

THE NOISY CROWD: THE POLITICS OF VOICE IN MICHEL FOUCAULT'S FINAL COLLÈGE DE FRANCE LECTURES

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Michel Foucault is not really known as a thinker of music, or more generally, as a thinker of the *sonorous-auditory* (voice, sound, audition and listening). At first glance, one might be tempted to label Foucault a *visualist* or as *ocularcentric*, that is, as a thinker who presumed an essential, even exclusive role for vision in his political thought (cf. his seminal figures such as the *medical gaze*, *Panopticon*, and *the eye of the power*), concomitantly neglecting or denying the political sense of other modalities of sensory perception. In various recent discussions dealing with the political theory or cultural history of the senses (the sensorium), such a portrait of Foucault comes to the fore. What comes to the fore as well is the criticism of Foucault for his reductive account of vision and visibility (in terms of the objectifying gaze), and for his omission of other sensory modes, audition in particular (see e.g. Jay 1988 307-326; Jay 1989 175-205; Jay 1994 6-7, 1-26, 381-416, 587-595; Jay 1996, 1-15; Sterne 2003, 14-19, 127-128).

Without going into the details of this critical discussion, let me note that I consider the criticism to be justified when it comes to certain themes and parts of Foucault's *oeuvre* where the ocular-visual bias is admittedly quite overtly present (especially in the well-known analyses of the clinical-medical gaze, panoptical surveillance, panoptical society etc.). Yet, in this essay I attempt to show that such a portrait of Foucault, together with the related criticism, is *only partially* correct and needs to be re-assessed, set into a limited context, and abandon its categorical tenor of the accusations. My basic point is that in Foucault's thought we can indeed discover currents that do not fit into the picture of him as ocularcentric, but instead show that he *did* consider the political role of other modalities of sensory perception as well, and of the sonorous-auditory in particular.

Contrary to what one might expect in Foucault's work across its different periods and variety of intellectual interests and contexts (from the 1960s until his death), there is no shortage of material and evidence to support the point concerning the political significance of the sonorous-auditory for Foucault. In fact, such material is so abundant that it would be impossible to cover it sufficiently within the scope of one essay. Thus, here I choose to focus on only one case in which Foucault deals with the political significance of audition, voice, sound and music. It is found in Foucault's final, recently published lectures given at *Collège de France* (1982-1983), titled *The Government of Self and of the Others* (*Le gouvernement de soi et des autres*) (Foucault [2008] in the references; unless otherwise stated in the references, the translations in this essay are mine).

Although the focus of this essay is on one particular text, and although the argument will be put forth through a close reading of it, this does not mean that the relevance of the issue and the scope of the argument – the political significance of the sonorous-auditory in Foucault's thought – is limited to this one text. Behind this reading, there is a more general project of reading Foucault as a thinker of the politics of the auditory-sonorous, that is, a thinker who wanted to show how hearing and voice occupy a significant place in power, knowledge and resistance. Thus, I will attempt to introduce the outlines of this more extensive project, to which this essay belongs and in which its relevance becomes clear.¹

Firstly, the issue of the senses – not only vision, but also audition – comes to the fore already in Foucault's 1960s work on the *archaeology of knowledge*. This is the case with the most central concepts introduced and applied by Foucault during this period. *Discursive formation* and *discursive relations* do *not* mean linguistic rules or structures of language (*la langue*); they are not detached from, indifferent or neutral when it comes to perception and senses. On the contrary, different historical formations of discourse also constitute different *historical orders* or *regimes of perception and senses*. The historical discourse-formations pertain already to an opening out as well as a delimiting of the field of possible objects for perception and sensory experience. Furthermore, the discursive formations work by positioning the subject as the *subject of perception*, as the *sensory subject* (a seeing subject, a listening subject, a touching subject etc.). In other words, it is a central dimension of the discursive formations to bring about historical regimes of the sensory-perceptive capacities or faculties (i.e., their differentiations, organizations, hierarchies) and to open as well as delimit the range of possible objects, without this meaning at all a reduction of the senses, or of the "sensory", to language. Correspondingly, historical *discontinuities* also bring about ruptures in the regimes of the senses (Foucault 1972, 40-49, 52-55, 181-186; Foucault 2001a, 738-753).

In Foucault's thought from the 1960s, we can discover the idea that the constitution of auditory perception and its relation to vision are *not* excluded from the archaeological-historical treatment, and that they are also penetrated by changes and ruptures. Thus, Foucault challenges the transhistorical setting, in which vision and audition are determined in terms of opposites (vision as the observing, distant, objectifying sense of science and power; audition as the temporal and affective sense). The argument challenging this juxtaposition comes forth especially when Foucault is dealing with the historical formation of the discourse of modern clinical medicine, which in the 19th century gave centrality to clinical perception and experience, and with the concomitant *medicalization* of the use of power that took place. It is in that context that Foucault

shows how auditory perception *can be* (and historically has been) articulated into modern scientific knowledge and the related use of power. Audition, in its different articulations and uses, is thus taken as a historical as well as a political issue, essentially penetrated by change (Foucault 2005, 30-31, 35-36, 38, 168-169; Foucault 2001a, 585-588; this point has often been overlooked in recent discussions, see Sterne 2003, 14-19, 127-128; Schmidt 2003; Schafer 2003). Hence, already in Foucault's knowledge-archaeology work of the 1960s, what should be noticed is the *politicization of auditory perception* ("the politicization of our ears"), which means locating auditory perception in the historical field of struggles over knowledge, over the limits and possibilities of knowledge, which is intrinsically related to the struggles over the living bodies as such, perhaps the most central and pervasive political issue in Foucault's thought.

