence at the end of a vocalization entails emotive, sensuality, connection and recognition, it is very physical and capturing both for the self and in the context of others. The erotic and emotive nature of vocalization are

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<sup>32</sup> Finer, E. (2015). *Strange Objects/Strange Properties: Female audibility and the acoustic stage prop.* In *Voice Studies: Critical Approaches to Process, Performance and Experience*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge: 178.

<sup>33</sup> Cavarero, A. (2005). *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

connected to the way vocalization is from the flesh. This is sensory on multiple levels in terms of sound, texture, feeling and even the visual of the vocal chords reflecting the same shapes as the vagina.<sup>34</sup> It is also erotic in the experience of vocalization with the other. In the performance art piece, *Real's Fiction* by Benjamin Kamino, groups of people sing in the presence of each other in semitones. The audience could join the piece. In the close proximity of vocalising with the other, captured in the tension of the semitone, a dance ensued. It felt as if the vocalisations were magnetised towards each other, similar to the energy in a kiss but then would also repel each other at certain points, if the ear registered a discordance, that pulled apart the erotic tension of the semitone. This isolated intersubjective interaction in the piece, partially encapsulates the force of the face in vocalisation as commanding the presence of the other, whilst at the same time the self-conscious pull back, a repulsion that brings the vocalisation back into an auto-affective relationship with the self. This makes the bond between self and other is fulfilling yet fleeting, capturing the imagination of the possibility of presence with the other in vocalisation, whilst also capturing the sense of loss that comes with the evasiveness of that presence.<sup>35</sup>

The vocal experience is also self-pleasuring. The embodied physicality of vocalizing and its unique arrangement within the body adds a level of connectivity that is not just that my body is penetrated by your sound but also is sensual, emotive and is a personally erotic experience, we like to vocalise, it feels nice in the body. In the hiccups scene from Plato's symposium Aristophanes says "it makes me wonder

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<sup>34</sup> The erotic of the vocalization is very much connected to femininity, partly because the most sensitive part of the vocal mechanism reflected twice in the female body.

<sup>35</sup> Kamino, B. (June 1<sup>st</sup> 2010: 22:00). *Real's Fiction* [Dance Performance]. Access content on <https://www.atd.ahk.nl/en/das-graduate-school/das-master-presentations/das-choreography/benjamin-kamino/>

whether it is the well-ordered part of my body that wants the kind of noises and tickles that make up a sneeze. Aristophanes comments on the pleasure of vocalising in and of itself. In the context of their discussion about love and the erotic, it also references the sensuality of vocalizing together auto-affectively but as part of a vocal orgy, which is definitely an amusing take on *The Symposium* but it is also the nature of debate itself, where each individual is given the opportunity to luxuriate over the sound of their own vocalisation in the presence of others but not in direct relationship to them.

Furthermore, vocalisation, is an embodied experience of sound making that is not necessarily connected to signification. When we vocalise an extensive range of physical procedures take place for a sound to be emitted. Again the example of the hiccup, of which both the cure and cause and or purpose, still remain largely a mystery, is one that distinctly shows that vocalization is not necessarily connected to meaning making, it is a task of the body. If we think of vocalization as a bodily function it helps us zoom in on the way that vocalization contributes to the transformation and flux of the bodily processes. The body is in a state of constant transformation, being predominantly liquid in nature and made up of manipulative tissues. Every time we vocalise we transform the shape of our own vocal cavity. This is how we can learn to sing, to speak to form vocal sound, by shaping and training the muscles to interact with a certain order but also to add tension, density and flexibility to minute musculature. This transformative nature means that we are a plurality of vocalisation, in that every vocalisation is unique, and that every vocalisation we make shapes the next vocalisation, add the influence of other vocalisations in the soundscape that also transform the vocal, what we hear affects



how we speak, we can hear that the vocalisations are related. Essentially, each vocalisation gives birth to a new vocalisation that is both shaped by the previous but also takes inspiration from the vocalisation of the other and other sound in the soundscape. This is also reflected in the breath, the inspiration being the breath coming in from the external, and the expiration containing the possibility for vocalization. In this we see how vocalisation has a uniquely plural, fluid, reproductive and quality that is also in constant manipulation of the body reflecting on the internal body and penetrative and manipulative of body of the other through the passage of the ear.

