

## AN APPROACH TO THE AFFECTIVE DIMENSION OF SPEAKING

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### INTRODUCTION

During the Twentieth century, studies of language proliferated and colonised wide regions of the humanities and social sciences: Wittgenstein placed the correlation between thought and reality in grammar; Heidegger turned from the study of Being to the study of its house—language; analytic philosophy began with Frege's conception that thoughts are structured as sentences, and subsequently pursued its core business the reduction of all things human to a logic of propositions; Austin and Searle grappled with speech acts, construed as specific problems of truth value; Derrida took insights from Saussurian linguistics and based his entire metaphysical enterprise on them; Foucault established the domination in the social sciences of the figure of discourse as the engine of power in institutions and the shaper of bodies; Irigaray and Cixous heard language as the primary instrument of patriarchal domination; Peirce interpreted the whole of creation as an ever-complexifying system of signs; Lacan described the unconscious realm of our darkest impulses as structured like a language; and linguistics—structural, social, pragmatic, systemic, functional, deep grammatical, and applied—took up a position at the centre of the understanding of what humans are, what they do, how they relate to each other, and how their societies are structured. Various disciplines proposed languages of the body, music, art, film, colour, design, and the senses. Wherever it found complexity of structure and interpretation, the Twentieth century imported metaphors of language.

However, despite this obsession with language, the living, breathing act of speaking—embodied, performative, affective, expressive, creative—went largely unexamined. Saussure's complaint of the incorrigible contingency, unsystematisability and idiosyncrasy of speaking is symptomatic of the difficulty and denial of the possibility of and need for the study of speaking in its own right.<sup>1</sup> In the main, the study of speaking has been limited to speech pathology, anthropologies of when and under what circumstances different groups of people speak in which ways, remedial phonics and pronunciation in applied linguistics, and rhetorics of public speaking. In all this, the categories by which a coherent and grounded study of speaking might be pursued are yet to be established. Indeed, it is even difficult to conceive of speaking as a dimension separate from sound-making and linguistic systems of signification and communication.

There have been recent attempts in French linguistics to draw a lineage of studies of speaking, opposed to structuralism, originating in the work of Michel Bréal (1832-1915) on the intertwining of speech and subjectivity,<sup>2</sup> through Charles Bally's (1865-1947) stylistics,<sup>3</sup> and Gustave Guillaume's (1883-1960) comments on "the act of language."<sup>4</sup> The generally accepted watershed of the tradition is a small series of essays by Émile Benveniste which explore the subjectivity of language and introduce his influential distinction between the utterance (*énoncé*) and the enunciation (*énonciation*).<sup>5</sup> Arnaud Fournet goes as far as suggesting that similarities between concepts and terms in Bréal and Benveniste are too close to be coincidental.<sup>6</sup> More recently, the thread extends in the work of Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, who draws together Goffman's theory of interaction,<sup>7</sup> Harvey Sacks' work on conversation,<sup>8</sup> and Benveniste's theory of enunciation to explore an assortment of everyday speaking situations.<sup>9</sup> Antoine Culioli has directly developed Benveniste's concepts into a *linguistics of operations* and a *linguistics of the utterer*.<sup>10</sup> But while these theories attempt to deal with the act of speaking or the occasion and event of language, they stay firmly within the realm of communication and meaning. De Vogüé is emphatic on this: "it is because enunciation is conceived of as a process of constitution of meaning (and not as the act of a speaker) that language must be conceived of as an activity."<sup>11</sup> So while this tradition does originate in an impulse to redress the *parole/langue* imbalance and stretches towards the action of the speaker, it still remains firmly in the systematic mould of linguistics, and in cultural, social investigations of the conditions of production and communicative function of language rather than the embodied, performative dimension of speaking.

This paper takes up one small question in a proposed larger applied phenomenological study of speaking. It points the way to possible openings into a resistant and obscure realm of the everyday and the taken-for-granted. The broader project aims to perform a phenomenological bracketing of both the simple making of sounds and communicative, signifying systems of language, to reveal the constitution of the *performative, creative, affective, expressive, and embodied* dimensions of speaking. This bracketing makes thinkable the isolation of *speaking in itself, conceived independently from language*. This article concerns the affective dimension—the textures and qualities of the body's phonic responses to its relation to objects and occurrences in the world. The proposed aim is to follow the contours of the ebbs and flows of its elations, anger, shame, fears, enjoyments, appetites, and satisfactions, as these affective dispositions shape and determine the speeds, weights, temperatures, intensities and rhythms of the speaking which emerges from it and expresses it. Neither a pathology of the organs of speech, nor an analysis of modes and structures of signification, this paper is rather an attempt to outline the theoretical ground for the apprehension, and a possible way into the understanding of, the gestural basis which animates both: this paper attempts to reveal and bridge the abyss between the genetic and the social grounds of speaking.

It begins with a brief consideration of Giorgio Agamben's archaeology of the concept of realm between sound and meaning, which he calls the "Voice". It then draws on J. G. Herder's essay *On the Origin of Language*,<sup>12</sup> to point towards the animal and affective ground of speaking. This ground is explored further through Agnes Heller's theory of "feelings", which constitutes a coherent schema for revealing and understanding the essential but unexamined phenomenon of the affectivity of speaking. Finally, the paper very briefly outlines a phenomenological method by which speaking might be apprehended and joined with in its natural environment—between, among, within, from, and toward humans.

