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Simon Peng-Keller

## "Accende lumen sensibus": On the Vocality and Sensuality of Prayer

"*Veni Creator Spiritus ... accende lumen sensibus!*" "Come, creator Spirit, thy light to every sense impart!"<sup>1</sup> The Latin verse that belonged to the steady repertoire of Roman liturgy for over one thousand years and "was inherited by all of the great churches that proceeded from the Reformation" also belongs by way of various musical renderings to the creative domain of Western music.<sup>2</sup> The words not only sound at the beginning of a conclave, but they also lend the luster of a foreign and distant sacrality to profane spaces. The mystic-poetically developed epiclesis of the Pentecost hymn combines what has drifted apart in the history of spirituality and often been perceived on the contemporary horizon as polar opposites: spirituality and sensuality. The authors of hymns and poets were permitted to do what school theology forbids; they intertwined the reality of God's spirit with the material world of sounds, colors, scents, aromas and sentient qualities.<sup>3</sup> If we are to deconstruct the catchy dual "spirituality and materiality" within the framework of this volume, that is, consider the "sacral and the profane" as a problematic antithetical form, then, not only its conceptual background, but also the historical, spiritual traces that point in another direction and open other ways of thinking ought to be taken into consideration. The central theme for the first part of my article is that, on the reflexive level, a marked contempt for the sensory has shaped the history of Western spirituality, but despite this, luckily, the lived spirituality of liturgy and prayer didn't lose a sense for sensuality. In order to precisely map the meaning of the senses in prayer, in this second section, I will advocate letting go of an action-theory that sets limitations on the theology of prayer and rather to understand prayer as a perceptual performance too. The following paragraphs will develop the consequences of this point of view by examining the sensory-auditory nature of praying. Hence, I will primarily refer to the recent

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<sup>1</sup> For a profound study on this topic see: Paolo Tomatis, "Accende lumen sensibus: la liturgia e i sensi del corpo" (Liturgico diss., Pontificio Roma, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Raniero Cantalamessa, *Komm, Schöpfer Geist: Betrachtungen zum Hymnus Veni Creator Spiritus* (Freiburg in Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2007), 16.

<sup>3</sup> An unique exception is in this regard the mystical itinerary *Scala divini amoris*, ed. Simon Peng-Keller, trans. Kurt Ruh (Freiburg in Breisgau: Verlag Kreuz, 2007).

philosophical-phenomenological reconnaissance of the voice, something seldom brought into a discussion of theology. These help to indulge the thick description of the vocality of prayer that Bernhard Waldenfels calls for in relation to the world of the senses.<sup>4</sup> The phenomenon of the voice is not only an excellent cross-road, which this proceedings addresses ("locating intersections"), but also one in which phenomenology and theology interact quite fruitfully.

## 1 Western Tendency to de-Sensualize

The ambivalent posture that distinguishes large portions of both Western intellectualism and spirituality rises from a cultural historical transition described by Karl Jaspers as the axial-age-turn. A Western indication of this far reaching cultural process of transformation that brought forth what has determined the shape of religion and philosophy for the last 2,500 years is, according to Jaspers, a process of "spiritualization."<sup>5</sup> Personal emancipation and the turn to the "inner self" implied distancing from the world and the self, which required renouncing the body and the senses. Part of this is also a metaphysical judgment of a voiceless spirit that grows ever purer as it becomes less audible.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, today it seems probable that it was particularly the discovery of the immeasurable possibilities of the written word that propelled the axial-age-turn.<sup>7</sup> The powerful difference between the material and the spiritual that marks Western thinking to this day could only be made through the sensory, that is, material-medium of the written word, which in its impartial "muteness" allows for a radical distance from itself, from contemporary institutions, and from the authority of what is transmitted. When Jasper's "spiritualization" is understood in terms of "internalization" it becomes true in different ways for both Israel and Greece. Here, as there, the new

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<sup>4</sup> Bernhard Waldenfels, "Vom Rhythmus der Sinne," in Bernhard Waldenfels, *Sinnesschwellen: Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden 3* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1997), 53-85.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, (Munich: Fischer Bücherei, 1983), 21. For a more recent discussion consult: Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas, eds., *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Louis Chrétien, "The Wounded Word: The Phenomenology of Prayer," in ed. Dominique Janicaud, *The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology* (Fordham: Fordham University Press, 2000), 147-175, esp. 152.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Assmann, "Cultural Memory and the Myth of the Axial Age," in Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas, eds., *The Axial Age and Its Consequences* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 365-407.

meanings show that texts assumed cultural-religious identity and a new way of interacting with each. As Holy Scripture increasingly took on the shape of "verbal temples enshrining divine presence,"<sup>8</sup> and the murmured Psalm meditations stood in the place of cult sacrifice in Israel,<sup>9</sup> the physical and sensory consummated contemplation (*theoria*) in Greece, which remained characteristic for the mystery cult in the axial age, was surpassed by the philosophical point of view. Each took a radical turn from the sensory world toward the intelligible world.<sup>10</sup> In the fifth century before Christ, the Greek "discovery of silent reading," when the voice is internalized and spiritualized,<sup>11</sup> prepared the way for the inward philosophical turn – realized with decided determination a bit later by Plato.<sup>12</sup> The continuing tendency toward internalization in the Christian tradition has something to do with the ethical ambivalence of sensuality; it finally also appeared in Jesus' teaching on prayer. The contemplation introduced in this context is not merely theological: "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray."<sup>13</sup> The conception that God lives in the hidden and sees into the hidden has an

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<sup>8</sup> Assmann, "Cultural Memory," 392. According to Assmann "canonized religious writings functioned as "a new trans-ethical homeland," 394.

<sup>9</sup> In this manner, for example, Psalm 34:8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good," is primarily focused on the liturgical meal; compare Peter Altmann's contribution in this volume. In the overarching context of the Psalms, this expression has the quality of a metaphor. Erich Zenger speaks with a view to Ps 27 from a "metaphorization" of temple theology: "In and with the recitation of the Psalms, the prayer calls God's reality to himself, which 'actually' is expected in and from the temple." German: "Im und mit dem Rezitieren des Psalms ruft der Beter die Gotteswirklichkeit herbei, die 'eigentlich' im und vom Tempel erwartet wird." See Erich Zenger, "Der Psalter als Heiligtum," in Beate Ego, Armin Lange, Peter Pilhofer and Kathrin Ehlers, eds., *Gemeinde ohne Tempel. Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999, 115-130, 121.

