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what are we missing? voice and listening as an event¹

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abstract

The paper begins with the concept of voice, and tries to question its different meanings, especially in educational settings, in order to propose a philosophical framing of people-of-young-age's material voices. It then proposes to understand those voices as disruptive differences or opportunities to (re)think about our roles as educators and, most of all, to return to the question of what a philosophical approach to childhood might disrupt. In doing so, it outlines some ideas about "voice" as sound and materiality (Cavarero, 2005) and about "listening" as permanent attention to what might emerge (Nancy, 2002; Davies, 2014), in order to then extend specific meanings of these concepts to the practice of thinking philosophically with people of different ages in the community of philosophical inquiry educational setting (Kennedy; Kennedy, 2012). It also builds on the concept of "event" by Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze, 2013) as a potential immanent within a confluence of forces to then ask how we can foster a philosophical way of living (in) education that understands people-of-young-age's material voices as something we cannot afford to lose. Finally, the paper proposes to frame the community of philosophical inquiry as a philosophical community

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what are we missing? voice and listening as an event

of voices, in the sense of an opportunity to experience the materiality of all the voices as something that matters for the shared thought of its participants.

keywords: voice; listening; childhood; event; community of philosophical inquiry

que estamos perdiendo? voz y escucha como acontecimiento

resumen

El artículo comienza con el concepto de voz y intenta cuestionar sus diferentes significados, especialmente en los entornos educativos, para proponer un encuadre filosófico de las voces materiales de las personas-de-poca-edad. A continuación, propone entender esas voces como diferencias disruptivas u oportunidades para (re)pensar sobre nuestro papel como educadores y, sobre todo, para retornar a la pregunta sobre qué es lo que un enfoque filosófico de la infancia puede transtornar. Al hacer esto, se esbozan algunas ideas sobre la "voz" como sonido y materialidad (Cavarero, 2005) y también sobre la "escucha" como atención permanente a lo que pueda emerger (Nancy, 2002; Davies, 2014), para luego extender los significados particulares de estos conceptos a la práctica de pensar filosóficamente con personas de diferentes edades en el entorno educativo de la comunidad de investigación filosófica (Kennedy y Kennedy, 2012). También se basa en el concepto de "acontecimiento" de Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze, 2013), como un potencial inmanente dentro de una confluencia de fuerzas, para luego preguntar cómo podemos fomentar una forma filosófica de vivir (en) la educación que toma las voces materiales de las personas-de-poca-edad como algo que no podemos permitirnos perder. Por último, el artículo propone enmarcar la comunidad de investigación filosófica como una comunidad filosófica de voces, en el sentido de una oportunidad para experimentar la materialidad de todas las voces como algo que importa en el pensamiento compartido de sus participantes.

palabras clave: voz; escucha; infancia; acontecimiento; comunidad de investigación filosófica

o que estamos perdendo? voz e escuta como acontecimento

resumo

O artigo parte do conceito de voz e procura questionar os seus diferentes sentidos, especialmente em contextos educativos, para propor um enquadramento filosófico das vozes materiais das pessoas-de-pouca-idade. O texto propõe, depois, que se entendam essas vozes como diferenças perturbadoras ou oportunidades para (re)pensarmos os nossos papéis enquanto educadores e, acima de tudo, para voltarmos à questão sobre o que é que uma abordagem filosófica da infância pode perturbar. Nesta linha, delinear-se-ão algumas ideias sobre a 'voz' como som e materialidade (Cavarero, 2005) e também sobre a 'escuta' enquanto atenção permanente ao que possa emergir (Nancy, 2002; Davies, 2014), para depois se alargarem os significados particulares destes conceitos à prática de pensar filosoficamente com pessoas de diferentes idades, no contexto educacional da comunidade de investigação filosófica (Kennedy; Kennedy, 2012). Também nos baseamos no conceito de 'evento' de Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze, 2013), enquanto potencial imanente dentro de uma confluência de força, para perguntarmos como podemos encontrar uma forma filosófica de viver (n)a educação que tome as vozes materiais das pessoas-de-pouca-idade como algo que não nos podemos dar ao luxo de perder. Por fim, o texto propõe considerar-se a comunidade de investigação filosófica enquanto comunidade filosófica de vozes, no



sentido de ser uma oportunidade para se experienciar a materialidade de todas as vozes enquanto algo que importa no pensamento partilhado dos seus participantes.

palavras-chave: voz; escuta; infância; acontecimento; comunidade de investigação filosófica

what are we missing? voice and listening as an event

what are we missing? voice and listening as an event

*Há mais ou menos duas vozes:
a voz que te faz falar e a voz que te faz ouvir, entender,
perceber.*
Luís Alfinete, 10 anos

*Hay más o menos dos voces:
la voz que te hace hablar y la voz que te hace oír,
entender, percibir.*
Luís Alfinete, 10 años

*There are more or less two voices:
the voice that makes you speak and the voice that makes
you listen, understand, perceive.*
Luís Alfinete, 10 years old

beginning(s)...