As we proceed further in Foucault's intellectual history, to his 1970s genealogical works, we can see how the basic issue – the politicization of audition – is still further elaborated in novel contexts. For the purpose of this essay, what is perhaps most important is the manner in which Foucault now relates audition and voice explicitly not only to power, but also to *events and practices of resistance*. There are various expressions used by Foucault to refer to this resistance: *multitude or multiplicity, crowd, mass, swarm* or the *plebs (la plèbe)*. These are set in a relation of conflict with the apparatus of disciplinary power. What should be noticed is that they are resistant precisely due to their diffuse and centrifugal mingling- and merging, as well as their non-individualized and non-totalized fluidity, which is difficult to quantify or locate. Most importantly, it is when depicting this sort of mobile resistance, and its adversarial relation to disciplinary power, that Foucault recurrently uses sonorous-auditory tropes: *noise, chatter, howling and singing* (Foucault 1979, 143, 170, 197-198, 200-201, 218-219; Foucault 2003, 77; Foucault 2001b, 421-422).

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the issue of sound and voice as well as music reappears, now in the context of Foucault's elaborations on the concept of *governmentality (la gouvernementalité)* and in discussions with his friend, the composer-conductor Pierre Boulez. To put it briefly, it becomes even more evident that Foucault did consider there to be a resistant potentiality in the auditory-sonorous, one extending to confrontation with modern state rule. The events generated through sound, voice and audition possess a subversive potential against political-governmental rationality, or reason of *omnes et singulatim* (totalizing and individualizing) and the related practices of governance (cf. the modern policies of noise abatement) (Foucault 2004, 273; Foucault 2001b, 953-980).

My intention above was to offer a short introduction to the sonorous-auditory in Foucault's thinking, to show that it was for him a political issue that emerged long before his final lectures (already during the 1960s) and remained important to him during the 1970s since it related to central political themes in his thought (knowledge, power, governance and resistance). The occurrence of the theme of the voice and audition in Foucault's final lectures is much more than a curiosity of this period. As presented above in the introductory remarks, the issue of the voice and hearing is relevant and recurs in Foucault's thinking of the 1960s and 1970s; however, in the end he still offers us no detailed or extensive discussion of his idea of the voice and audition, one in which he would really show us *why* and *how* there is a connection between the sonorous-auditory and the practices or events of resistance, the formation of multitudes, crowds, masses, or the plebs. One is left without answers to these questions.

This is where we come to the significance of the last *Collège de France lectures* as they are read in this essay. It is here that Foucault finally in a much more detailed and extensive manner tackles the issue of voice and audition, their resistant or subversive potential, and their specific role in the formation of multitudes. Hence, what I try to show in the following is that, while the theme of the auditory-sonorous as the locus of contestation and struggle occupies a relevance that surpasses Foucault's final lectures, reading these lectures *does* contribute something novel and indispensable to our understanding of Foucault, and especially to the more general project of reading him as a thinker of the politics of voice, sound and audition. For such a project, the lectures provide invaluable material, requiring extensive and detailed treatment. Although *parrēsia* – the theme of the lectures and focus of this essay, developed through Foucault's long reading of Euripides' tragedy *Ion* – might seem a rather limited topic at first, one will see how the reading of the lectures with the general background above can clarify pertinent questions of Foucault-interpretation, specifically, his approach to voice and audition.

The Struggle of Parrēsia: from Truth-Saying to Truth-Crying

The context in which voice comes into focus is set by the central theme of the lectures, *parrēsia* (meaning, in Foucault's translation, the practice of *truth-speaking, truth-saying [dire-vrai]* or *speaking-frankly [franc-parler]*) in its different forms, and its relation to governing, that is, to the government of the self and the government of others. One of the central texts for Foucault in this lecture series, through the reading of which he most centrally elaborates the idea of the different modes of *parrēsia*, is Euripides' tragedy *Ion*.

In the typology presented by Foucault, there is, firstly, *political parrēsia*, to be taken in limited narrow sense, that is, referring to the speech, discourse, or *logos* through which the city-state is governed. Secondly, there is the divine or religious *parrēsia*, the enigmatic signs of the oracle, related to the superior power and knowledge of, primarily, the god Apollo. The central tension of the tragedy, according to Foucault, involves the need to reveal the truth of the divine ancestry of the central character Ion (showing he is secretly the illegitimate son of Apollo and the mortal Creuse) in order for Ion to be granted Athenian citizenship and thereby access to participate in the *political discourse proper*, or the *political parrēsia*. The tension arises when Apollo refuses to tell the truth and attempts to prevent it from being revealed in order to prevent his own shameful injustice or crime from being revealed as part of the truth.