<sup>10</sup> Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in its Cultural Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Jesper Svenbro, "Archaisches und klassisches Griechenland: Die Erfindung des stillen Lesens," in Roger Chartier and Guglielmo Cavallo, eds., *Die Welt des Lesens: Von der Schriftrolle zum Bildschirm* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1999), 59-96; Jesper Svenbro, "Stilles Lesen und die Internalisierung der Stimme im alten Griechenland," in Friedrich Kittler, Thomas Macho and Sigrid Weigel, eds., *Zwischen Rauschen und Offenbarung: Zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Stimme* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2002), 55-71.

<sup>12</sup> Svenbro, *Archaisches und klassisches Griechenland*, 67: "The 'voice of the conscience,' or precisely the daimonion, which is associated with Sokrates (Platon, Apologie, 31d, among others), is obviously emblematic for this internalization – that takes place exactly in the century which provides us with the first indisputable proof for silent reading – namely, the internalization of the reader's voice, which is from then on in the position to 'read in his head'." German: „Die 'Stimme des Gewissens', oder genauer des daimonion, welches mit Sokrates (Platon, Apologie, 31d usw.) assoziiert wird, ist ohne Zweifel emblematisch für diese Verinnerlichung – die sich genau in dem Jahrhundert vollzieht, das uns den ersten unbestreitbaren Beweis für stilles Lesen liefert, nämlich die Verinnerlichung der Stimme des Lesers, der von nun an in der Lage ist, 'in seinem Kopf zu lesen'."

<sup>13</sup> Mt 6:6.

ethical explanation too: public prayer can lead to bogus and self-centered prayer praxis. In the criticism of dispersive extraversion, Jesus' proclamations and the ethos of the antique philosophical schools intersect.

The axial turn toward internalization, however, is inadequately apprehended, if we describe it as mere "spiritualization." For one, internalization is not synonymous with de-sensualization. Not only does the sacrificial cult embrace the sensual, but the murmured prayer is a bodily-sensory performance too. On the other hand, to block out sensory perception is in itself a sensory act. It follows a paradoxical law that Matthias Jung formulates concisely with a view to the axial turn: "Symbol-users can escape embodiment only by reasserting it."<sup>14</sup>

Yet, was not the axial-age-turn towards the internal self condensed in the slow crystallization of the conception that there are internal forms of prayer in which a mental presence of God's reality steps into the space of the spoken words of prayer? Could early Christian Scripture meditation in comparison to antique prayer praxis be described as more spiritually refined? Both the exegetical and the history of spirituality findings do not provide an answer here. With a view to the Pauline Letters, probably the most dependable testimony of early Christian spirituality, praying "in the spirit," is not something "purely spiritual," but it is a vocal performance and therefore also an audible event (1 Cor 14:15-16).

Whether in their prayerful approach to Holy Scripture the early Christians moved the word they read in their hearts alone (Lk 2:19:51) and not – as was usual for early Judaism – murmured it before and into themselves is also unclear. In any case, latest in the fourth century within early monasticism, that is, ironically in the context of an ascetic movement, Christians forms of meditative prayer that attributed great meaning to the bodily-sensory performance were developed. At the same time, within the framework of this early monastic movement, a contemplative prayer ideal that located the highest form of Christian prayer in a trans-verbal awareness of God's presence was established.<sup>15</sup> Still, the contemplative did not only remain tied to exceeding sensory forms of transmission, rather it is also inwrought by them. Indeed, the "inner senses" do not lie on the other side of the

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<sup>14</sup> Matthias Jung, "Embodiment, Transcendence, and Contingency: Anthropological Features of the Axial Age," in Bellah, *The Axial Age*, 77-101, 99.

<sup>15</sup> Gabriel Bunge, *Das Geistgebet: Studien zum Traktat De Oratione des Evagrius Pontikos* (Köln: Lütke Verlag, 1987).

physical world. For with the emotions or affects with which they are bound, corporeality also remains in play – even then if in the disappearance of the senses they vanish from the praying person's conscience.<sup>16</sup>

Seen as a whole, one might say that through all of the hundreds of years and beyond all of the processes of transformation, Christian prayer occurs as an eminently sensory performance. That theological reflection concerning the concrete sensory-corporeal shape of Christian prayer and meditation remained sparse well into the twentieth century is admittedly odd; yet, there is a simple historical theological explanation for this. The tendencies of the axial age shaped Christian theology to a much higher degree than it formed actual prayer practices. All of the negative qualities of human existence (finitude, fallibility, corruptibility, and so forth) became attributes of corporeality, while, in contrast, the spirit was everything desirable (freedom, objectivity, clarity, and so on). In addition, the curious blindness of theology for the positive meaning of the senses and the body may also have something to do with the problem that the most obvious is the most hidden and the most evident is the most difficult to verify and recognize. Thus, it can happen that the most important theologians *as theologians* oversee what they perform and experience every day *as those who pray* – namely, the intricate intersection of the sensory experience and spiritual recognition.

## 2. Passive-receptive Dimensions of Prayer

Next to the axial tendency to de-sensualize, the Christian theology of prayer also suffered, and is suffering, under an equally lopsided and seldom questioned actions-logic theoretical bottleneck.<sup>17</sup> Alongside a mentalist conception of the spirit as an *transmaterial* medium in a private internality that is at the same time

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<sup>16</sup> Niklaus Largier, "Die Applikation der Sinne: Mittelalterliche Ästheik als Phänomenologie rhetorischer Effekte," in Manuel Braun and Christopher John Young, eds., *Das fremde Schöne: Dimensionen des Ästhetischen in der Literatur des Mittelalters*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 43-60. That developing Christian theology in the context of antique philosophy tended toward a less sensory friendly understanding of prayer cannot be denied.

<sup>17</sup> The beginnings of the understanding of prayer discussed here are already to be found in: Simon Peng-Keller, *Einführung in die Theologie der Spiritualität* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010), 94-95.