## AGAMBEN AND THE METAPHYSICS OF "VOICE"

For Agamben, the problem of the question of speaking is as old as Western thinking itself, and at the root of its metaphysics. In *Infancy and History*, he characterises his whole project as an attempt to ask the questions "what is the meaning of 'there is language?' ... what is the meaning of 'I speak?'"<sup>13</sup> He concludes that the "Voice," the separation of sound and meaning, is the fundamental negativity which opens the breach of Western ontology. "The transcendence of being with respect to the entity, of the world with respect to the thing, is above all, a transcendence of the event of *langue* with respect to *parole*."<sup>14</sup>

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While the current project proceeds unabashedly from within the metaphysics which Agamben delimits and calls into question, it recognises in his work the most comprehensive archaeological/historical analysis of the roots of the problem of the obdurate opacity and unapproachability of this strange, complex, taken-for-granted phenomenon of the complex haze of the sounds we make and in which we live with each other.

Agamben traces a tendency which begins with Aristotle's distinction between the animal voice and the human logos; it re-emerges in Augustine and the medieval philosopher Gaunilo of Marmoutiers, and reaches its greatest clarity in Benveniste's work on pronouns and other linguistic "shifters." This sporadic tradition reveals a realm where "*language takes place...prior to the world of meanings...to the very event of language.*"<sup>15</sup> It is based in an "experience of the word in which it is no longer mere sound ... and it is not yet meaning, but *the pure intention to signify.*"<sup>16</sup> From here, he attributes the problem to an originary fundamental negativity, outlined by Hegel, who "demonstrates the place of language as the having-been of voice,"<sup>17</sup> and ultimately, most radically, to Heidegger's discovery of language as a double negation which grounds Dasein's "function of acting as the 'negative foundation of its own negativity.'" <sup>18</sup>

However, as Agamben himself acknowledges, to recognise and critique a metaphysics is not to overcome it, but merely to speak of its limits from within. He asserts that Derrida "believed he had opened a way to surpassing metaphysics, while in truth he merely brought the fundamental problem to light."<sup>19</sup> Agamben further suggests that his own confrontation with Hegel's *Absolute* and Heidegger's *Ereignis* offers "a more decisive critique."<sup>20</sup> And no doubt it does; in similar fashion to the ever more radicalising critique offered by Heidegger to Nietzsche and Husserl, and by Levinas and Derrida in their turn to Heidegger. But, as Agamben again points out, perhaps to the detriment of his own argument, the entirety of Western philosophy is predicated on the historicity of "the identification of the structure of the trace of the origin as a fundamental problem."<sup>21</sup>

Although it is in significant part inspired by Agamben's prising open of the abyss between sound and meaning, this essay makes no attempt to join in the obsession of late-Twentieth century Continental philosophy with the overcoming of Western metaphysics. It asks different questions. It offers no opposition to Agamben's revelation that "language is and yet is not our voice."<sup>22</sup> But the obdurate fact remains: we speak. The question then becomes: if language and voice are held in the suspension of the impossibility of their resolution, what might be said about speaking? What are we doing when we speak? What does it mean to speak when speaking is neither language nor voice but remains inextricably intertwined with both? According to Agamben, the answer lies in the *ethos* of "human speech itself."<sup>23</sup> This is where this project begins—in the *ethos* of the performativity of human speaking. What are the conditions of the act of speaking? What does it do and how does it do it? What is the characteristic mode of its emergence? What does it bring forth?

This work asks these questions through a three-phase phenomenological approach—worldly/eidetic/transcendental—following speaking to where it lives, between, among, from, and in human bodies, and dwelling with it. The careful, slow, descriptive method of phenomenology, the quixotic "back to the things themselves," the bearing of the impossible burden of presuppositionlessness, is particularly effective at giving light, shade, and detail to phenomena which do not usually show with clarity. Phenomenology proceeds in full awareness of the impossibility of the complete fulfilment of its task, of the indistinctness of its limits and the inevitable implicit resistances and misconceptions in the constitution of the object of study. But nevertheless, it proceeds; and often yields new categories and insights on the way, giving access to the hidden and the taken-for-granted in everyday phenomena—in this case, human speaking.

Still, it must be emphasised, in the shadow of the abyss of the negative origins of language, that this writing remains haunted by the spectre of the possibility of its own impossibility; and it must be asked whether or to what extent this proposed phenomenological description and analysis might be a futile conception. Might not its ground be illusory, so shifting that the credibility and worth of its findings would dissipate and crumble on their own enunciation? Would the findings not merely reproduce and founder on the same aporias the project seeks to clarify? Despite these dangers, there appears to be no choice but to trudge on into Husserl's "infinite horizon

of tasks,”<sup>24</sup> with a Levinasian “audacity” which “does not hesitate to affirm the impossibility of statement while venturing to *realise* this impossibility by the very statement of this impossibility.”<sup>25</sup> The transcendental urge is to plunge into the abyss, employing methods originally designed to elicit an ultimately elusive certainty, stumbling for footholds which slip away as they are attained, always qualified, always conditional, always in the subjunctive mood.