Vocalization is unique and also emotive. It is very much connected to the fluidity of being and transformation of the self. One vocalization is never like the next as each vocalization manipulates the cavernous vocal mechanism, the body, and prepares it for the shape of the next vocalisation. This also why water and vocalization may be very connected both mythologically but also Eidsheim's analysis of Snapper's singing underwater performance art describes how there is a belief that water represents extreme emotion. Emotions flow in the body, are in flux and the sound emitted from vocalization affects the movement of that water in the body making it a unique access point to work with and explore emotion. Tears are perhaps the clearest experience of water being emotional in substance but as Vestinavesti notes also common metaphors indicate a more symbolic outlook such as being "flooded" with emotion, "storms" of rage etc.<sup>36</sup> Vocalisation transforms the body as it manipulates water, which manipulates tissue, muscles texture and surface. It is

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<sup>36</sup> In my own voice finding method I also discovered a very vibrant connection between ocean and voice, surrendering to the teachings of the water brought up a natural impulse to sing.

further unique to the individual, to the shape of the self, so it carries a unique presence asserting the presence of the self and other in the space. Its unfolding uniqueness, also it is impossible to synthesise in its entirety, again pointing to the fleshy presence of somebodyness.

When I speak of intrusion, I hope it is now captured that sound is not just intrusive in auditory nature but it is intrusive in a penetrative sense, it physically invades the body. However, despite this physicality in the body, the intrusive nature of vocalisation does not necessarily entail violence. Thus far all I have aimed to demonstrate is that vocalization is a more penetrative experience than sometimes perceived to be. Some would argue, particularly those working in healing and sound work, that sound can be caught in the body. The flesh has memory in the body that leads to trauma, sometimes this can even pass down through the mother. If this were the case, intrusion could be explicitly examined as a physical trauma on the body, however, this is difficult to prove and therefore from penetration alone one cannot connect intrusion with violence.

Intersubjectivity contains within some interactions that appear to link intrusion with violence. Take the example of the man in the museum, it is an intentional act of disrupting the soundscape of the other and the various soundscapes present in the space, when he imposes his vocalization on all the bodies present in the space, he is un-avoidable and penetrating of the physical body. However, this alone cannot connect the intrusiveness of vocalisation with violence, as a casual conversation with a friend for example, is not necessarily violent.

Therefore, we cannot say that intrusion is de facto violent, dominating perhaps but that is not violent.

The next section will argue that the link to violence stems from a deception and disappointment in the quality of intersubjective interaction. We have social means of presenting our consent for the vocalizer to enter the soundscape of the self. Many vocalisations take place outside of any kind of consenting relationship, such as the man in the museum and in many vocal interactions it visibly appears that the self is invited into the soundscape of the other by the construct of the conversational experience. However, although intrusiveness does not de facto lead to violence, I will now put forward another argument that points towards how examining vocalization in intersubjective interaction and with an understanding of intrusion coupled with the nature of vocalization in chord allows us to envision an ethics of relating that goes beyond sonic intrusion, a pattern of consensual violence in day to day interaction.

Vocalisation's intrusive qualities, its grab-hold-ness, the way it enables us to take space, even though this seems rather unpleasant, it does not necessarily entail violence. The violence stems from the obligation to respond, even to the back of someone's head, that comes from the inter-subjectivity contained in the chord of vocalisation and its closeness to face. This section will argue that there is consensual violence almost always present in the way that we vocally interact with the other. It is not vocality in and of itself that is violent, vocalisation is still a social opening and there is possibility for breaking out of such tendencies towards violence, however,

the ongoing use of disassociated monologues that visibly appear to be intersubjective interactions but are more akin to self-pleasuring, are integral to an ethics of relating.