ontologically separated from social, practical, and linguistic externals,<sup>18</sup> these contributed to the fact that the significance of the sensuality of prayer has only marginally penetrated into the theological conscience. There is no doubt that prayer is comprised of performed actions. However, the passive-receptive dimensions of prayer need consideration too. In order to locate the validity of the sensuality of prayer, it is essential to define and describe this dimension more precisely. From a pneumatological perspective, a circumscription of prayer could be a God awakened and interwoven performance.<sup>19</sup> In Pauline language, Christian prayer arises from God's self-presentation, the sighing of God's spirit in the depths of the human spirit, the pneumatic Abba-call in people's hearts (Rom 8:15-26). Prayer as an experiential opening for the reality of God does not arise from human initiative, but goes back to godly inspiration and remains dependent on it. The godly spirit working in the inner person awakens all actions *and* passions, which give the prayer event its unique shape. Thus seen, Christian prayer is a passionate following-up, a responsive attunement in a prayer of the spirit that is already a reality before anyone's actions. This occurs in artfully embellished forms like the Pentecost hymn or in phatic communication that comes forth almost without words. "Ah, yes," is the original form of prayer that contains everything and that all prayer must return to, according to Karl Barth.<sup>20</sup> Such a quick prayer is eminently physical, affective, and sensual, like all phatic communications. A wordless or sigh of few words directed to God can express the entire content of a person's heart – what pierces their bones and marrow. No matter how quietly a prayer is spoken, it is momentous that it embodies and becomes a sensual experiential expression. Thus, as an interim finding, it can be noted here that prayer is an expressional, experience that involves us in a sensory-emotional way. Lifting one's heart to God does not occur via one's own strength and initiative. We are not the only

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<sup>18</sup> Compare Fergus Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 171-173. I thank Andreas Hunziker for pointing this out. For more on a mentalistic understanding of interiority, compare John Swinton's contribution to this volume.

<sup>19</sup> One might refer to this as the *basal* passivity of prayer. For the difference between basal and correlative passivity see: Philipp Stoellger, *Passivität aus Passion: Zur Problemgeschichte einer 'categoria non grata'* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> According to: Kurt Marti, *Gott im Diesseits. Versuche zu verstehen* (Stuttgart: Radius, 2005), 15.

participating actors, but rather those equally freed to reply, suffering under the burden of prayer, as physical sensory people, parts of a prayer community and tradition.

If one tries to define the experiential nature of prayer from a Christological and ecclesiological perspective more closely, the responsiveness of prayer becomes even more accentuated. Christian prayer is a reply to Christ's prayer and in other ways to the prayer of the church. It is the prayer of the raised one in his body. What is expressed in the main Christian prayer, which is that it is a reply to a prayer invitation from Jesus, applies to all Christian prayer. To join in the Pentecost hymn means to join in a prayer that went before our prayers, which also carries our prayers to where they become silent. A multi-level registry of the senses carries the Christological and ecclesiological described responsiveness of Christian prayer. Prayer is the sensory-embodied reply to something realized in a sensory manner that becomes increasingly familiar; a word that reaches us in contexts in which we are kinesthetic and synaesthetically involved. A Latin pontifical office with frankincense, candles, hard church banks, and sweet Mass wine is not necessary. The shaky voice of a grandmother is also a sensual medium of prayer communication and communion – her weak hand with which she blesses us with the sign of a cross on our foreheads in a house that smells like the wood of old furniture. Our earliest prayer impressions can also take our prayer to where we forgot it long ago.

Letting go of an action-logical narrow point of view and paying attention to the passive dimension of prayer, the sensual nature of prayer achieves new and diverse luminescence. Prayer thereby loses the semblance of an accidental requisite and proves to be sacramental. Before I go deeper into the vocality of praying, in order to raise phenomenological sensibility, I will look at recent philosophical approaches to the senses of hearing and voice. I will limit myself to three voices, those of Sybille Krämer, Bernhard Waldenfels and Jean-Louis Chrétien.

### 3. Phenomenological Approaches to the Voice and Hearing

One must turn to the philosophers of language in order to comprehend the development of the philosophical dignity of the voice. Hamann already demanded that one must perceive language "with all of the birthmarks of sensuality," particularly

as they are revealed in tonal quality.<sup>21</sup> At this point, it seems sufficient to point out several aspects of the recent philosophical discussions. In her debate with the *linguistic turn* in twentieth-century philosophy, Sybille Krämer noted that, among other things, the arguments rest on the premise that the voice is categorized within the field of the discursive alongside writing and it is to be held separately from the iconic.<sup>22</sup> The *saying* that occurs in language and writing clearly differs from *showing* or the quality of the pictorial. The philosophy of language of the past hundred years exists in the orbit of a "Two-World-Ontology" that owes as much to the "first" Greek Enlightenment as the "second" Modern one.<sup>23</sup> Two such contrary linguistic theories as Chomsky's generative grammars and the speech-act theory of Searle or Habermas meet, at least in Krämer's opinion, both in the idealization of language and in an emphasis on standardization as well as in the fact that a concrete linguistic usage for the *embodied* voice are missing.

Krämer describes her own thought on the phenomenon of the voice as an attempt to problematize such categories and thereby regain the sensual quality of the voice. Her leitmotif is thereby the relationship of tension between the said and the shown where vocal embodying language is inherent.<sup>24</sup> In the sensual and physical form of the voice, the non-discursive becomes effective in the very own field of the discursive. The physiognomic functions of the voice are, according to Krämer,

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<sup>21</sup> Johann Georg Hamann, *Schriften zur Sprache*, ed. Hans Blumenberg and Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), 204.

<sup>22</sup> Sybille Krämer, "Die Heterogenität der Stimme oder: Was folgt aus Friedrich Nietzsches Idee, dass die Lautsprache hervorgeht aus der Verschmelzung von Bild und Musik?" in Alfred Messerli, Hans-Georg Pott and Waltraud Wiethölter, eds., *Stimme und Schrift: Zur Geschichte und Systematik sekundärer Oralität* (München: Fink, Wilhelm, 2008), 57-74; Sybille Krämer, "Die, Rehabilitierung der Stimme. Über die Oralität hinaus," in Doris Kolesch and Sybille Krämer, eds., *Stimme: Annäherung an ein Phänomen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 269-295; Sybille Krämer, "Sprache - Stimme - Schrift: Sieben Gedanken über Performativität als Medialität," in Uwe Wirth, ed., *Performatanz: Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 323-346.

<sup>23</sup> Krämer, *Sprache - Stimme - Schrift*, 323-24. Krämer calls these the "'Protestant gestus' in the cultural sciences." These are, moreover, "no plea for Catholicism, rather an allusion to the semiological new interpretation of the host, which the Reformed no longer see as the real embodiment, but much more - exclusively - as a semiotic representation of Christ," 325. Krämer appears to have the Zwinglian, however, not the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper in mind. German: "kein Plädoyer für den Katholizismus, sondern eine Anspielung auf die semiologische Uminterpretation der Hostie, die den Reformatoren nicht mehr als wirkliche Verkörperung, vielmehr - nur noch - als semiotische Repräsentation Christi galt."