It is here, in Foucault's reading of the tragedy, that a third form of truth-saying is introduced. This third mode is fundamentally different from both the political form of *parrēsia* and from the signs of the oracle. The third form is *confessional*, but of a rather extraordinary kind. It is characterized, firstly, by the fact that it is a *public confession (l'aveu*

public), publically and not privately uttered. Secondly, we are told that this confession is not at all one that would serve the function of revealing the crimes or the temptations of the subject to the religious authorities; it is not at all a confession by which a believer could demonstrate allegiance to the authorities (cf. Foucault's idea of the *pastoral*). In contrast, this confession is itself an act of *blasphemy* (*l'aveu blasphématoire*), an act of rebellion against the religious authority – ultimately, it is disobedience against god. Clearly, the new mode of truth-telling introduced in the tragedy is generated in a situation of conflict and struggle. Yet, the conflict started by the blasphemous confession – as it comes from the outside the city-state's government and outside of the governing *logos* – is not political *agon* properly speaking, it is not an *agonistic play or game* (*le jeu agonistique*) between *logoi*, the game played between speaking citizens and their speeches, between arguments, between persuasions etc. (Foucault 2008, 98, 102).

Foucault states that what he considers to be of primary importance is not the *logos* and not the issue of speech, but the voice: *the theme of the voice is absolutely fundamental*. The conflict takes place between voices. On one side, there is the voice of the god, the voice of the divine authority that refuses to speak, a secretive and reticent voice, one that in this sense has become silent and can no longer be trusted. Against this is uttered *the voice of the mortals*, that of the public and its blasphemous confession, challenging the reticence of the authority (Foucault 2008, 116).

The fundamental importance Foucault attributes to the voice specifically relates to the *conflict between two voices*, that of the divine authority (the *divine ruler-sovereign*) and that of the mortal subjects. The first voice is one that combines the reticence of the secretive oracle and a *song of indifference* from the divine authority, a song manifesting his indifference towards the multitude of mortals, towards their sufferings, their complaints and their desires in general. This voice – which is both reticent as well as a *singing voice*, thus *music* of a kind – does not say or reveal anything. All it communicates is its own indifference, its refusal to answer or tell the mortal subjects what they would need to know. Against this, comes the voice of the mortals, which is neither song nor speech. Their voice is now a *cry* (*le cri*), noise or the *bare voice* (Foucault 2008, 117).

It is voice (*phōnē*) that is not speech, but neither is it musically articulated or formed. The voice of the mortals is a *bare* or *brute voice*, in which the *brute truth* (*la vérité brute*) is brought about, the brute truth against the will of the divine ruler in an act of recrimination and accusation for the injustice he has committed. There are also further aspects of special note, in the remarkable passages where Foucault presents a detailed account (through his reading of Euripides) of the constitution of this peculiar modality of truth and truth-emission. Especially, we should notice how Foucault emphasizes the specific manner in which the truth itself and the vehicle of the voice in which it is conveyed are actually generated in and by the *plurality* or the *multitude* of humans, in and by the *crowd*, *amongst* and *in the midst* of them, that is, *not* by any determinate subject or agent, not by any volition, whether human or divine (Foucault 2008, 107-108).²

Despite the fact that it may be called confession, the point is that the truth and the emission of the truth-voice come only from the multitude; there is *no central agent or subject*. The truth and its peculiar mode of *parrēsia* – the bare voice, the cry – come from the midst of the density of the multitude. Although the voice may come through the mouth of one of the persons involved – in the case of Euripides’ tragedy, the woman Creuse – Foucault strongly emphasizes that the emanation of this truth has no agent, no subject, so that it comes out, so to speak, in spite of each individual subject, out of the control of each and every agent involved. There is no *maître d’oeuvre* behind this truth-crying. The truth and the voice carrying it are born *in-the-middle of* or *in-between* (*entre*) the “members” of the multitude without any determinate, distinctive agent, and not relating back to any particular person or will. I believe it is justified to say that the truth and the voice that carries it are *radically anonymous*. In fact, the truth-voice is born in the interrelations, in the mobile interactions between the actors. It is the encounters between *passions*, the *shock of passions* (*le choc des passions*) coming into contact with each other, that give birth to the truth-voice in the manner not controlled by any actor and that could not have been planned or predicted by anyone (not even a divine ruler). The *unexpected*, sudden, and uncontrolled quality is, above all, attested to by Foucault’s characterizing the truth-crying with terms such as *shock*, *flash* (*l’éclair*) and *exploding* (*éclater*) (Foucault 2008, 107-108).

In other words, the truth and its voice are not and cannot be the *property* of anyone. We should give full notice to the weight of this idea: truth born *without a will*, without the will to truth, without the will to knowledge or will to speak. What we encounter here, according to Foucault, is a mode of truth – the event and practice of truth production and transmission – that appears to be significantly different from those forms of truth-discourse that contribute to the governing and functioning of the dispositives of power-knowledge, as analyzed by Foucault in a variety of contexts. In opposition to the latter, what Foucault believes he has discovered in his analysis of the *tragic truth*, and the *tragedy of truth-saying or truth-emission*, is a mode of truth that is *non-individual*, *non-individualizing* as well as *non-totalizing*, or the anonymous truth of the multitude, coming only from the middle, from the in-between, in the unexpected shock or explosion engendered by the contingent encounter of passions, truth carried by a cry, by the bare voice of what is neither speech nor music.