Ultimately, the phenomenological work proposed here does not seek an origin of language or anything else, but proceeds hermeneutically, from a contingent point of entry into the groundless circularity. It is possible that the thinkability of the bracketing of language from speaking suggests that the matter under examination is an entirely separate issue from the question of language and voice. This is yet to be discovered. This paper’s relationship to the work of Agamben may well provide a springboard for an initially unforeseeable radical departure. But, without speculating on eventual results, it must be stressed again that there is no attempt here to overcome metaphysics, but merely to dwell in the shadow of its limits.

The broader project aims to approach the opaque and indistinct realm of speaking from a number of standpoints. The primary assumptions are that speaking is performative, embodied, creative, expressive, affective, and consequently a primary mode of the coming forth of self. However, these elements are not separate; they are co-constitutive determinants which underpin and complement each other. The affective dimension of speaking cannot be considered without reference to its embodied emergence, its gestural expressivity, and the performativity of the way it brings forth and shows the rhythms, flows, stops, intensities, weights, speeds, and durations of the manifest self.

However, just as each dimension requires its own characteristic terms of explication, each highlights particular moments of the constitution of speaking. In the case of the affective dimension, it is necessary to consider and gain access to a bridging zone of indeterminacy between the purely physical and the communicative, between the animal and the human, the social and the genetic. The theme of the differentiation and commonality between the animal and the human is a central consideration in the study of the ground of language. It is a recurrent theme in the writings of Agamben,<sup>26</sup> and the subject of an essay by Benveniste.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, the intrigue of the questions of the origin of language, the realm of the affective, and the indistinct borders between the animal and the human are central to this investigation.

## HERDER—LANGUAGE AND THE HUMAN ANIMAL

It is no coincidence that Agamben’s enquiry concerning the metaphysics of the voice occurs at the indistinct border between the animal and the human. The collusion of language, God, and logos has long been put forward as a site of this differentiation. For the purposes of this enquiry, it is necessary to again approach the border, not with an aim to clarify and sharpen distinctions, but to cloud the issue further and detail the breadth of the zone of overlap. The question of the affectivity of language requires an explication of the common ground between the animal and the human, with particular emphasis on the elaboration of the intertwining and separation of the genetic and social *a priori* which constitute the ground of the possibility of speaking. The aim in this instance is to locate the percolations of the linguistic and the animal in the affective substance of human speaking.

J. G. Herder’s *Essay on the Origin of Language* provides a useful starting point. Herder wrote the essay to challenge the notion prevalent among his peers that language is of divine origin. He begins the *Essay* with the observation “while still an animal, man already has language.”<sup>28</sup> This locates his enquiry in the temporal interval between the “still” and the “already.” The human remains an animal, but it is distinguished from the animal by language which it “already” has. Human language differentiates it from the other animals but not to the extent that the human ceases to be an animal. The condition of having language does not constitute a total departure from the animal, but offers a span between the animal and something else in which the human plays out. The ultimate question of Herder’s enquiry is the source and nature of this something else.

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Before proceeding with the details of Herder's contribution, it should be noted that there are many other theories of the origin of language, but again, this study is not about origins. Rather, the value of Herder's essay here is its description of the extent to which speaking, in its affective substance, circumscribes a zone where the animal dimension of the human is revealed.

All violent sensations of his body, and among the violent, the most violent, those which cause him pain, all strong passions of his soul express themselves directly in screams, in sounds, in wild inarticulate tones.<sup>29</sup>

Most animal species emit sounds which resonate with other members of their kind, to let feelings resound, to express sexual desire, hunger, fear, and other bodily states. "There is, then, a language of feeling which is—underived—a law of nature."<sup>30</sup> This law of nature applies to the human to the extent that it is "still an animal." This language of feelings remains, to some degree, underlying, constituent and affective upon, but not normally thematised as an object of attention in its own right, in the language of everyday social communication. We do not say to ourselves "he is speaking loudly, he must be angry," we feel his anger and respond with fear. Affective manifestations in speaking are clearly interpretable, but like grammar itself, they disappear in the comprehending of that which is said. However, unlike the semantics and syntax of linguistic grammar, there is, as yet, no "grammar" of affects in speaking.

Still, despite the obscuration of this "language of nature" by our socialised conventional and arbitrary systems of communication and signification, at times, "the surging storm of a passion, the sudden onslaught of joy or pleasure, pain or distress ... an overpowering feeling of revenge, despair, rage, horror, fright,"<sup>31</sup> reveals the hidden affective substance of language. And in this, it can point towards biological imperatives in speaking.

A suffering animal, no less than the hero Philoctetus, will whine, will moan when pain befalls it, even though it be abandoned on a desert island, without trace or hope of a fellow creature. It is as though it could breathe more freely as it vents its burning frightened spirit.<sup>32</sup>

Human speaking shares an affective basis with the soundings of other animals. This affective basis is also a ground of communication. It exists to affect others of its kind, to make a like body resound with feeling. "Nature hid sounds in these chords which ... can arouse other beings of equally delicate build, can communicate ... to a distant heart a spark that makes it feel for this unseen being."<sup>33</sup> The proof of our animality, of the shared origin of our language with other animals is in the way our vulnerable, perishable body resounds with the sounds and bodies of those other animals. This holds not only in the sympathy we feel with the tears of mourning of our own species, but in the whine of the injured animal, in the fear we feel at the roar of the predator, the hiss and rattle of the snake, the comfort in stroking the purring cat, the alarming, high pitched buzz of the wasp, and in the cowering of the domestic dog as we raise our voice to order it.