<sup>24</sup> Krämer, *Die Heterogenität der Stimme*, 63. In this context, "Embodiment," according to Krämer, designates "the seam of the creation of sense from non-sense phenomena," Krämer, *Sprache - Stimme - Schrift*, 345. German: "Verkörperung" kennzeichnet nach Krämer in diesem Zusammenhang "die Nahtstelle der Entstehung von Sinn aus nicht-sinnhaften Phänomenen."

not only primarily phylogenetic, but they are essential for every evolved form of communication. She points out their pre-symbolic and pre-propositional layer. In an enactment of speech, our voice shows that it is either in agreement with what was said, and supports it, or that it stands in dissonance to it and undermines it: "Our language functions in a pre-symbolic, a pre-verbal, and non-propositional dimension in which it is less about *what* we say, and much more about *how* we say something."<sup>25</sup>

This "how" creates the affective foundation of our understanding. It makes possible the *phatic* communication, something deeply interwoven with our corporeality. According to Krämer, the heard, bodily begotten voice is the "trace of body in language."<sup>26</sup> One can still speak of a bodily trace when the voice is silent and goes on to say nothing. "In that withdrawal of voice... which by sheer absence appears to remain silent, comes...something to light that stands against the aisthesis of vocality. What transpires in silence, qua material mark on a surface and event for the senses, cannot be reconstructed exactly."<sup>27</sup>

The voice reveals what moves us. Yet, the strength of a voice goes far beyond this. It interacts with us as speakers. We are realized in our performance of the said. Our voice is our own and reveals us; still, according to Krämer, it also has a "heterogeneous" quality. The externality of its tone, on the other hand, actually has a special proximity to internality. The sound of a voice plays on the rich register of phatic communication and lives from the space of resonance and the affective. Yet, the materiality and exteriority of a voice is the starting point for reflexivity. To hear and see ourselves speak on a recording or video is sometimes strangely disconcerting. Although the medium functions as a contact with ourselves, our voices also seem self-distanced. The process lends thought objectivity and authority – for the speaker as well. Demanding and promising voices, which embody social powers to bind and to organize morality as well as their dangers, develop an transpersonal existence of their own that occasionally dominates others through their psychological efficacy. That we are not only dealing with the phenomenon of the speaking voice, but also equally with listeners, grows particularly clear here. Before we begin to speak, we are spoken to: quietly and

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<sup>25</sup> Krämer, *Die Rehabilitierung der Stimme*, 274.

<sup>26</sup> Krämer, *Die Rehabilitierung der Stimme*, 275.

<sup>27</sup> Krämer, *Die Rehabilitierung der Stimme*, 289.

encouraging, but also loudly and imposing, critically and demanding. Thus seen, our speech always has the character of a response. We proceed from voices that go before us, and these become part of our speech.

Krämer's reflections here connect with various contributions that Bernhard Waldenfels published in line with and in continuation of the phenomenological tradition on this point. Responsive hearing and the Logos of the answering voice grow, according to Waldenfels, from the pathos of being spoken to, and they remain in-wrought by them. "We can only say what we hear by answering. Yet, this saying comes from hearing itself, likewise hearing becomes an answering listening."<sup>28</sup> Waldenfels holds to the premise, among others, that the voice *as voice* is easily overheard. Hereby, it is "not only because the noises disappear behind the proclaimed meaning. The phenomenon of hearing is unrecognized when one does not suspect more than the announcement of something that is already there in stillness and is merely waiting to perform."<sup>29</sup>

In this sense, both speaking and hearing maintain the character of an event. In them, something new takes shape. In spoken and heard experiences, the sound and fading of a voice can reveal the unheard of and the un-thought. Voices let the in-audible become sound; they correlate with silence – the rear and background of linguisticality.<sup>30</sup> The eventfulness of a vocal statement is last but not least manifest in its volatility. Pitches and tones escape the listener as they fade, and precisely thereby, they create such a momentous time-space. Respectively, part of listening is eavesdropping. The ecstatic tendency that makes the process of hearing unique is particularly sensible in this context: "Hearing, we are never totally here; hearing, we are never completely by ourselves."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the larger vision of this is applicable to speech: it is bound to the vocal chords of the speaker and therefore localized. Yet, as a heard voice, it belongs to the listener as well as the speaker. "In this sense, the voice has no place; yes, it proves itself to be a sort of no-place,

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<sup>28</sup> Bernhard Waldenfels, "Klänge und Töne aus der Ferne," in Bernhard Waldenfels, *Sinne und Künste im Wechselspiel: Modi ästhetischer Erfahrung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 159-179, 165-66.

<sup>29</sup> Bernhard Waldenfels, "Medialer Widerhall der Stimme," in Bernhard Waldenfels, *Phänomenologie der Aufmerksamkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 186-204, hier: 187.

<sup>30</sup> Bernhard Waldenfels, "Lautwerden der Stimme," in Waldenfels, *Sinne und Künste*, 180-207, 206.

<sup>31</sup> Waldenfels, *Klänge und Töne aus der Ferne*, 168.

in as much as, it is obviously not able to be more precisely captured than as a metaphor for an instable "in between."<sup>32</sup>

In Waldenfels' phenomenology of the voice, his development of the corporeal aspect is equal to its logicality and its social, and ethical meaning; therefore, one might also read it as a contribution to philosophical anthropology. We find our way into the community of the listener and speaker as living beings to whom someone else speaks; thereby, we are provoked to bring our own parts into the concert of voices. After receiving the spoken word and hearing the ourself speak, the voices overlies each other: in one's own voice strange ones sounds, and together with the foreign, twangs of our own.<sup>33</sup> That the speaking and listening body does not represent a simple instrument of registration or reproduction is seen in the pregnant polymorphic nature of the voice configurations, which make human communication so colorful.<sup>34</sup> Waldenfels differentiates between three voice types in which para-linguistic devices such as tone fall and timber are each uniquely operative: *speaking voices*, *singing voices* and *shouting voices*.

All this is to be considered with regard to the vocality of prayer. In the phenomenological writings by Jean-Louis Chrétien, we find valuable pathways in this direction. Like Krämer and Waldenfels, Chrétien also emphasizes the responsivity of human speech. Likewise, he extends them to religious experiences and language. By taking up the phenomenological-hermeneutical idea that things are collected in language and then brought to explicit manifestation, Chrétien developed the idea of an ark of the word. "As a new Ark of Noah that collects all things within itself in order to lend these a common form, language is destined to sing the praises of the creation and thereby to say yes to creation."<sup>35</sup> Speakers stand in the role of witnesses. Chrétien give to this observation also found in Krämer a theological turn.<sup>36</sup> Together with Chrétien, I now turn to the phenomenon that was our starting point.