It becomes evident that the significance of the observations made by Foucault in his last lectures concerning this in-between-mode of truth and *parrēsia* is not limited only to his reading of Euripides’ tragedy, but extends to some of the most recurrent political themes in his thought, such as the relations between power, governing, resistance, discourse and truth. We already know what the medium of the anonymous, non-controlled, truth is and is not: it is not *logos*, not speech, and not the enigmatic signs of the oracle, but instead *the cry*, *the bare voice*, *phōnē*, *the noise*, *the vocal emission* without linguistic or musical articulation. This sound is generated inside the density of the multitude, inside the density of the crowd, in and through the mobile interactions of various kinds, in the collisions, and in the shock of the encounters and contacts between the passions. This is in line with the truth it proclaims. Both the truth and the medium are without any central agent, without a subject who could seize them or take them into possession. The non-individualized and non-totalized voice – which exists only in transition in-between, is shared by the multitude, and occurs in the sharing between individualities while unpossessed by any single one – is the real medium for the blasphemous, “subversive” *parrēsia*. It is truth emanating through a voice without volition, without the will to speak or to know, a voice emitted and spreading without control by the intentions of the speaking subject: a voice without any definite place or origin, but only in transition, in the contacts, in the in-betweenness.

The conflictual quality of the voice, of the cry, of the truth it proclaims, has already been mentioned. It is, above all, in

confrontation with Apollo, that is, with the divine authority, with the ruler who has committed an injustice against the subjects and who tries to hide. In Foucault's reading of the classical text, the arrogance of the divine authority Apollo, his indifference to the sufferings of mortals, his *irresponsibility* for his injustices against his subjects – is epitomized not only by the silence and ambiguous, cryptic signs of the oracle, but also in *self-indulgent, self-absorbed practice of music*. The music here is music of the divine ruler's superiority, of his rising above mortals, across insurmountable distance and out of mortal reach, touch and sight. It is music of the self-sufficiency and independence from mortals, a sort of fulfilled narcissism.³ This is what Apollo's song and his playing of the *lyre* are about (Foucault 2008, 117-119).

There are various points in Foucault's interpretation of the tragedy that need to be examined. What now comes to the focus is the role of a particular musical instrument, the *lyre*, and the music produced by its playing. This is seen as contributing to Apollo's power, specifically, to the indifference and irresponsibility of his sovereignty over mortals. As we remember, Foucault himself explicitly states that he considers the issue of voice to be absolutely central for his understanding of Euripides's tragedy. Thus, the question arises concerning the role of the particular instrument, a string-instrument, and the music played with it together with the song (Foucault 2008, 117-119).

The two interrelated functions of the music of Apollo noted by Foucault in his reading are: firstly, the playing for himself, offering the medium for the self-sufficiency of self-enjoyment, for self-worship; secondly, the music hides and masks the god from mortals, thus perfecting his distance, his superiority, his being above the law, above the claims of justice, and above responsibility for lesser beings. We could say, that the fulfillment of Apollo's sovereignty, meaning also his indifference and sense of his absolute superiority, as depicted in Foucault's reading, is brought about in a process of *auto-affection*: in the impression and fantasy of immediacy produced by the production as well as the *hearing of one's own voice*, or in this case playing the lyre and hearing its sound, one that is in absolute submission and proximity to one's own will, as if it really were a part of one's own being, following one's every wish, without any distance or delay from the intentions of the subject (Foucault 2008, 117-119).

In this way, through our reading of Foucault's last lectures, we are brought close to the seminal theme of the work of Jacques Derrida, the relation between voice and auto-affection, *phonocentrism* and *logocentrism* in the history of Occidental Philosophy, as the kernel of metaphysical thought and discourse from Plato to Husserl (and even beyond) (Derrida 2005a, 15-16, 85-89; Derrida 1976, 20; cf. Poizat 2002; Mallet 2002; Pickstock 1998, xiii, 4-6, 115-116; Cavarero 2002; Cavarero 2005, especially 213-241; Dolar 2006, 42; Nancy 2002, 67, 69).⁴

What Foucault thus points out in the final lectures is the role of a music of indifference, a music of carelessness, irresponsibility, self-enjoyment or self-worship, of a particular musical practice with its own instruments as well, and a music that is at play in *the relation of the sovereign-ruler-god to himself* (essentially, Foucault says, Apollo sings and plays for himself and listens to himself singing and playing). What we are dealing with, hence, is *a musical art-, technique- and practice of the self*, music at work in subjectivation, in the production and formation of the self by itself, in its self-relation. Furthermore, this *musical subjectivation* is one in which Apollo is constituting himself as a sovereign agent, but not at all as a good and just ruler from the point of view of the subjects. On the contrary: the musical art-, practice- and technique of the self which is at play here is one in which Apollo produces himself as *the absolute sovereign* of total superiority, meaning total irresponsibility and indifference to the sufferings of his inferiors. It is in this practice and technique of the self that this particular sort of music, the singing of the *paeans* and the playing of the lyre, has its central function. Now that the central setting in Foucault's analysis – the conflict between the *parrēsia* of the noisy crowd and the sovereign music of Apollo – has been discussed, I will next examine in more detail the character and basic differences between the two.

Apollo versus the Noise: Revisiting the Mythical Struggle

In order to better understand what the musical subjectivation of the sovereign Apollo, as depicted by Foucault, is about, it would be helpful to take a closer look at the characteristics, insofar as we know them, of the particular musical instrument, the lyre, and also at the central qualities of the related musical practice. In this manner, hopefully, the nature of the conflict between this musical practice and the *noise parrēsia* will become more comprehensible. Finally, by setting Foucault's analysis in the context of the interpretation of Greek mythology and research on the ancient history of music, it will become possible to re-assess Foucault's statement on the centrality of the voice and of *the antagonism of Apollo's power and musical practice versus the noise*. What should be examined is whether this centrality is limited to Euripides' *Ion* (or Foucault's reading of it), or whether there is more general relevance to the meanings teased out by Foucault.