However, for Herder, although language derives from conditions of possibility in the animal, it is also the site of differentiation from the animal. Like the sounds of other animals, most of our speaking and other bodily resounding occurs in relation with other members of our own species. Speaking is clearly a means, the primary means, by which we communicate among our own kind. For Herder, this suggests that human language belongs necessarily to an origin in the human rather than the divine. The human does not need to work towards language: it "already" has language. Language is a property of the human animal. The human is "destined to be a creature of language."<sup>34</sup> Without language, there can be no human.

If others found it incomprehensible how a human soul could invent language, to me it is incomprehensible how a human soul could be what it is and not, by that fact alone—without the help of a mouth and without the presence of a society—be led to invent language.<sup>35</sup>

So although human language is dependent on the human body for its eventual manifestation, it is still not entirely of animal origin. It is not “an organisation of the mouth that made language, for even one who is mute for life, if he is human and if he reflects, has language lying in his soul ... a reflective being invented language.”<sup>36</sup> But equally, the specific origin of human language is not to be found entirely in its social functions:

The hermit living alone in the forest, would have had to invent language for himself, even though he had never spoken it. It was an agreement of its soul with itself.<sup>37</sup>

Although Herder belies a nascent romanticism in his taste for luxuriant descriptions of the passions, he remains very much a creature of the enlightenment. The origin of language is to be found in the innate human capacity for reason. Humanity “already had that art of thinking which produced the art of speaking.”<sup>38</sup> As Agamben rediscovers by another route centuries later, Herder asserts that the human, “with all his apish appearance, without a sound from his tongue ... was an inwardly speaking human, who sooner or later had to invent for himself an utterable language.”<sup>39</sup>

So, for Herder, language is neither simply social nor animal. Language is a property of, and emerges from, the essential structure of the human being’s relationship with itself and its surrounds. However, for the purposes of this enquiry, it should be noted that the emphasis on reason is the primary cause of the obscuration of the affective dimension of bodies which speak. The value of Herder is in his demonstration of the complexity of relations which constitute human speaking. It is a function of reason and reflection, a means of communication and a site of the social, but also a link to the animal and the affective resonance of the human body.

This essay seeks to extend Herder’s observations on the affective, animal element of language. The aim is to catch, reveal, and hold the fleeting movement of the affective dimension of speaking as it resonates the human body, as expression of its experience of itself and the stimuli which activate it from inside and out. The aim is to sketch the activation of the gestural, expressive basis of speaking: in the rises and falls of velocity of the warning cry as danger approaches and recedes; in the rhythmic measuring of syllables accentuating emphasis; in the stuttering slowness of the coming forth of a barely formed concept; in the squealed tone of a cry of delight; in a lover’s whisper; in the muted, chilled stillness of a torture victim recounting their ordeal; in the gasping tumble of syllables of an excited child. There is, as yet, no algorithm which can capture these gestures, these scales of intensity; no grammar which captures their structural rules, no glyph to write the smouldering of contained rage, the clipped syllables of the body holding its pain, the hushed high pitch of fear, the rises and falls of velocity and volume in the orator. These are performative dimensions of speaking; sometimes, but not necessarily, motivated by rhetorical intent, more often immediate sonic expressions of states of the body which is speaking. It is possible to describe them, but there are, as yet, no alphabets adequate to expression of feeling. This is not to say that these gestural underpinnings are not interpretable. Their meaning is usually clear. According to Herder, their primary, animal function is the expression of transfer of affect from one body to another. “Their nerves are tense in unison, their souls vibrate in unison, they really share with one another the mechanics of suffering.”<sup>40</sup>

It should by no means be assumed that this affective dimension of speaking is an earlier stage which somehow “turned into” language or that it is even the most fundamental essence of speaking.<sup>41</sup> For Herder, while the affective dimension is not the ultimate origin of language, it does participate at a fundamental level: “not the roots as such; they are the sap that enlivens the roots of language.”<sup>42</sup>

The methodological premise of this entrance into the affective dimension of speaking is that the matter cannot be accounted for in a study of origins and metaphysics, but only through an enjoining activation of this “enlivening” of language. Agamben has highlighted the need to address the question of speaking in general. Herder has shown a way in to the specifics of the affective dimension. The problem is how to approach this opaque, evanescent, and consequently neglected phenomenon; how its constitution might be thematised, inhabited, and held in hesitation with, to allow its rendering as a site of investigation. How might it be possible

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to think this animal remnant within language, this instinctive expressivity of speaking? And having isolated it and located its boundaries and openings, how to catch its measure?