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<sup>32</sup> Waltraud Wiethölter, *Stimme und Schrift: Szenen einer Beziehungsgeschichte*, in Waltraud Wiethölter, Hans G. and Alfred Messerli Pott, eds., *Stimme und Schrift: zur Geschichte und systematik sekundärer Oralität* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2008), 9-53, 20 (after D. Kolesch).

<sup>33</sup> Wiethölter, *Stimme und Schrift*, 196.

<sup>34</sup> Wiethölter, *Stimme und Schrift*, 170.

<sup>35</sup> After Hans-Dieter Gondek/László Tengelyi, *Neue Phänomenologie in Frankreich* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), 579.

<sup>36</sup> Dominique Janicaud, *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Combas: Folio essais, 1991).

#### 4. The Vocality of Prayer

Liturgical scholarship in particular has been working for quite some time to rehabilitate the sensuality of prayer.<sup>37</sup> The French Jesuit Joseph Gelineau, to whom the Vatican II Council has much to thank for important impulses in church music, actually anticipated with a view to liturgical singing a number of ideas later assumed by phenomenology.<sup>38</sup> In the following, I pursue his idea that the voice within the framework of prayer gains a sacramental meaning precisely through its sensual-physiognomic quality. The tonal materiality of a prayer voice is in the same measure a medium of the sacral that Christian spirituality finds precisely in the corporeal-sensory its highest character. In the praying voice, the *what* of the said is entangled with the *how*, the *sense* with the *sensuality*, one's own language with that of the other, with the voice from before, with, and those echoing the prayer.

##### 4.1 *Sacramental Sensuality*

In the incarnation of the holy, the holy takes on a sensual shape per se. Despite this, under the conditions of time and space, which reign over human sensuality, becoming present is accompanied by the shadow of disappearance and in some cases is also accompanied by dwindling senses. The inviting word that God spoke into this world (even if it should be his last word) sounds in such a way that it always sounds new. The word comes to language and takes on a sensual realizable shape in both proclamation and prayer. It is audible and can be repeated, generates resonance, or sounds empty. In its liturgical sound-form, the *verbum externum* is sometimes similar to a river in which those it addresses can dive in without sinking. Churches are acoustic rooms in which God's Word and the forms of prayer evoked by him obtain an echo of reply. The architects of Roman and Gothic Cathedrals created through their particular interior design the deeper and darker tones of a long reverberating echo, which leads to a longer and relaxed feeling for time and space, "The natural tone landscape is exchanged for a church tone

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<sup>37</sup> In systematic prayer theology, there is a logo-centric bottleneck to report similar to the one that Krämer ascertained with a view to the twentieth-century philosophy of language. Indeed, "speech event" and "word event" function as key words in hermeneutical theology. However, the sensual qualities of the prayer voice are often overseen.

<sup>38</sup> Compare Joseph Gelineau, *Die Musik im christlichen Gottesdienst: Prinzipien, Gesetze, praktische Anwendungen* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1965), 13.

landscape that lifts the acoustic everyday environmental orientation and specifically refashions it."<sup>39</sup> The emphasis on the lower frequencies and the dampening of the higher, which are necessary for localizing the acoustic noise, awaken the feeling of surround sound and stepping outside of the familiar world.

Navid Kermani, who explored the aesthetic of the Koran in his dissertation, provides a thick description of a similar word and sound experience.<sup>40</sup> According to Kermani, reciting the Koran has a "quasi sacramental character."<sup>41</sup> The subject concerns a sacramentality that circumvents the antithesis of the sacral and the profane. The emphatic calling, repetitive voice of the Muezzins, penetrates into the everyday world in Muslim countries: "The loudspeaker of the Mosque, television, radio, and private tape recorders create in many regions a blanket sound that underlies the life of the faithful with God's voice. Particularly those who wander around cities like Cairo or Damascus on late afternoons during Ramadan are altogether engulfed in the rays of the Koran verses."<sup>42</sup> Whoever recites the Koran verses is, "compelled to imagine them self emotionally in the revelation situation."<sup>43</sup> Those who pray in this manner should "be aware of their own position in a chain of covenantal acts that go back to God's speeches to Gabriel...."<sup>44</sup> In a symbolic alignment with the revelation occurrence, the speaker has the task of producing the sound, "that Gabriel taught the prophet, which he shared with his colleagues."<sup>45</sup> The closest Christian parallel to this lies in the Catholic Rosary prayer.

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<sup>39</sup> Horst Wenzel, *Hören und Sehen, Schrift und Bild: Kultur und Gedächtnis im Mittelalter* (München: C.H. Beck, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> Navid Kermani, *Gott ist schön: Das ästhetische Erleben des Koran* (München: C.H. Beck, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> Kermani, *Gott ist schön*, 222: "quasi sakramentlichen Charakter."

<sup>42</sup> Kermani, *Gott ist schön*, 222: "Moscheelautsprecher, Fernsehen, Radio und private Kassettenrekorder erzeugen in vielen Regionen einen Klangteppich, der das Leben der Gläubigen mit der Stimme Gottes unterlegt. Besonders wer im Ramadan spätnachmittags durch Städte wie Kairo oder Damaskus streift, den scheinen die Verse des Koran gleichsam einzuhüllen."

<sup>43</sup> Kermani, *Gott ist schön*, 225: "angehalten, sich emotional in die Offenbarungssituation hineinzuversetzen."

<sup>44</sup> Kermani, *Gott ist schön*, 225: "den Gabriel den Propheten gelehrt und den dieser an seine Gefährten weitergegeben hat."

<sup>45</sup> Mireille Schnyder, "Kunst der Vergegenwärtigung und gefährliche Präsenz. Zum Verhältnis von religiösen und weltlichen Lesekonzepten," in Peter Strohschneider, *Literarische und religiöse Kommunikation in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 427-452, 433-34: "Über den vorgelesenen Text konstituiert sich ein Raum, in dem sich die darin anwesenden Körper zu einer Hörer-Gemeinschaft zusammenschließen. So hat Vorlesen auch immer den Charakter einer Inszenierung, in religiösem Kontext auch des Ritualen. Durch die Lautfolge des gesprochenen Wortes sowie die Kontinuität der Erzählung und Logik des Gehörs ist der Raum der Lektüre durch eine lineare Zeitstruktur geprägt."