To begin, we should notice that besides the lyre, which comes to the centre in Foucault's analysis, there is another string instrument associated with Apollo in Greek mythology: the *kithara*. In fact, the lyre and *kithara* have certain common qualities that appear to be quite relevant here. The lyre and *kithara* – in comparison to other instruments of Greek antiquity – could be characterized as offering maximal power and control of the sound, allowing the most perfect *taming* and *subjection of the sound* in its material existence, in its movements, its resonance, its vibration, pitch, inflection etc. (the

superior capacity, especially in comparison to wind-instruments, in the punctual control of sound, I believe, can be seen in case of the modern guitar as well). What we are dealing with are musical instruments and the instrumental art and technique that allow the (musician-)subject a position of superiority akin to sovereignty, in relation to the sound, to the body of the sound, which is thus made as perfectly *docile* as possible. It is through these string-instruments, more than any others, that the sound can be seized and held sustained so that it follows as faithfully and as accurately as possible the commands of the sovereign musician. It is by these means that the sound is made to

follow without hesitation, without ruptures, and almost without the slightest deviation the command of the god-musician. In temporal terms, it follows the command of the player *immediately*, without the slightest delay (Landels 2001, 47-68, 148-162; Rowell 1979a; Rowell 1979b; Rowell 1988). So, relating these observations back to Foucault's reading of *Ion*, it is quite understandable why and how it is precisely the lyre that was Apollo's chosen instrument: by playing it, Apollo produces for himself a sense of sovereign power, of absolute superiority over his subjects, whom he imagines are as obedient and in his possession as the sound of his lyre.

A couple of further remarks are still in order concerning the specific manner in which the musical control functions, that is, the manner in which sound is taken into possession and maintained in lyre and *kithara* playing. To characterize this control, we shall use the terms *punctuality* and *point*, which we relate closely with *purity* and *clarity*. The lyre and *kithara* are instruments that allow an ideally high degree of control in the accurate, punctual determination of pitch, in other words, the production of a *pure sound*, or the purification of sound. This musical control, operating on sound, can be characterized as a practice of *locating* or *emplacing* the sounds inside a "musical space" (a space constituted on the basis of discrete tones modelled according to the *fixed points* of classical geometry). In terms of temporality, in the control of musical time, the basic matrix is similar: *pulse, beat and blow* set the basis for the temporal *punctuation or punctualization of music*, establishing the temporal coordinate-points on the basis of which the rhythmical measure and the rhythmical forms are constructed (Rowell 1979a; Rowell 1979b; Rowell 1988; Landels 2001, 24-26, 148-162; Pickstock 2003).⁵

In relation to sound, we come across the subject of the *spatial coordination of bodies*, of the individualizing power that is practiced through the spatializing operations of emplacement, location, alignment and serialization/sequentialization. A very similar idea expressed in these very terms is centrally present, though in a different context, in Foucault's analyses of disciplinary power, as well as in his genealogies of *governmentality*, of *raison d'État*, and of the *reglementary* or *police* functions of the state (see Foucault 1979, 143, 151-152, 170, 187, 195-197, 200-203, 216-217; Foucault 1997, 27, 215; Foucault 2003, 77; Foucault 2004, 59, 348). Above, this spatialization is examined in its relation to *musical power*, a rational and planned *intervention into sounds*, into their relations, movements, transitions and inflections, exercised in order to develop them in a certain direction or to block them, to stabilize them, to use them for certain assignments, or to attach them to certain "values" in a functional form. Characterized in these terms, I believe it is appropriate to speak here of a *musical dispositif* (cf. especially the discussion of *dispositif* in *The Game of Michel Foucault [Le jeu de Michel Foucault]* from 1977, in Foucault 2001b, 300-301).

Depicted as a practitioner of such a perfected *art and technique of taming the sound, of making the sound docile*, we could say that Apollo (the figure of Apollo that I have presented through the reading of Foucault's final lectures) could be characterized as a *virtuoso*.⁶ As has already been stressed, this virtuoso-subject – in the struggle between voices and between emissions of sound in Foucault's lectures – is set against the *brute*, non-technical noise-emission of the collective *parrēsia*, where each individual can only take part in the event of a sound that is beyond any mastery of contacts and connections, a sound that occurs through the contingent touches, in the horizontal conjunctions, in the manner of an unexpected shock or explosion.

As noted above, what comes to the center in Foucault's reading of *Ion* is a confrontation between two very different voices and two very different practices of the voice. We should note that in Greek mythology this conflict emphasized by Foucault is not the only one in which Apollo's music – his *kithara* or lyre playing and his singing – runs into a *confrontation with noise*, that is, with the voice and sound that is neither discursive nor musical. This time, Apollo's musical practice – his musical *dispositif* – comes into a confrontation with another instrument, a particularly *noisy instrument*. This noisy instrument is the *aulos*,⁷ an ancient wind instrument. What is here most important is that the sound of the *aulos* has been described as noisy: it ultimately lacks and defies both *logos* and the beauty and harmony of music (the simple playing of the *aulos* prevents the player from both speaking and singing). The sound of the *aulos* is at the borderline between noise and music. It is an instrument whose sound to a great degree lacks clear articulation, accuracy, distinctive division, the individualization and the harmonization of units, all of which in contrast are strengths of the lyre and *kithara*, that is, in the control of sound they afford (Landels 2001, 24-26, 148-162; cf. Plato *The Republic*, 397a-b, 399e).