### HELLER'S FEELINGS

The concept of the affective dimension of speaking emerges against the question of the extent to which this highly socialised, self-determinedly rational creature can still be said to be in touch with and acting on its instincts in speaking, a mode of activity which is widely held to be the mark of its socialisation. No contemporary Continental philosopher has addressed this issue more explicitly and comprehensively than Agnes Heller. While Herder circumscribes the emergence of language as a region between the animal and the social, Heller's philosophical anthropology of the affects enables a clearer and more intricately elaborated description of the connections, boundaries, overlaps, gaps, and distinctions between them. Her work generally deals with universal human phenomena such as laughter, morality, judgment, creativity, and feeling, attempting to shed light into the dark and difficult abyss of the mutual functioning of the social and the genetic.<sup>43</sup> Her theory of the affects, derived in part from Silvan Tomkins, in part from Darwin, and in part from Gehlen and Claessens' work on "instinct demolition,"<sup>44</sup> provides a solid framework on which to build an understanding of the affective, gestural basis of speaking. Consequently, it is important here to provide description and detail, first, briefly, of her entire schema of "feelings," and then a thorough explication of the workings of the specific level of the "affects," to demonstrate the potential of her theory to account for the full scope of its appropriateness for the description of the intrication of speaking, affect, and the other levels of human "feelings."

Heller's conceptualisation of the co-determination of the social and the genetic is exemplified by her idea of "the instinct of reason."<sup>45</sup> This concept provides a bridge to the paradox of the respective roles of reason and animality in speaking. The positing of an instinctual basis for reason is typical of Heller's strategy in response to the aporetic closures of dualistic social/natural determinisms. Her philosophical anthropology does not posit a strict dichotomy between nature and culture, or take up the cudgel for one side or the other, but acknowledges the essentiality of both to an adequate understanding of the human. She privileges neither genetic nor social determinations, but enters the indeterminate zone between the two, offering a nuanced elaboration of their interrelations.

This approach enables Heller to construct a finely-detailed account of the role of both genetic and social factors in the heterogeneous and dispersed field opened by the term "feelings." She elaborates five registers of feelings. 1) Drives, such as hunger, which are signals of the organism, "addressed to the self and not to others." They are essential to the preservation of the individual and/or the species. Although the drives have no communicative function in themselves, they depend, more often than not, on higher level linguistic, social and normative structures and systems to attain satisfaction.<sup>46</sup> 2) Affects (of most interest in this instance), which are universal human instinct remnants, "functionally rational" in that they are originally and necessarily related to the survival of the organism and/or the species, but which differ from the drives in that they are responses to external rather than internal stimuli. Affects, including rage, fear, shame, disgust, curiosity, lust, appetite, joy, and sadness are reactive and expressive; they "pertain to the human species in general." Although their specific expressions are differently socially and modified, the affects themselves are not idiosyncratic. The differences in manifestation are the consequences of higher level "cognitive-situational" emotions. Due to social prescriptions governing the intensity and occasions of affective expressions, it is impossible to encounter a "pure" affect except in children. There is, however, a degree to which the control and manipulation of affective expressions becomes difficult or impossible, as in blushing with shame, trembling with rage, sobbing and laughing uncontrollably.<sup>47</sup> 3) Orientational feelings, such as hunches, inklings, convictions, and higher order aesthetic judgments of taste and moral feelings, which are entirely social, idiosyncratic, and the product of experience, are nonetheless universal in all adult humans. Although these feelings are commonly referred to as "instinctive," they are not innate like the affects and the drives.<sup>48</sup> 4) Cognitive-situational feelings, emotions proper, which are idiosyncratic, culturally, socially and individually determined. These are not universally necessary in the way of drives and affects. Hunger, lust, and rage are essential to survival; appetite, romantic love, and resentment are

not. Emotions are “built on affects,” but they are more complex and varied. Language and social modulation are essential constituents of their emergence.<sup>49</sup> 5) Emotional character and emotional personality: the deeply habitual dispositions and patterns such as reliability, consistency, trustworthiness, courage, melancholy, caprice, pessimism, and the passions. These are made of durations and repetitions of emotions to the extent where they become traits.<sup>50</sup>

Although there are only five primary categories, the sub-classifications, overlaps, distinctions, and exceptions are many. The relationships of dependence and priority between these levels of feelings and the conditions of habit, universality, will, language, necessity, idiosyncrasy, intensity, expression, and reaction which constitute them are manifold and complex.

The full description of the intentionality of the dependencies and priorities between language, speaking, and these different modes and levels of feeling will be a major undertaking. Certainly all these different levels of emergence, constitution, and expression of feeling sustain in complex arrangement with speaking and language, reliant on both in different ways for their coming forth. However, the aim of this article is more limited and specific. The aim is to stay with the level of affects—rage, fear, joy, shame, lust, disgust, enjoyment, surprise, excitement—and make a few observations of their role in the gestural expression of speaking.