The prayer lends the words of the Angel Gabriel a voice as well, and through monotone repetition, it produces a sound space that takes the prayer equally meditatively and sensually into the word sensation of the Christian revelation. Particularly when prayed in alternating voices, it comes to a sensory realization interwoven with address and request; whereby, the first is equivocal: on the first level of meaning, an intercessor addresses Mary; on a second level, the prayer self comes alongside Mary, who the angel addressed, and is identifiable in a typological interpretation. The responsive listening and praying sets off an affective-cognitive, an internalization process that functions to build community. In this type of hearing and praying, an inner room takes shape encompassed by a tonally formed community space. What Mireille Schnyder wrote with regard to the middle ages for the community *lectio divina* applies as an analogy for Rosary prayer (and other forms of prayer) today, "A room is constituted above the text read out-loud in which the bodies that are present are closed together as a community of listeners. Thus, reading-out-loud also always has the character of an enactment, and in religious contexts, also the ritual. Through the phonetic sequence of the spoken words as well as the continuity of telling and the logic of listening, the reading room is shaped by a linear time structure."<sup>46</sup>

The ritual staging in which the exchange of voices plays a central role, serves in a sensual realization of the holy presence, but equally, it serves the self-presence of the praying person. Then the holy word-event requires a watchful spirit and demands sensual self-presence. Such prayer represents a syn-aesthetic presentation, and the focus on the voice and hearing thus far is indebted to a methodological hardly avoidable abstraction. Part of the syn-aesthetic unity of the until now mere description of auditory aspects of prayer execution logically includes e.g. the visual perception of light that influences the atmosphere of a prayer room, the tactile sensation of the distinguishing marks of the Rosary beads, the bodily experience of the vicinity of the scented space of a church, or any other place of prayer. If the Rosary is spoken responsively with a prayer leader, then in order to invoke the Holy and to become present before the Holy One, the individual voice quality

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<sup>46</sup> Krämer, *Die 'Rehabilitierung der Stimme,'* 247: "Mit dem der Stimme eigenen Mischungsverhältnis von ‚Brustton‘ und ‚Kopftön‘ autorisiert sich Macht und signalisiert sich Ohnmacht, stellen sich Inponiergehabe und Aggressivität zur Schau, enthüllen sich Unsicherheit und Defensivität."

matters: the vocal range, timbre, linguistic velocity, modulation, articulation, and so on. The voices of prayer can be inviting or repulsive. Haste and harshness, as well as an infectious intensity, or peace can be manifest in them.

#### *4.2 Sensual Testimony and Affective Resonance*

The responsive form of prayer just described can be depicted as reciprocal testimony. Then, although prayer is discernable from proclamation, when it occurs in public it has a testimonial character. Prayer leaders testify to God's approachability and attest to themselves as people who depend on God and acknowledge this in prayer. No matter whether in consideration of spontaneous or formal prayer, the role that para-lingual moments play in such prayer testimonies is not to be underestimated. What Sybille Krämer writes with a view to the communicative meaning of para-lingual vocality, can easily be transferred to the prayer situation, "With the voices own mixed relationship to 'breast tones' and 'head tones,' power is authorized and powerlessness is signaled, the desire to impress and be aggressive are displayed, insecurities and defensiveness are revealed."<sup>47</sup> The voice shows something beyond the speaker's control. A nakedness and rawness are qualified that can only be temporarily covered with the material of voice training and the cloak of official status.

In order to give my thoughts greater clarity, I reach back to a personal experience, which has sustainably influenced me, despite its apparent insignificance. It was fall of 1997. I was spending a week with youth in the Taizé community. At that time, Frère Roger's shaky voice impressed me most. After the songs faded and the crackle of the loud speakers, his voice was quiet and whispered ever so fragile as tender and affirmative a prayer into the microphone. If my memory does not fail me, it always began with the same vocative, "Jésus le Christ!" Although these prayer words were full of emotion and poesy, they did not carry anything mincing for me. They reached me as a declaration of love from a person, who was

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<sup>47</sup> For the stress that lies in the roles of the witness, see: Sybille Krämer, "Zum Paradoxon von Zeugenschaft im Spannungsfeld von Personalität und Depersonalisierung. Ein Kommentar über Authentizität in fünf Thesen," in Michael Rössner and Heidemair Uhl, eds., *Renaissance der Authentizität?: Über die neue Sehnsucht nach dem Ursprünglichen* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012), 15-26.

burning with the great passion for he whom he called upon and stood at the end of his long journey, his whispering words were the sum of his life experience. That is no objective characterization. These are the perceptions of a confessionally marked and situation-determined ear moved by some voices, and irritated by others. Against such descriptions, arguments could arise that claim it stamped by an pathos of authenticity that makes prayer subjective to an unreasonable mass. Comparatively, the liturgical ideal could lead into the field, after the subjectivity of the prayer leader steps back behind the objective shape of the liturgy, and the personal voice becomes transparent for the *ecclesia orans*. Whoever feels obliged to this ideal, for this person, the communal Taizé prayer probably seems too emotional and spontaneous. Not everyone likely do not find the same pleasure in the daily transitions of Frère Roger's prayers as me. Indeed, even the intonation of the transsubjective-ecclesial character of the liturgical prayer voice that was finally also characteristic for the Pontificate Benedict XVI naturally had its own particular sound that achieves affective resonance, or not. Also avoiding all subjective-situative affectivity is an approach to shaping affectivity. Pope Benedict was a speaking example for this. In addition to all of his exquisite knowledge of Latin and the indisputable will to self-denial, his prayers spoken with a German accent – worldwide transmission of his Latin prayer sounded undeniably personal – for the one a reminder of home, smelling to the other like antiquated piety. The task of the prayer leader is that of a double testimony. Prayer leaders stand in the gap for others and do not speak in their own names to realize a self-initiated commission. Yet, they are also untenable persons, who have realized this role in this moment *coram Deo et ecclesia*.<sup>48</sup> The tension filled interconnection demands a conscious search for the passing tonal range, the correct tempo, the balance of insistence and self-revocation. The resonance on the inevitable personal sound of a prayer voice is beyond the control of the leader and other prayer voices. The more intimate the prayers are with each other, the more this is contingent on other factors. The voice stands for the speaker, who lends or destroys his or her own credibility.

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<sup>48</sup> This is also the leitmotif of the dissertation rich in material by Tomatis, *Accende lumen sensibus*. In Tomatis terminology, the word register of sensual prayer forms belongs to the dialectic of comprehension (*implicatione*) and excess (*accidenza*).

If prayer is a communicative event and communication lives to a large part in the pathic dimension, then the previously described aspects are no aesthetic accessories, but rather affect the core of the prayer event. The voice embodies the presence of the other. In it, his or her presence testifies as the one who receives me and demands me. This can be annoying and disturb my peace, like riding in an over-full train or a poorly insulated apartment – or make us happy like back then in Taizé when the voice of Frère Rogers engulfed me with prayer. (Prayer) voices have a pre-ethical aspiration; one cannot not reply. In addition, they embody a gift that reaches us before we realize it. To answer, can mean different things: being all ears and resting in the things heard; or rather to find one's own way into the Word and to embrace an articulation-event that takes me beyond myself.