## Section 3: Ethics of Vocalisation

### *3a Vocalisation is a chord*

Vocalisation is experienced in a chord. When we vocalise we hear the vocalisation inside our head simultaneously with the vocalization present in the world. Merleau-Ponty describes this as a “primordial unity” an “indistinction between the act of speaking and the act of hearing.”<sup>37</sup> This connects the internal experience only present to the self with the external experience of self, present only to the other, we cannot hear the two parts individually, but we get a unique sense of the two experiences in harmony. In the moment of vocalization our sound is both intimate and foreign, we hear them as a chord, so conjoined that it almost presents itself to us as one but is still distinctly two notes.

The chord makes vocalisation reflective, the interior world is mirrored, representationally and thereby not entirely, in the exterior, but unlike a mirror, the ripples of sound extend out in all directions, mirroring and injecting the world sonically back into the body. This is also captured in Derrida in auto-affection “which is due to the circuit between the voice and ear of a subject who hears himself speak.”<sup>38</sup> The experience of the echo is a very vivid experience of this because it split the chord by reflecting it off a surface so we receive the vocalisation only outside of the body back towards us. In the experience of the echo, we hear the walls of soundscape, coming into contact with the walls of the face, reflecting our own vocalisation back to us in a similar yet distorted way. A fully subjective experience of vocalisation is not possible because it is always mediated in some form. It is one of

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<sup>37</sup> Merleau-Ponty, M. (2007a). The Child's Relations with Others. In *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*: 163.

<sup>38</sup> Cavarero, A. (2005). *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: 221

the unique experiences of hearing our voices, and the only experience before the recording of voice was possible, which provides a distinctly uncanny yet comforting experience. It is also uncanny in that it is the closest we get to hearing the vocalization outside of oneself, and comforting in that we like the sound of our own voice, it gives us a sense of situatedness in the world as it provides immediate feedback that we are also in this world.

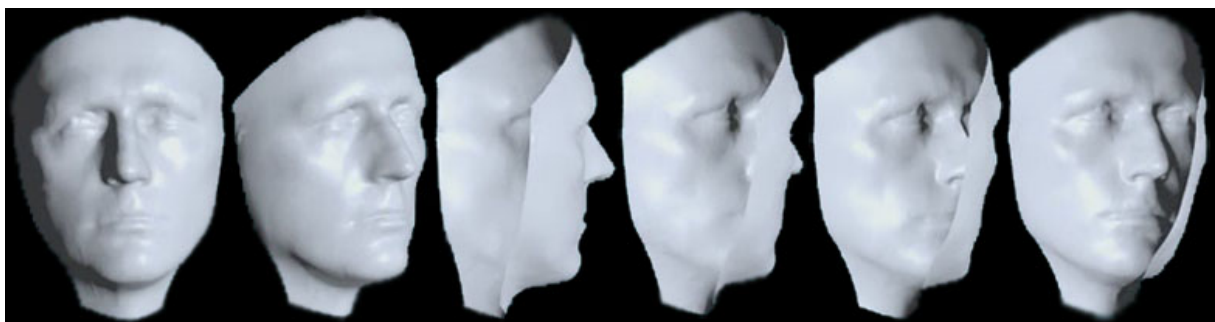
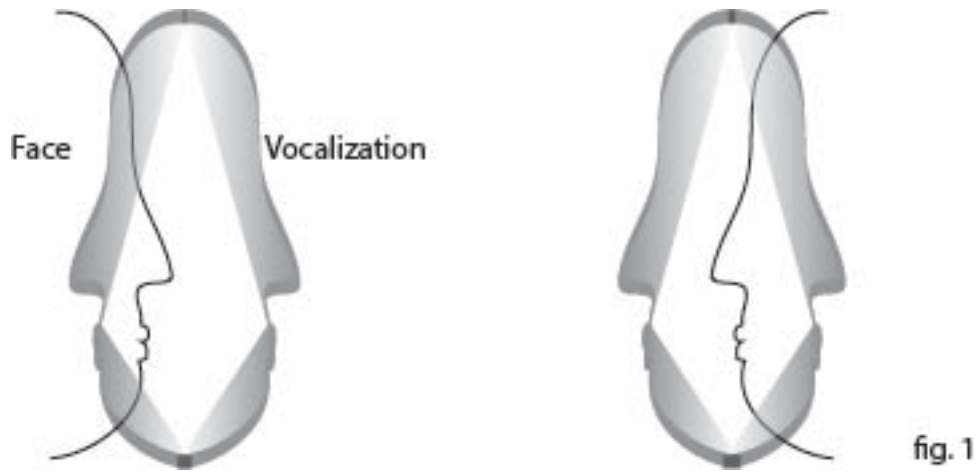
The experience of chord, one would hope, leads to a social opportunity, which is a kind of promise of vocalisation and the social openness of the soundscape. So as hearing one's own vocalisation happens in a chord, for an individual with vocalising capability, vocalization means chord and chord implies the possibility for intersubjective interaction. Vocalisation thereby in and of itself, in its chord-likeness already appears to contain social potential. The connecting of the inner and outer world together, sets us up to feel the possibility of community through the meeting of the other in the inter-subjective experience. A possibility for actualising a social destiny of the vocal and thereby denoting a sense of belonging to part of a community of sound makers. The hope for belonging to this community is crucial to the experience of vocalisation. However, often it feels as though this sonic potential is not met.