## AFFECTS AND SPEAKING

Speaking is a mode of concern. To speak is an expression of a degree of commitment; commitment of body and intention to some purpose or position. Even the most habitual, automatic request for a train ticket is an expression of my commitment to my journey, its purpose, and the means of its procurement; the most cursory and phatic “fine” mumbled in response to a “how are you,” acknowledges a commitment to the other person and the event of speaking, however fleeting and inconsequential. Heller defines feeling as involvement: “to feel means to be involved in something.”<sup>51</sup> Speaking belongs to the dimension of affect to the extent that it emerges from and embodies the involvement and participates in its gestural expression. While the higher level, complex, emotional-cognitive functions are largely socially and culturally determined and dependent on engagement with language, the affective substance of speaking is of a different order altogether. The emotions entail the combination of drives and/or affects with cultural and social conditions. In one sense, emotions exist “because every culture must regulate the drive feelings and affects (86).” Affects are an *a priori* condition of emotions. No doubt, speaking, in its content and purpose, is inextricably commingled with socially and culturally constructed language; but in its affective disposition, speaking is an *a priori* of the communicability of language, a condition of its possibility. Without the affective basis of speaking, language, in its current form, would not be possible. Although Herder and Agamben point towards a silent origin of the human voice, the ability to speak is an essential condition of most modes of human communication. Again, this component of the broader study of speaking is not so concerned with origins as with hidden conditions of manifestations and emergences. Communication, as foregrounding of the message, necessarily obscures the act of speaking. A closer examination of Heller’s definition of the register of the affects and of specific affects themselves, in the context of a consideration of some examples of speaking, will help to thematise some aspects of this dimension of speaking which ordinarily go unrecognised, hidden by the communication of the intended message.

It should be noted here that this consideration of the role of affectivity in speaking elides something of the complexity in Heller’s distinction between the drives, affects, and emotions proper. The drive of hunger can elicit a spoken expression, as can a cognitive-emotional recall of a sexual encounter. It may or may not be the case that to be expressed in speaking, the hunger drive needs to pass through its affective correlate of appetite; or that the utterance of the feeling of a given sexual encounter bears necessary relation to the levels of the sex drive, the affect of lust and the emotion of love. No doubt, the relationships between these levels of activity are complex and it is difficult to isolate the drives, affects, and emotions from each other. This is precisely the task of the full proposed study of the affective dimension of speaking. This article can only point towards its possibility and outline a program for its pursuit.

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Heller gives detailed enumeration of the qualities of the affects. She cites Darwin, for whom “every expression of affect is the ‘remnant’ of an instinctual act. (86)” All affects require external stimulus: we are fearful of something, disgusted by something, have an appetite for something. All affects are expressive: rage shouts or stifles, lust sighs and moans, enjoyment smiles, surprise gasps. Affects are “part of” sociality: we are ashamed before our peers, lust after our objects of desire. Expressions of affects are not essentially acquired, they are innate. Although affective responses are idiosyncratically variable, the repertoire of gestures is tied to instinct demolition—the bared teeth of the snarl, the muscular tension of the smile, the reddening of the blush, the piercing warning of the scream, the release of air and tension in the sigh, uncontrollable laughing and crying are all remnants of original instinctive functions. The object of affects does not always produce the same response: the same item can inspire disgust or delight. Unlike the drives, the tension of affects—the thrill of rage, the rush of joy—may be sought after; there can be a degree of will in their production. Affects may be diminished by habit: contemplation of the same object, sex with the same lover, eating the same foods, resignation to undesirable circumstances, can cause lessening of the affective response. It is possible to intentionally diminish the affect by turning away from the stimulus: walking away from a fight lets anger subside, leaving the aromas of the kitchen can lessen appetite but not hunger. One affect may suppress another: the appetite for the desired food will quickly turn to disgust as the smell of putrefaction becomes evident. Affects are contagious: joy sweeps through a crowd, excitement takes hold of an audience, fear grips a community. Affects are not inevitably needs: I do not need this sexual partner or this particular food. Affects cannot be felt in response to the self: to feel ashamed of oneself, angry at oneself are the product of higher level emotions. The affect does not express personality: my fear does not mean I am not courageous, the shout of elation over the victory of my football team does not mean I am not a habitually calm person. We are not responsible for our affects, only the actions which derive from them. Affects have their origin in innate functions, emotions are learnt. Some affects are built on drives, some are not.<sup>52</sup>

This is a very complex set of conditions and parameters concerning what affects are and are not, whether, how, and under what circumstances they do or do not manifest, and their relationships to drives and emotions. There are many contentious limits and definitions in this list which require testing. The assessment of the manifestation of these affective responses in speaking will serve to some extent as a test of Heller’s definitions and categories. Again, although the broader study will require it, the immediate task at hand here is not to carry out a conclusive investigation of all these qualities of affects. The important point in this article is that in all these definitions and delineations, affect functions as a linking zone between the physical, animal impulses of the drives, and the social, communicative world of emotion and language, between the external and the internal, between the conditioned and the instinctive, the reasoned and the reflexive. The question of the affective dimension of speaking, and the larger question of the study of speaking in its own right, as distinct from language, require the articulation of these thresholds. Speaking is not entirely affective and it is not possible to completely isolate the affective dimension of speaking from the other levels of feelings. The full task would differentiate the emergence and manifestations of Heller’s categories of drives, affects, emotions, orientations, and dispositions as they motivate and structure speaking. There is a great deal of detailed phenomenological work which needs to be done. The first step is to make explicit the implication of the affects in speaking, to point towards some of the connections and parallels.