#### 4.3 *Voices as a Medium for Collection and Self-transcendence*

Speaking, reciting or singing and listening to a prayer of one's own or that of a strange prayer voice works equally centering and de-centering.<sup>49</sup> The paradoxical essence of prayer is why. Jean-Louis Chrétien describes it thus, "effusion that collects and an offering that concentrates."<sup>50</sup> Even though it depends on the interconnection of these two moments, I observe them in the following as particular in order to profile the roles that the voice has in them. Not only the prayer *words* that draw our attention to the reality of God; the prayer *voice* also collects in that it gives our spirit a sensual mooring.<sup>51</sup> Sensitivity to sensual qualities in general and for sounds in particular function in a strong sense as collection. They lead from absorbing thought and phantasy worlds to the here and now. If we are all ears, for a moment, whatever had taken our notice disappears to the background. Euphonies that awaken our attention and with their over and under tones refine our sense of hearing belong to the principle inventory of the great prayer traditions. Bells and instruments of all kinds support the prayer voice in its task to collect the human spirit back from its absentmindedness and to collect it towards God's

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<sup>49</sup> Chrétien, *The Wounded Word*, 168.

<sup>50</sup> Compare already: Bonaventura, *Breviloquium*, trans. Marianne Schlosser (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 2006), 229 (v.10): "...our inner inclination is awakened by the spoken words, and directed toward the sense of the words our scattered thoughts are collected." German: "...durch die gesprochenen Worte wird unsere innere Neigung geweckt, und gerichtet auf den Sinn der Worte sammeln sich unsere zerstreuten Gedanken."

<sup>51</sup> Compare: Martin Schleske, *Der Klang: Vom unerhörten Sinn des Lebens*, (München: Kösel-Verlag, 2010), 103.

presence. Strangely, precisely the volatility of the sounds and voices contribute to this collection. The lower range of sound, the pianissimo, affects a holy silence.<sup>52</sup> When the by-gone sound immediately resounds, it challenges our presence and confronts us with the effort to be present and to remain attentive. What seems spontaneously to be more difficult –namely, to say a prayer and at the same time to think of something completely different is usually not that difficult. The sensory sound of prayer words, which we recognized, are the same as a well-shaped bannister on which our evasive spirit can clamber. The prayer voice collects us in that it marks an exteriority, something not impaired by our drifting thoughts. The voice opens a sensual experiential room of sound that encompasses the stormy sea of our moods and feelings, which makes a salutary distance to our absorbing affects possible.

Spoken, recited, and sung prayers work collecting because in them much more sounds right than we intend and are often aware of. Just like a stringed instrument, the untouched strings covibrate; each tone has gentle under and over tone. Describing prayer as an expression of an occurrence, it encompasses various inseparable cognitive and affective indexes. When our voice sounds we are physically and spiritually involved. The thereby highly integrational potential of the voice has what Krämer coins "threshold character." "It is sensual and sensory, somatic and semantic, indexical and symbolic, natural and artificial, affective and cognitive, discursive and iconic, individual and social, material and immaterial, physical and psychic...."<sup>53</sup>

The threshold character of the voice has an "anagogical" sense introduced above as a de-centralized quality. The voice is a medium of praying self-trans-as-cendence.<sup>54</sup> To gift one's ears with resounding prayer words and fading after tones is a means to content self-forgetting. The intentionality that marks everything spoken takes a special shape that is against the grain, which has as much to do with the *from* and *to where* of prayer as with its performance. Although praying is auto-affective, praying is not talking to oneself, even when it looks like it from the

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<sup>52</sup> Krämer, *Die 'Rehabilitierung der Stimme'*, 290.

<sup>53</sup> Compare: Jean-Greisch, *Das Spiel der Transzendenz: „Trans-Aszendenz“, „Trans-Deszendenz“, „Trans-Passibilität“, „Trans-Possibilität“* (in press).

<sup>54</sup> Casper, *Das Ereignis des Betens*, 62, speaks in reference to E. Lévinas from a „bouleversement de l'intentionnalité“ that is the paradox of a „nichtintentionalen Intentionalität“ (not intentional intentionality).

perspective of the observer. It much more situate oneself in a sensual realizable way in God's presence, and it open oneself to, among other things, what occurs when somebody is able to bring his/her needs or joy into the language of prayer. It lies in the dynamic of prayer that it does not remain by vocalization. That a prayer according to Jesus' teaching should be short, has its reasoning exactly in that it is not depleted in self-statement, but it should be transferred to the heard.<sup>55</sup> Prayer accomplishes *de profundis*, that is, in voices that through the espalier of words move upwards beyond all that can be spoken, for instance in the Gregorian of melismatic song going out and beyond all words. If as Waldenfels argues, the lingering sound awakens to itself and harkening after the sound, the listener steps outside of himself, then this is true of prayer in a particularly important way, "Listening we are never completely here, listening we are never completely and totally by our selves."<sup>56</sup> According to Johannes Cassian, someone who leads an intense spontaneous prayer, finds the perfected prayer where the prayer forgets that they are praying and forgets *that* they pray.<sup>57</sup>

#### 4.4 "Silence is praise to you" (Ps 65:1): What Words Cannot Contain

Silence belongs to the vocality of prayer. The particular affinity of prayer to silence comes on the one hand from the unspeakable nature of God's name, on the other, however, from the overwhelming nature of joy and sorrow. While most of the modern translations of Ps 65:1 do not translated the text above on hand the Masoretic text ("Silence is praise to you"), rather on hand the Septuagint as "Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion"<sup>58</sup>, " presents a simple translation issue.<sup>59</sup> Still it contributes to this day to a destructive dominance of the second variation of Western ent-sensualization of the prayer voice, which also means the same for silence.

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<sup>55</sup> Compare: Anno Schoenen, "Oration brevis, Das Kurze Gebet als Wesenszug des stillen Gebetes in der Tradition und heute," in Anno Schoenen, ed., *Itinera Domini: Gesammelte Aufsätze aus Liturgie und Mönchtum* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1988), 175-188.

<sup>56</sup> Waldenfels, *Klänge und Töne*, 168.

<sup>57</sup> Johannes Cassian, *Conférences VIII-XVII*, trans. v. E. Pichery (Paris 1958), 66 (Coll. 9,31): „non est [...] perfecta oratio, in qua se monachus vel hoc ipsum quod orat intellegit.”

<sup>58</sup> English Standard Version.