The chord of vocalization can also be experienced antisocially. We can listen to the sound of our own vocalization and that is the sound of the face. This means we have the unique experience of being able to vocalise to oneself constantly, like staging a permanent dialogue with ourselves but visibly appears to be a monologue to the other. When I vocalise it would seem like I present myself in the soundscape of

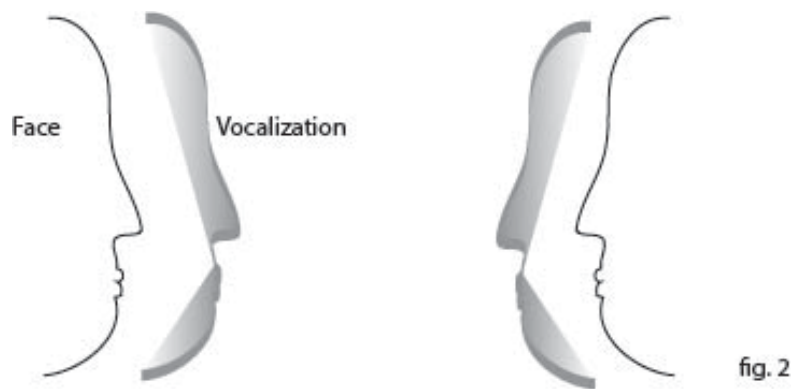
the other whilst at the same time I leave myself in conversation with myself. This seems somewhat asocial but not necessarily violent. I am visibly present to the other physically but I am absent to the other in attention. It enables us to appear social when we are in fact are asocial. It is like going to a dinner party where all the people in the room appear to be talking to each other, when from listening to the content you become aware that they are all talking about entirely different things and not accounting for the vocalisation of the other. This is both a combination, I would argue, of the self being in discussion with the self and, as I will argue later, a desire to claim sonic territory in the space.