The *aulos* is the instrument of noise, an instrument out-of-control, like the crowd's noisy *parrēsia* examined by Foucault. Its sound lacks musical purity, meaning the accurate localization in musical space-time. It does not quite hit the notes, the musical coordinates, but impurely moves "in-between", similar to Foucault's crying *parrēsia*. Similarly, the creature who plays the *aulos* and challenges Apollo is a noisy, boisterous creature as well: Marsyas the satyr, a follower of Dionysus. The conflict between the noise-music of Marsyas and the controlled, articulate music of Apollo, the conflict between the *aulos* and *kithara*, is also a struggle between instrumental music and accompanied vocal music (music having *logos* or music *had by logos*). Finally, it is a struggle between an alien (of Phrygian descent) and a proper Hellenic god, between their cults and their respective sorts of music (the story ends in violence, in the flaying of Marsyas) (Landels 2001,

24-26, 148-162; cf. Plato *The Republic*, 397a-b, 399e).^s

In the analysis Foucault presents on the blasphemous, *parrēsia*, the *noise-parrēsia* coming to challenge Apollo's absolute power, there are qualities that relate to the depiction of the *aulos*. The cry of *parrēsia* is emitted from the crowd of mortals, from their multitude, without being proper to, or property of any agent. It is emitted and sounds (like the sound of the *aulos*) without really belonging to anyone, without being governed by any volition (it comes unexpected, like a shock, and has no *maître d'oeuvre*, as Foucault notes). It is a collective sound, coming from the midst of the multitude. Far from offering a medium for auto-affection or (self-)production of a feeling of superiority or supreme power (like Apollo's self-absorbed music), or even self-expression (unlike the conventional confession), the collective noise-voice of *parrēsia* (along with the noisy sound of the *aulos*) escapes the control of individual agents as well as of the community ("communal agent") as a whole. In other words, the voice does not imply a common or general will behind it, but is instead produced from the contacts and interactions, the horizontal conjunctions and connections, *in-between* the agents, without being the proper voice of anyone either individually or collectively.

Thus, in the light of this brief excursion into Greek mythology and the history of ancient music, one may conclude that Foucault was right stating that the issue of the voice is central, i.e. the conflict between two essentially different practices (firstly, the sovereign taming and subjection of sound by the localization method epitomized by Apollo; secondly, the noise-emission, which ultimately defies emplacement and the punctuality of musical coordinates, always passing "impurely" in-between). The occurrence and the relevance of the antagonistic setting is *not* limited to the reading of Euripides' *Ion*, or to the framework of Foucault's own analysis of the modes of *parrēsia*, but applies more broadly to the context of Greek mythology as well as musical history, the analysis of the principles and practices discriminating between music and non-musical sound.

Becoming All Ear: the Sovereign on Trial

Another central theme is the conflict between governing, or government (with its rationalities, techniques and practices) and sound, in its concrete materiality. There is a "*subversive potential*" in this sound, one that makes it threatening from the point of view of government and governing. To return to the reading of Foucault's lecture, the singing and lyre playing of Apollo become challenged by the bare voice, by the cry, by the noise. As mentioned, Foucault explicitly states how central he considers the issue of the voice to be for his understanding of Euripides' tragedy. At the more general level, the voice is also important in Foucault's analysis of the different modes of *parrēsia*, and their political senses. In the crying and shouting emitted from the plurality of people, the "subversive potential" is most evident: as Foucault said, a *blasphemous* event is taking place. The noise emitted, sound without speech and without music, subverts the rule of Apollo, his cruel and arbitrary use of power (a sort of divine absolutism). In this situation, the noise of the humans, the bare voice which is born out of their multitude, comes to challenge the self-sufficient music of Apollo as well as the reticence of the oracle. The blasphemous cry, the blasphemous noise of resistance, is emitted straight to Apollo, or more specifically, to his *ear*, as in the citation Foucault presents:

And you, you play the lyre and do nothing but sing your paeans! Hey! it is you that I call ... That this cry that I utter arrives in your ear (*que ce cri que je pousse arrive à ton oreille!*) (Foucault 2008, 113)

So, the cry is emitted into the ear of the mighty Apollo, the ruler who has withdrawn into what appears to be total superiority, indifference and untouchability, complete sovereign in other words. We should remember that, though the cry comes from the mouth of Creuse (a woman, and hence excluded from Athenian citizenship), Foucault stresses that, in reality, the voice and the truth it carries come from *in-between* (*entre*) of the multitude. The shouting, crying, and the truth in the cry take place without a will, without an actual subject performing the utterance. It is truth and voice emitted without a speaking subject, an anonymous voice and an anonymous truth. In Foucault's interpretation, what is important here is the voice as such (not the verbal utterance stating the mere fact of shouting or crying as such) (Foucault 2008, 119).

The passages discussed above are noteworthy for the figures Foucault uses: power and resistance is a setting related to the *mouth*, the *ear*, and the *voice*. The god Apollo, in his authority, should be the god-mouth, and also the god-voice, the mouth- and the voice of authority. As has been emphasized, the mouth and the voice of the god have become the medium of his auto-affection: when the voice emitted by the sovereign mouth is received by the god himself, by his ears, the circle is complete, without any ruptures or distractions by other voices or sounds from the outside. Apollo's ears hear only his own voice – a voice that is only for his own enjoyment, which does not transmit or convey anything for anyone else. The god has withdrawn into a self-contained *oral* and *aural circuit*, ensuring the continuation of his state of indifference and superiority.