Affects are fundamentally expressive “in facial expression, in phonics, in modulation of voice, in gesture (69).” Whilst emotions and drives can either be expressed or remain unexpressed, there is something in affects which belongs primordially to expression. In rage, the body shakes, the complexion reddens, the voice roars; in lust, the voice moans, the breath gasps, the body stiffens and melts; in joy, the face contracts and opens in smiling, the body laughs, the voice exclaims. In all of these affective conditions, the expressions are unmistakable. Whereas expressions of emotion are modulated by conventions, the expressions of affects—salivating, laughing, crying, snarling, genital engorgement, blushing—are related to physically determined instinct remnants. This makes it difficult to isolate the affectivity of speaking, which already enters the social world of communication and meaning. However, the scream of anger, the sing-song tone of joy, the sigh of relief, the trembling voice of fear, the lowered mumbling of shame, and the moan of lust are unmistakable. The analysis of the full

intentionality of speaking would take into account specific and idiosyncratic social and cultural patterns of emotional expression in speaking and trace the connections between the affective expressions and these social manifestations. The loud, fast speaking in over-compensation for the feeling of shame might be connected to the desire to deny the situation, to talk the feeling away; the muted, measured utterance of rage between clenched teeth expresses the inappropriateness of the outburst in given situations. Emotions are very often precisely the denial and overpowering of affects. Speaking is a prime site of these socio-cultural modulations of affect.

Affects are fundamentally responsive. They differ from the internally motivated drives in that they respond to external stimuli. In this, the affects are a threshold between the senses of interiority and exteriority. Speaking is an exteriorisation of interiority, affirming yet blurring the boundary between them. In speaking, I voice my concerns, my judgments, my feelings, my intentions, my states of mind, and in doing so I come forth as the one I am. Derrida's concept of the voice details the effacement of the senses of inside and outside as the site where their primordial intertwining in "hearing oneself speak is experienced as an absolutely pure auto-affection."<sup>53</sup> Here, speaking and the affective emerge intricately in the coming forth of self. Agamben reads a similar result from Heidegger. "*Thus the Sage, originary speech ... is essentially pure self-demonstration.*"<sup>54</sup> This reveals an ontological moment of speaking: The performance of speaking is the site of the coming forth of self, the showing as the one I am. The affects are implicated here as the specific and contingent rhythms, weights, speeds, temperatures, and intensities that define the person.

Speaking and the affective both operate at a fundamental level which underlies and gives rise to more complicated subjective, social, cultural, linguistic, and communicative phenomena. Just as the affective works as a ground of the emotional-cognitive, so speaking acts as a ground to the social-communicative. Affects emerge as a link between the drives and the emotions, the genetic and the social. Speaking opens an indistinct zone which bridges the animality and sociality of the human. Heller's affects are instinct remnants, obscured by, but motivating of and essential to the structure of higher level social organisations. The act of speaking in itself, between the making of sound and the communication of meaning, belongs to the same ontological register as the affective. Speaking is an essential, formative moment of the human. The affects are essential human qualities. Both speaking and affectivity are universal human phenomena, which despite the multiplicity of their diverse culturally specific manifestations, are crucial definitive pathways to the understanding of the limits and meaning of the human.

## PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE AFFECTIVITY OF SPEAKING

The final question which must be asked in this preliminary outline concerns methodological approaches. The manifestation of affective qualities in speaking is fleeting, indistinct, and variable: evanescent moments whose givenness rises up, flickers, and dissipates. The function of their expression is to relieve the tension they build in the body. The sign of their emergence is the means of their disappearance. Speaking, as expression, often serves to dispel the affect it expresses. Moreover, as Heller emphasises, it is impossible to encounter a "pure" affect.<sup>55</sup> They are always commingled in higher-level cognitive-emotional dispositions, orientations, and expressions. How then might it be possible to apprehend, isolate, and assess these barely perceptible, usually unnoticed, necessarily obscured, partial manifestations, the purpose of whose expression is their own annihilation?

What categories or terms might be adequate to first reveal and then give measure to these elusive bodily/affective eruptions? Clearly, the affectivity of speaking shows in shifts of speeds, flows, stutterings, repetitions, rhythms, weights, pitch, amplitude, and volume, always accompanied and attenuated by bodily and facial gestures. But greater difficulty lies in the way these quantifiable, observable, physical manifestations might link to the felt, qualitative states and dispositions which Heller describes. Feelings are qualities, not quantities. As stated earlier, there is no alphabet of fear, no mathematics of shame or anger. Anger can lead to a shout or a stifled whisper between clenched teeth; shame can show as silence or effusive over-compensation; fear can make the voice tremble, speed-up, or stutter. What strange metric is required here? How to think and speak about this dimension of speaking in a way that is sufficiently articulated to be of use to further research and understanding

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of the phenomenon without robbing it of the actuality of the substance of the way it animates human bodies?

In addition to the fleetingness and variation of the manifestation of affective expression, the problem is exacerbated by the phenomenon of speaking in itself. Speaking is doubly obscured: first by the meaning it articulates, and second by its subsumption to language. In the first instance, speaking, as referenced in Heidegger's categories of *Rede*, *Sage* and *Sprachen*,<sup>56</sup> in Levinas' distinction between *le Dire* and *le Dit*,<sup>57</sup> and in Agamben's negativity of the pure Voice, does not show readily. Despite the diverse ontological and metaphysical registers which these concepts describe, the underlying principle is the same: the content of the utterance elides the uttering itself. The second part of the problem requires no more evidence than the reasons for Saussure's turning away from the study of *parole*. Twentieth century humanities and social science have dwelt customarily in readily systematisable grammatico-socio-cultural explanations. Speaking bodies are idiosyncratic, unpredictable phenomena, determined by the weight of layers of obscure contingencies.