For now, if we look at the what happens to the face in the chord, Vocalisation, as previously mentioned, captures the face sonically. If we contextualize this in the chord of vocalisation, it creates ambiguity as to the directionality of the face presented in vocalization. When someone vocalises visibly towards me, I cannot be sure which way the face, sonically captured in vocalization, is facing. It is unclear if the other is just talking to themselves or to me or are half in, half out, or are rotating (see figures below). I cannot argue for sure whether the face rotates or is fixed towards the self. I want to believe that vocalisation is rotational simultaneously concave and convex, a sonic shape of the face outside of the body but always in relationship and extension to it, because that entails at least some sociality. It seems unlikely that it is locked outside of the body in permanent response to the command of the face of the other because the fact that each and every vocalisation is heard/felt as sound in the face and the face captured in sonic form outside of the body simultaneously, is more suggestive of the Narcissus' story, where the face is more often or than not, if not always reflected back towards the self. This thesis is

supported further if we think about vocalisation as a form of self-pleasure, in the erotic experience of forming vocals and the enjoyment of hearing one's own voice, reflected in the story of Echo and Aristophanes hiccups.







This auto-affective vocalization seems to point towards a social failure, or at least ambiguity of the interaction between self and other, if the self is always talking to the self. The experience furthermore changes drastically when we de-mute or make sonic vocalisation, rarely done in a philosophy of voice. Incorporating sound's intrusive quality on the body into this intersubjective interaction points towards a violent potentiality. The intrusion of the sound of the other on my soundscape, my extended body, is the sonic extension of the body of the other in vocalisation, commanding a piece of my hearing territory, thereby penetrating my body.

Levinas holds that I am not in relationship with the other, I am in relationship with respect for their face. If we add that in a purely auto-affective, or even partially auto-affective interaction, the other's relevance is reduced to a minimum. Yet still the other is affected by the interaction because of the sonic intrusion on their space. When I vocalise, I simultaneously occupy space in the soundscape of the other, which is an extended hearing body and is physically affected by that sonic intrusion.

The difference between the interference of the face and the vocalization has a sonic excess. Vocalization is ongoing intrusion, urgent, immediate and unavoidable as we do not have ear lids. This possibility for a constant stream of vocalization is an ongoing intrusion that is penetrative. Although visual stimuli also penetrate the body, the penetration of vocalization is ongoing and more manipulative of the flesh by the very nature of vocalisation being sound.

When we vocalise we make our presence known to another. We all have a soundscape, it is 360 degrees and it is open, it is open as there is no physical protection barrier such as ear lids. It is as though we plant a flag in their soundscape

that says, I am here. As a vocalization always points to the present of a vocalizer, of a relatable presence, it draws attention to the possibility for interaction, rejection and or to be heard or unheard. It is a vulnerable act to vocalise. We open up the possibility for response that we may not receive, at the same time it is an assertion of power, power and vulnerability are connected in the vocalisation. When we engage with vulnerability and power we engage with the possibility of connection with and rejection. We are lined up to potentially triumph over the space of the other and at the same time take the possible risk of losing ourselves in the space of the other if our presence is not acknowledged, if we don't receive acknowledgement or recognition (Source on politics of recognition).

We increase territory through vocalization by claiming a piece of the other's soundscape, in our very presence, I am in your soundscape and I speak. If we think of the soundscape as "our world," then the act of vocalizing is a way in which we command the territory in the world of another and also how other people command territory in our world. The more soundscapes we make ourselves known to, the more potential agency to influence and transform we have, as the vocalization is an extension of the body and the soundscape is an extension of the body, this influence is physical and penetrative. We can increase our territory through these interactions and also potentially lose any sense of who we, becoming isolated in a lack of vulnerable social experience.

The difference between facing someone and vocalizing, is that the vocal experience offers the potential for ongoing intrusion on an earless soundscape, the experience of that intrusion is unavoidable. Therefore, the having a face and having

the capacity to vocalise distinction becomes a matter of temporality and urgency in the vocalisation process. A constant, grabbing of attention by asserting my presence on the world of the other. The violence emerges in my duty to constantly respond to this grabbiness because there is no way I can avoid it. If I do not respond I commit a graver violence, which is to deny the presence of the individual in the world, in my silence.