Or so Apollo appears to believe. In the scene that Foucault gives us (the formulations are his own, not borrowed from Euripides), resistance takes place. The crying or shouting comes to interrupt the auto-affective playing of Apollo: the bare voice, the noise of the cry, which conveys truth (the unadorned *parrēsia*, without *logos*, and without an uttering subject). In spite of his desire and attempts to remain in his auto-affective circuit, not even the mighty Apollo is able to prevent the noise

from entering into his ear. Not even Apollo can exclude this voice, or prevent its unexpected – as it were, explosive and shocking – intrusion. Through the ears, through audition, the powerful ruler who believed himself untouchable and perfectly self-sufficient, *becomes open* against his will to the outside, and finds himself in a situation where he cannot choose what to hear and what not to hear. In Foucault's depiction, the figure of the ear is given the central role, the "locus" through which the most powerful ruler becomes exposed and vulnerable to what is coming from the exterior, that is, to the contingent movements of voices. Exposure to voices and sounds, emitted by anyone or anything, by the unknown, unidentifiable and unnameable. Through the ear, the alien, the anonymous, and the improper come to interrupt the pretension of the self-sufficiency and superiority of the ruler (Foucault 2008, 119).

Foucault says that this course of the story is the inversion of the ordinary or expected: the god who *should* be the *god-mouth* (*le dieu-bouche*) becomes the *god-ear* (*le dieu-oreille*). The god who should be the self-sufficient (self-relating, spontaneous, auto-affective) voice is turned into an exposed *ear*. The arrogant and indifferent ruler now becomes, to further elaborate on the ear-figure of Foucault, "all ear", that is, an uncloseable ear, one that cannot avoid hearing the voices of anonymous others, the voices of who- and whatever, the sounds of the exterior. The significance of the ear-figure in Foucault's analysis is that of the ruler becoming exposed to the noise of his subjects, of the crowd of inferiors, a noise that is not in fact even generated by any determinate subject or agent at all. The figure of the ear, as it comes to the fore in Foucault's lecture, is the figure of the ruler's becoming vulnerable to the abruptness, to the *flash* and *explosion*, to the *shock* of this voice, generated in the in-between of the plurality, unexpectedly and without anyone being able to control it in the unpredictable contacts and interactions of passions. This is the anonymous cry of the crowd, its shocking vocal emission, which even the god-ruler cannot avoid hearing and receiving – the cry that is able to challenge and knock over the religious authority, represented by the silent or cryptic oracle (Foucault 2008, 119).

What actually takes place in the scene, as read by Foucault, is the overturning of the conventional, expected setting: now, it is the god – immortal, mighty Apollo – who is *called*, not by any of his subjects or agents in particular, but by the *crowd of the mortals* through the noise generated in the horizontal conjunctions between them beyond the control of all calculation and all volition. The god who is unable to ignore or escape the noise-call, can no longer remain above and indifferent to the complaints of the mortals. The indifference and auto-affectation of Apollo, his musical virtuosity in playing the lyre and singing *paean*s to himself, are pierced by the noise of the mortal multitude. The auto-affective singing-playing becomes brutally interrupted by the cry of the *parrēsia*.

Foucault's reading of the metamorphosis into a great ear may suggest a parallel scene from Nietzsche: not the Apollonian/Dionysian difference, but the later scene from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (*Also sprach Zarathustra*) where we encounter the strange creature called the *inverse cripple* (*der umgekehrte Krüppel*). He was at one time a human being, but has become a *gigantic ear*. Again, as in Foucault's, so also in Nietzsche's scene of becoming an ear, the growth of the hearing organ until it is as big as man brings about a loss of force and power, an atrophy of everything else in the being (Nietzsche, 1930 [*Also sprach Zarathustra*], "Von der Erlösung").

In Foucault's lecture, the metamorphosis into an ear is also a kind of an onset of disability, a loss of the self-sufficiency and sovereignty, a becoming vulnerable. It is the downward movement in which Apollo is forced to descend to the level of his subjects, to give up his pretension of absolute superiority as well as his secrecy and concealment. This is the real disruptive and even violent effect of the voice in its confrontation with the irresponsible, cruel sovereign-god. In Foucault's account, a further sense of this disruption is that it marks an *event of justice*, an interpellation, where the divine ruler is made accountable for the sufferings he has caused his subjects (Foucault 2008, 54, 119).

There is the accusation, which is in reality only the vocal emission, the cry of the complaint, the noise without words and without music, in which the charge against the sovereign is put into action. This event of voice and hearing (the ruler's becoming an ear), is an act of justice that takes place outside the *polis*, that is, outside the realm of positive law and the institutions of justice. In this hearing, it is the ruler who attempts to set himself above justice, that is, above accountability to anyone for his governing over his subjects. The accusative cry, rising like a shock wave from the midst of the multitude, is one that the ruler qua ear can no longer ignore, no longer shut out (Foucault 2008, 134-135, 140).