The theme of the 20th Biennial International ICPIIC Conference has inspired us to think specifically about people-of-young-age's voices and sets the tone for what we would like to share in this paper. "*Philosophy in and beyond the Classroom: P4wC across cultural, social and political differences*" seems to state that what we call P4wC (Philosophy for/with Children) is not aimed at dissolving the differences between people. Not even (and mainly!) the differences between people-of-young-age (Almeida, 2019) and people-of-not-so-young-age. The idea seems to be quite the opposite: to encourage educators and researchers to invent ways of thinking among (and with) those differences; and maybe, most importantly, *because of* those differences. So, when ICPIIC chose to hold its 2022 conference inspired by the idea of P4wC *across* cultural, social, and political differences, we saw it as an opportunity to go in the same direction, of taking into account people-of-young-age's voices.

Suppose a movement of crossing occurs in a homogeneous and well-balanced context. In that case, it is probably destabilizing what is already there as opposed to looking for emerging echoes between different things. However, resistance is a significant part of the crossing gesture when differences are at stake, primarily *cultural, social, and political differences*. Furthermore, with resistance other movements begin to emerge, such as slowing down, delaying, interrupting, and

disrupting. Could it be the same with people-of-young-age's voices? What can we hear when we think about those voices across (cultural, social, and political) differences?

Moreover, how does the philosophical concept of difference allow us to *re-turn* and *re-spect* to voice and listening? How might this movement of returning *differently* to voice and to listening affect us as educators and researchers? Finally, how can our relationship with the materiality of people-of-young-age's voices - as bodily marks (or places) of thought - constitute a philosophical way of re-configuring both the *voice* and the *listening*?

This paper begins with a sentence by Luís, a person-of-young-age who we met in the Azores in June 2022⁵. When Luís states that "There are more or less two **voices**: the voice that makes you speak and the voice that makes you listen, understand, perceive," what is it that affects us? The content of his saying, his utterance? Are we affected by the fact that a-person-of-young-age put words to what seems to us, people-of-not-so-young-age, to be a very complex idea? Were we affected by Luís's voice? By the materiality of the specific way he verbalized this idea: a hot summer day, in a summer camp on an Azorean Island, in a room with white walls and a gray floor, where other people-of-young-age and three people-of-not-so-young-age exchanged philosophical ideas? Was it the particular tone and volume in which that idea was uttered? Was it the setting and the specific conditions that made that utterance possible? What do we listen to when a person-of-young-age speaks? The semantics? The phonetic substance? Both? Our educational practices? How can listening to a person-of-young-age's voice reverberate with us as educators and researchers?

To put it another way: what might we miss if we fail to take up the challenge of questioning what we know about voice and listening? In what ways are we open to being affected by others' voices? What conditions must be met for someone to speak and be heard?

⁵ Luís Alfinete was part of the group of children of C.A.S.A.: Centro de Apoio Social e Acolhimento Bernardo Manuel Silveira Estrela, in Ribeira Grande (Azores), with whom the authors participated on a philosophical activity in June 2022, as a part of the research project *escuto.te: vozes das infâncias entre a filosofia e a política* and of a presential encounter of the Master's Program in Philosophy for Children, held at the University of the Azores.

This article frames people-of-young-age's material voices as disruptive differences or opportunities to (re)think about our roles as educators. Most of all, it asks what things a philosophical approach to childhood might disturb (Costa Carvalho, 2002). We will first lay out some ideas about "voice", based on the work of the Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero (2005), and "listening", based on the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (2002), as well as the Australian thinker Bronwyn Davies (2014), to extend specific meanings of these concepts to the practice of thinking philosophically (with people of different ages) in the community of philosophical inquiry educational setting. We will also build on the concept of "event" by Deleuze (2013) to ask how we can have a philosophical way of living (in) education that understands people-of-young-age's material voices as something we cannot afford to lose.

voice(s)

What is voice? How many different meanings of the word are there? Which of these meanings are commonly used in educational and philosophical research?