So, it appears it's impossible to not include the voice in the face but this pose a challenge to some other parts of Levinas philosophy, that come out of his examination with face. The risk of transgressing the other is the core of my opposition to Levinas, even though intrusion in and of itself is not violent, when I have no ability to avoid the intrusion or no ability to avoid intruding, I get caught up in a violent relationship by its very inescapability. It becomes even more disassociating when the outcome of this interaction is so unfulfilling, in that it is very hard to fulfil my social need through an interaction that inevitably entails me talking to someone who is talking to themselves also. This means I feel like I am always in false presence with the other.

When we examine vocality as face that is auto-affective, in a chord, what seems like an interaction between self and other is simultaneously an interaction between self and self. To watch someone talking to themselves does not fulfil the desired social quality, the social destination of an intersubjective interaction making a-socialising the sociability of the vocal experience. When we re-sonify, make sonic, the vocalisation, the story changes again. My soundscape is being occupied with an unavoidable presence and is intruding on my body.

So, it seems the only way of avoiding this situation is remove oneself from it or not to acknowledge the other who is in conversation with themselves, this would both avoid being an intruder and avoid the disappointment of the asocial-social experience. However, to reject the activity of the vocalizer who is in conversation with themselves, and to not respond to that activity is also problematic. There is an ethical code of conduct that demands of us that if we let the vocalizer speak. If we do not acknowledge their vocalization with a response, we are not participating in the acknowledgement of their presence, we are rejecting them, we are not meeting the command of the face. This means that although as a vocalizer I know I penetrate the soundscape of the receiver with a response, I am encumbered to do so because not to is to delegitimize the presence of the speaker, to deny their very presence in the world and their voice. What we have here is a very strange phenomenon. It is intrusive and asocial to vocalise, but it is also asocial and unacknowledging not to vocalise and to respond is also is intrusive. This relationship appears to be a trap. It is violent to not be violent.

What does this entail for ethics? Violence is unavoidable, but because of its unavoidability that does not nullify the concept of violence. The experience of consensual violence, in a mutual excuse of violence, something moral is lost and what is revealed is a sadomasochistic reality where violence cannot be judged because it takes part in a relationship of consent. Levinas hoped to separate the ethics from violence but in examining vocalisation, a new relationship between ethics and violence emerges, an ethics of consent. We get something in return for being part of this violent arrangement. We are legitimized as having a presence in the world, we can participate, we are in the world and even in such an arrangement can still be

understood as having the potential for voice, even if there would be no one there to hear it. We essentially consent to be part of the violence, constantly to live in asocial yet visibly social, life. The experience of vocalization is one of asocial sociability, and it becomes political when there is also an aspect of dominating soundscape, marking the territory of others whilst simultaneously wanting to be left alone, an ambivalence, a numbing to both being violated and contributing to violence in order to belong. The consent means that the violence becomes almost but not entirely amoral. I am obliged to contribute to the violence in the world and the life of the other, that does not necessarily justify my violence. Yet, the amorality also comes from the impossibility to judge. We cannot judge someone for participating, being a violent actor, in fact, we typically judge those who appear not to play the game. The world may not be perfect but how can I assume the other does not want to live in that world if the relationship is consensual.

For Levinas, your face is my responsibility and in this process of taking responsibility for your face, you get forgotten, the other gets forgotten. This means the self is merely a response to the other, we are caught up in a duty to respond to the other. I develop a relationship with my respect for you rather than you. When we take vocalization as a double face in its inversion into account, a new vision of what a respectful relationship between individuals appears, rather than having a relationship with my respect for you, I live in a state of duty to respond and thereby intrude on you, so as not to deny your presence even if that presence is a false presence. It is a consensual violence, a duty to consent to having you intrude on my life and I yours, so as not to deny your very existence.