This is the straightforward abruptness, even violence, of the voice, of its persistent claim for justice against the sovereign's claims of absolute power. In the end, the truth of Apollo's injustice is revealed, and becomes also spoken by a god (through the agency of Athena). The truth concerning Apollo's guilt (the true descent of Ion, as the illegitimate son of Creuse and Apollo), is finally revealed, and Ion is thus granted his rightful status amongst the citizens of Athens, and thus also his share in the government of the city-state. The justice is implemented. The remarkably effective and victorious subversion of the crowd of subjects occurs through their bare voice, their cry, their noise. It is this voice, which (as Foucault insists) *snatches from* (*arracher à*) the reticent ruler the confession of the injustice he has committed against his subject. The bare voice (*phōnē*) of the multitude – rising as with the shock of an explosion, without will, possessed by no agent but

coming from the anonymous interstices – is able to oblige the ruler to answer for his acts, and also results in the correction of the injustices committed, as justice is finally brought to bear and everyone is given their due share (Foucault 2008, 134-135, 140).

Conclusion

In the reading I have presented on Foucault's final lectures, what has come out is Foucault's idea of *the absolute fundamentality of the voice*, together with that of the "ear". This absolute fundamentality can be understood in at least two ways. *Firstly*, if we stay at the level of the lectures and their central subject matter, the voice and audition occupy a fundamental position in Foucault's understanding of the concept of *parrēsia*. Voice and hearing are at the center stage when the conceptual differentiation is made between the distinctive modes of *parrēsia* (of the divine, oracular sovereign; of the citizens; and of the anonymous multitude/crowd/mass). We came across the idea of the sovereign, the formation of the sovereign subject, thought in terms of a definite musical practice. There are also the speaking voices of the citizens, the game of governing *logoi*, or the game of arguments, which – according to Foucault – is an individualizing discursive game. Finally, what has been emphasized in particular is the idea of the multitude with its "*subversive parrēsia*" that takes place through the bare voice, or the cry. The differences, tensions and struggles between these modes of *parrēsia* involve, above all, the practices and regimes of the auditory-sonorous, not the ocular-visual.

Secondly, this idea of the fundamentality of the auditory-sonorous that emerges through the reading of the lectures, as I referred to at the beginning of this essay, is at odds with the somewhat common depiction of Foucault as an ocular-centrist thinker. At the beginning, I stated that, in Foucault's *oeuvre* from the 1960s archaeology of knowledge up until his death, we can find various cases where the political sense of the sonorous-auditory is dealt with. It has not been possible to discuss these in detail in this essay. Yet, they form the background against which the more general significance of the specific conclusions of this essay should be evaluated. In comparison with the earlier Foucault, the final lectures stand out in the explicitness, specificity and scope with which voice, sound and audition are treated, putting a focus on their role in the formation of multitudes. In this manner, reading the final lectures does add something highly significant to our understanding of Foucault as a political thinker, and especially, to the project of (re-)reading Foucault as a thinker of the politics of the senses.

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NOTES

1. On this more extensive project, see especially Siisiäinen (2010), where the political sense of sound, audition and listening in Foucault's thought is examined chronologically from the 1960's works up until his final lectures.
2. Despite the introduction of terminology such as *alētheia*, *disclosure* etc., we should refrain from taking too far the associations leading to Heidegger. As we follow further along in Foucault's analysis, we will notice that his "third" mode of the truth is different from that of the oracle, from the *logos* of free citizens and also from Heideggerian disclosure. As Heidegger carefully emphasized, his authentic, disclosing hearing (*das Hören*) is essentially a matter of *logos-legein*, taking place in silence, stillness and soundlessness (*das Lautlose*), not a matter of the ear, sound, noise, sonority or aurality (to mention two works in which this appears quite explicitly, see Heidegger 1979, 243-249 259-260, 266, 333, 352, 364, 382-383; Heidegger 1997, 70-71, 75, 99-100; cf. Mallet 2002; Mallet 2004).
3. Cf. the idea of *vocal-auditory narcissism* in Dolar (2006, 39-40) and Pratt (2002).
4. In fact, in one of his last works, dedicated to Jean-Luc Nancy, Derrida presents a systematic re-elaboration of the issue of the senses, of the sensory roots of the language of Occidental philosophy, of its privileged sensory tropes, and its sensory hierarchies. Far from suggesting that the aural and sonorous are privileged, he strives to show that it is above all *the touch, the tactile-haptic* sensory mode in its interplay with the optic-visual that has been given pre-eminence throughout the history of Occidental philosophy, in the metaphysical determination of truth in terms of presence (from Plato to Husserl and perhaps beyond) (Derrida 2005b, especially 120-121, 161-162).
5. The centrality in the history of Western art music – continuing still in 20th Century modernism – of spatialization of determinate kind, has in fact meant a certain *de-materialization* of sound, as was examined in detail by Foucault's friend, Pierre Boulez (2005a, 422-423; Boulez 1989, 79-86; Boulez 2005b, 95-96, 100-101).
6. To compare, very much the same qualities come to the fore in Peter Szendy's analysis of the idea of *virtuosity* and the *virtuoso*, as shown in the letters of Franz Liszt, one of the most eminent virtuosos in Western music (Szendy 2002, 13-14).
7. The *aulos* is often translated as the flute, though this translation appears to be inaccurate, if not altogether misleading. Firstly, the *aulos* is composed of two pipes, not one. More importantly, the sound of the *aulos* is characterized as *shrill, blaring and booming*, qualities hardly reminiscent of the flute (see Landels 2001, 24-26).
8. A depiction of the general centrality of noise, noisemaking, and its contagious spreading, in the myth of Dionysus and his cult can be found in another tragedy of Euripides: *The Bacchanals* (Euripides 1979, 50-70, 110-140; cf. Otto 1960, 85-87; Burkert 2001, 223-225).52

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