Any foray into an uncertain realm such as the affectivity of speaking must proceed from a new beginning, derived from categories offered by the phenomenon itself. Systems such as Heller's must be applied with great care and hesitation, as hermeneutic guidelines, always under test of falsification and subject to refutation.

To catch speaking where it lives, in the wild—within, from, to, and between human bodies in situations—invites an endeavour of applied phenomenology. First, the very thinkability of speaking in its own right, as distinct from vocal sound-making and linguistic systems of signification and communication, requires a phenomenological reduction. Second, phenomenology is specifically aimed at revealing the underlying structures of everyday taken-for-granted phenomena. It is particularly useful for shedding light on phenomena which do not show clearly in their usual manifestations. Third, speaking is an intersubjective phenomenon subject to broad idiosyncratic variations, so a group phenomenological study would aim to foreground those variations as a theme of the investigation and reduce them to underlying essences. The group approach employs small teams of trained phenomenologists who meet to observe and describe everyday intersubjective phenomena in their own and each others' lives. They begin in discussion of relevant theoretical positions from which the thinkability of the project becomes possible and which might serve as hermeneutic operators, and decide on situations where the phenomena might best be apprehended. Differences between their respective observations and descriptions are discussed with an aim to find the source of the discrepancies. In this way, over time, the groups develop modes of apprehension which emerge from and belong to the experience of the observed phenomena.

This three-phase method, derived from Herbert Spiegelberg's workshop method, David Seamon's environmental experience groups and Amedeo Giorgi's phenomenological psychology,<sup>58</sup> has been specifically developed and applied to study everyday intersubjective phenomena.<sup>59</sup> In this instance, the groups will begin with the aforementioned readings from Heller, Agamben, Benveniste, Herder, and Derrida as well as other relevant material such as Merleau-Ponty's concepts of *le langage parlé* and *le langage parlant*.<sup>60</sup> This will establish preliminary categories for the framing, apprehension, and assessment of affective resonances in speaking. The groups will apply these categories to observe, describe, and discuss phenomena of speaking in their own lives and bodies. The aim is to allow the measure of the affective qualities of speaking from the flows of excitation in the body as changes in speeds, volumes, rhythms, weights, intensities, frequencies, flows, and durations. Affects resonate within and between bodies, contagious and consuming. Groups will frame the enquiry in basic questions. How do the affects shape the rhythms of speaking? How do they show? Under what circumstances are they hidden? What does it feel like to speak? How does speaking carry the speaker? How might it be possible to stay with the affective moment in an act of speaking in order to hold it for observation?

The findings of the first phase will be taken as the basis of an eidetic study of the invariant structures of the affectivity of speaking. What belongs to the affectivity of speaking? What are the affective essences of speaking? What are the essential features of affectivity as it shapes and emerges in speaking? These essences will inform a third transcendental phase aimed at revealing the basic constitution of the affectivity of speaking. This ultimate transcendental phase of the work will consist in a full analysis of the constitution of affective resonance in

speaking. What are the fundamental intentional structures of the affectivity of speaking? How does time work in these fleeting emergences? What are the temporalities of the different affects? Do joy and fear have different speeds, temperatures, weights, rhythms? How to catch the different intensities, the different qualities? How does the intersubjectivity of the affects work through speaking? How are the affects transmitted from body to body? These few questions and observations are a beginning. This is an extensive undertaking. It enters an obscure and unclear yet omnipresent facet of human life. It begins in the thinking of speaking in its own right as distinct from language, proceeds to the different dimensions—embodied, affective, performative, expressive, creative—which constitute the newly clarified phenomenon, surveys a theoretical field against which these dimensions might emerge, and reaches fruition in a full, three-stage, worldly, eidetic, and transcendental phenomenology. The full task will require a sustained investigation in worlds of human speaking. Ultimately, it needs to produce an approach which can be applied and tested across different cultures to provide a comprehensive account of what it means to speak.

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14. Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 26. Henceforth *LD*.
15. *LD*, 25.
16. *LD*, 33.
17. *LD*, 47.
18. *LD*, 59.
19. *LD*, 39.
20. *LD*, 39.
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22. *LD*, 107.
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25. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1981) 7.
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27. Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, 49-54.
28. *OL*, 87.
29. *OL*, 87.
30. *OL*, 88.
31. *OL*, 89.
32. *OL*, 89.
33. *OL*, 88.
34. *OL*, 147.
35. *OL*, 118.
36. *OL*, 118.
37. *OL*, 119.
38. *OL*, 125.
39. *OL*, 125.
40. *OL*, 96.
41. There should likewise be no interpretation on the part of the reader that there is here an assumption that language somehow makes the human higher or more developed than other animals. The fact that the human has language is no more remarkable than that birds can fly or that some ants can carry fifty times their own weight. Language is merely one of the differentiating features of the human; a particular contingent categorisation.
42. *OL*, 91.

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43. She appropriates the term abyss from Gehlen's concept of the essential unfinished character of the human. Arnold Gehlen, *Man, His Nature and Place in the World*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
  44. Agnes Heller, *A Theory of Feelings*, 2nd ed., (Lanham: Lexington, 2009) 68. Henceforth *TF*.
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  46. *TF*, 63-65.
  47. *TF*, 69-71.
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  53. Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).
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  56. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
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