When I vocalise, I make my presence known in the soundscape of the other, to the other. I sonically command a piece of territory in the soundscape of the other but that does not require that I meet the other. It is a false promise of interaction. It is reminiscent of Rousseau, "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying This is mine, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society."<sup>39</sup> We consent to our soundscape being marked by the other. It is easier to ignore their transgression by not listening to them but still pretend to acknowledge them by claiming a piece of their territory.

This lie of the social interaction is societal, because I consent to this violence as both a receiver and giver, I am now part of society, maintaining and legitimized within it. The experience of legitimacy is however, very different for different people and that is possibly why the experience of "having a voice" has very different connotations for different people. Towards some people, society has deemed the violence of not acknowledging and thereby de-legitimizing their presence, as acceptable and this is how a politics of vocalisation starts to form, where the vocal presence of some has both more traction in the quantity of soundscape territory. The experience of people of colour, women, queer communities, is not merely an experience of wanting to be listened to, we all want that, it is experience of being regarded as a legitimate vocal actor worthy of response. Which shows to not respond is more violent than to respond.

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<sup>39</sup> Rousseau, J.-J. (2009). Second Part. In *Discourse on the Origins of the Inequalities Between Humans*. The Floating Press: 63-115.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis above all else aimed to de-mute vocalisation, in a process of bringing the vividness of sound back to the vocal subject it started the process of trying to capture in words the tension of the embodied experience of sound making with the other. This led to an examination of vocalisation as face, extracting the cavernous facial shape in sonic form. What emerged was an ambiguous presence of a face that had a sonic excess, a transgressive quality that could not be accounted for in a Levinasian ethics of the face. This transgressive quality was that of a sounding vocalisation. The relevant phenomenological qualities of sounded vocalisation were identified to be its intrusiveness of vocalisation in its temporality, penetrativeness, manipulateness and urgency on the body and the earliness, and vulnerability of the extended body in the soundscape. When the intrusive quality of vocalisation was captured in an ambiguous directionality of face in the chord of vocalisation that connects the internal with the external, what emerged was an image of two people that visibly appear to be attending to one another but are actually in auto-affection with themselves. Coupled with the sonic intrusiveness of sound, the false presence of interaction becomes unavoidable, both because the openness of the soundscape makes receiving the presence of the other in the soundscape unavoidable and because the face which commands the attention of the other is present in the vocalisation. This implicates Levinas' ethics of relating from one of responsibility to the other based on respect, to one of obligation borne out of consensual violence. The consensual violence is simply that I want to avoid the transgression of the auto-affective other, but my obligation to respond means I am forced to intrude upon the other. This consensual violence is enacted in vocality combined with a false presence



of the face repeatedly undermines the social destiny of intersubjective interaction. Sound makers presence, the potential to reveal the somebodyness in the vocalisation, lost in the interaction, the hope that vocalisation will provide a sense of belonging to a community of sound makers, a world, is reduced to a violent tension of relating. It also means that it has meta implications for the relationship between ethics and violence. I cannot judge someone for wanting to maintain such unfulfilling relations in violent intrusions if by doing so they are also avoiding violence, I cannot judge an action where it is violent not to be violent. Furthermore, maintaining these relations also means that one's presence is constantly asserted in the world and the presence of the other is acknowledged. This means that the game, the situatedness and sense of belonging to the world that such an arrangement provides is perhaps more fulfilling than trying to constantly escape such interactions, one may even find some contentedness in the dissociative experience. There are so many potential avenues such a discussion could take. There seems to be in this tension an experience of worldliness of a game that also has creative potential, is culture building. There is lots to be done in the finding routes out of such relations of violence in resonance and listening and other emancipatory activities. Overall, I do not believe I have achieved to bring the full impact of the sonic voice's potential in philosophy but it did inspire me, it showed me that when giving attention of vocality in sonic form, prosaically said, when giving voice its voice back, the microscopic details of the flesh impart new avenues for philosophy yet to be fully explored.

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