<sup>59</sup> Compare the comments of Erich Zengers, who includes his translation of the masoretische text, in Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalmen 51-100* (Freiburg in Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2000), 213-14. The Vulgata includes both variations: "Te decet hymnus" (iuxta LXX) and "Tibi silens [bzw. silentium] laus" (iuxta hebr.).

Thereby, a view to the complete composition of the Psalm and its theology of silence was distorted. Lifting the entry of the cited verse correlates the denouement of the Psalm –namely, the silent joy of the valleys covered with grain (v.12). The weight of people's transgressions (v.2) is entrusted to God's silencing strength, that not only stills the roaring waves of the sea, but also the tumult of the peoples (v. 6). The joyful silence that Psalm 65 voices qualifies a differential praise-quality in itself: an appreciative sigh before God, an unspeakable jubilation, perhaps ever "a trusting poise of expectation in the sense of the refrain of Psalm 62."<sup>60</sup>

A silent prayer in the form of astonished muteness, a short pause in which one opens the self to silence or languish is the home of a particular sensuality that is intimately related to that of the voice. In this point as well, contemporary theology of prayer can learn from the phenomenological exploration of the voice. Silence and quiet are to be described as modi of vocality, according to Krämer, because something *appears* in them that stands across from aisthesis and vocality, while at the same time making it possible "What transpires in silence, qua material mark on a surface and event for the senses, cannot be reconstructed exactly."<sup>61</sup> What Krämer describes as a marked surface likely refers to the dimension of the time of silence; it is embraced from the forms of speech and has its beginning and end in the spoken word. That the space of silence is opened verbally becomes visible and audible in the following poem by Eugen Gomringer:

silence	silence	silence
silence	silence	silence
silence		silence
silence	silence	silence
silence	silence	silence <sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Hossfeld, *Psalmen*, 214.

<sup>61</sup> Krämer, *Die, 'Rehabilitierung der Stimme,'* 289.

<sup>62</sup> Eugen Gomringer, *Konkrete Poesie* (Stuttgart 1972), 58; quoted according to: Claudia E. Kunz, *Schweigen und Geist. Biblische und patristische Studien zu einer Spiritualität des Schweigens* (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 32.

In order to grasp the sensuality of silence, it is helpful to discern between the *vocal* and the *verbal*. In vocal silence the voice is silent, in verbal silence the words and our thoughts in words come to rest.<sup>63</sup> Silent prayer is non-vocal, but not always non-verbal, because prayer can be spoken inaudibly in the spirit. Considering the timeliness of prayer, other differences arise: the *preverbal* silence precedes the words of prayer, while the prayer fades in *transverbal* silence. The later can be described in two ways, as *whiling in the resonance* of a spoken prayer, but in the same way as *an empty space of saying* in which *the unspeakable* can reveal itself. That silence is able to accompany and influence verbal prayer can already be ascertained in that, on the one hand, every form of speech requires pauses, while on the other hand, prayer is dependent in principal on carefully listening to the prayer voice, that can be audibly heard, but does not have to be. Silence has – seen from the perspective of phenomenology – finally, also its own topography.<sup>64</sup> With a view to the act of prayer, one might say that in a prayerful posture and with the bodily-physical experience that belongs to this context, silence embodies and localizes.<sup>65</sup> Not merely the voice, but also silence has a space-building dimension. It opens acoustic space and makes it possible to hear things in the background and far away. Where people are immersed in prayer, it can also bring forth the feeling that space grows larger. As the sound of one bird enhances the silence of a garden, the silence of prayer becomes special through the quiet, proximity of sound both audible and tactile: a whisper, a murmur, a breath, and so on. The boundaries to sound that break the silence, may be ever as flowing as they are subjective.

Not only does spoken communication, but also communal silence performs in an experiential and sensory perceptible manner. Silence is synaesthetic. "The senses

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<sup>63</sup> Kunz, *Schweigen und Geist*, 36: Claudia Kunz who draws this distinction elucidates "that the Latins saw silence as non-verbal; however, the Greeks understood it as non-vocal, although, verbal phenomenon. In the first sense, it is realizable in a sensual way, in the second, spiritually." German: "daß der Lateiner das Schweigen eher als nonverbales, aber vokales Phänomen vernimmt, der Grieche es aber als nonvokales, gleichwohl verbales Phänomen versteht. Im ersten Fall ist es sinnlich vernehmbar, im zweiten Fall geistig verstehbar"

<sup>64</sup> Compare: Mireille Schnyder, *Topographie des Schweigens: Untersuchungen zum deutschen höfischen Roman um 1200* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); Hartmut von Saß, "Topographien des Schweigens: Eine einleitende Orientierung," in Hartmut von Saß, ed., *Stille Tropen: Zur Rhetorik und Grammatik des Schweigens* (München: Karl Alber, 2013), 9-29.

<sup>65</sup> Kunz, *Schweigen und Geist*, 31.

intersect in the medium of silence."<sup>66</sup> In silence, the voice comes together with sitting quietly, standing, kneeling or lying, with an abiding outlook, by moving the lips or feeling the knots or prayer string. Perceiving these sensations follows the intentionality of the prayer to encounter God's reality; to open oneself, to listen. According to Claudia Kunz, consolidation and transformation occur in prayer. In the silence of prayer, the senses become "clairvoyant and sensitive for the goodness," for the hidden presence of God.<sup>67</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

The difference between a vocal and non-verbal silence leads us back to the starting point of my thoughts – to the axial age turn towards the inner. In respect to prayer praxis, it has brought the view, that there are interiorized forms of prayer in which a mental realization of God's reality enters into the place of unspoken prayer words. The execution of what happens "in the spirit" during such prayer, what *is revealed* or sensed, is difficult to put into words. The *cognitio Dei et hominis* that occurs in such trans-verbal and non-vocal prayer is thereby no "purely spiritual" happening, because this sensory experience does not occur in a body or senses that are disconnected from the intellect, rather it is combined in multifaceted ways with sensory-bodily perceptible performance and also prerequisites these. In the medium of the senses in general and the voice in particular, on equally numerous levels of inaccessibility, in the epiclesis, what the Pentecost hymn invokes, infers God's immediate spiritual presence as reason, horizon, and motive for all prayers. Theological sensibility to the sensual and audible nature of prayer brings its revelational and event character to light.

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<sup>66</sup> Christiaan L. Hart Nibbrig, *Rhetorik des Schweigens: Versuch über den Schatten literarischer Rede* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), 252; quote: Kunz, *Schweigen und Geist*, 27.

<sup>67</sup> Kunz, *Schweigen und Geist*, 28.