Probably one of the best-known references to the voice of people of young age is article 12.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which seeks to guarantee their right (in accordance with their maturity) to express their opinion and have it taken into account in all matters that affect them. From this article, we can extract two implicit (and connected) ways of understanding *voice*: participation and opinion. On the one hand, *voice* refers to the idea that people-of-young-age can/should take part in decisions that concern them, that is, a conception of *voice* as a way to enable participation. From this perspective, we could say that people-of-young-age would be considered political subjects who participate in public life, at least partially. On the other hand, we can also extract another meaning from the *voice* when it refers to what people-of-young-age think: the voice would be the expression of the singularity of each person's perspective, that is, the voice as an opinion, or point of view.

Research and educational practices address the issue of people-of-young-age's voices by approaching it from one of these two conceptions: opinion and/or participation (Lundy, 2007). One could indeed question the very formulation of

article 12.1 as well as its fulfillment in reality (Nishiyama, 2020). However, in this paper, we will limit ourselves to the most common uses of the concept of voice and propose a third way of approaching it that can complement these other perspectives.

The approach that we would like to build upon starts from a prior meaning of the concept of voice, its literal meaning: voice as materiality, voice as sound, voice as the “corporeal root of uniqueness”, in Adriana Cavarero’s words (Cavarero, 2005, p. 4). In this sense, voice and listening are embodied twins and constitute two interchangeable forces constantly in tension, since we cannot think about one without thinking about the other (Nancy, 2002). Voice is, first of all, the vibration of certain sound waves with tone, volume, and timbre. Voice is sound, and sound is what can be heard. Thus, although it might seem like a rather trivial idea - the idea that we cannot think about “voice” without also thinking about “listening” - coming back to it might challenge some of our assumptions regarding what matters when we speak and listen to someone in an educational setting.

In one of his extraordinary short stories, the Italian writer Italo Calvino talks about a king who (only) listens. One summer evening, seated on his throne while listening to the sounds of the city, the king hears a woman’s voice. Amidst the night’s whispered betrayals and conspiracies, the political acoustics of the kingdom were disrupted by the uniqueness and singularity of the woman’s singing. Calvino elaborates: “A voice means this: there is a living person, throat, chest, feelings, who sends into the air this voice, different from all other voices. A voice involves the throat, saliva, infancy, the patina of experienced life, the mind’s intentions, and the pleasure of giving a personal form to sound waves. What attracts is the pleasure this voice puts into existing: into existing as voice; but this pleasure leads to imagining how this person might be different from every other person, as the voice is different” (Calvino, 1988).

If a voice is – just as Calvino claims and Cavarero further explores – throat, chest, saliva, patina, sound waves; if the voice is a personal way to give form to a lived life; if voice constitutes the subject that speaks, understood as the mark of a physical singularity in a collective (political) space, then should it not also be a key

element in thinking about childhood and education? How can we think about education, about people-of-young-age, about listening to people-of-young-age's voices, if we keep disregarding this meaning of the voice?

Thus, it is important to consider voices' political potential as a critical form of resistance to normalized practices of listening to children and even specific predetermined meanings of the *voice* in spaces such as schools. Which voices are in fact heard? How do we practice listening to the voices of people-of-young-age in our classrooms (Roseiro; Gonçalves; Rodrigues, 2019)? In what ways do our listening practices hold back some people-of-young-age, even in an educational setting as attentive to their needs as the community of philosophical inquiry? How have we co-opted a certain concept of voice that ultimately, is nothing more than the exclusion of certain voices?

Jean-Luc Nancy seems to gesture in the same direction when he asks:

"What secret is at stake when one truly *listens*, that is, when one tries to capture or surprise the sonority rather than the message? What secret is yielded - hence also made public - when we listen to a voice, an instrument, or a sound just for itself? What does listening mean *to be* all ears, as one would say, "to be in the world" mean? What does it mean to exist according to listening, for it, and through it?" (Nancy, 2002)

Returning to the physical tensions between voice and listening might, then, be a way of resisting a verbally articulated, rationalized, mature, adult conception of voice and, in a certain way, also resisting the hegemonic model of thought that pervades our educational practices (even when we say that we are listening to people-of-young-age).

This idea raises the possibility of listening "on the margins of what would count as scholarly knowledge in established scholarly communities within academia" (Johansson, 2021) and also within schools. Similarly, Viktor Johansson discusses the need to overcome the typical "pedagogical listening as a didactic approach, common in childhood education practices", proposing another mode of listening that he calls "to listen philosophically", that is, letting children's voices "challenge us existentially" (Johansson, 2021) and involve all our sensibility in the encounter with their voices (Johansson, 2010). However, we must understand that

merely listening to people-of-young-age's voice does not go far enough in terms of participation (Clark, 2017). We must go further.

Therefore, listening is here understood as a specific way of relating to others, requiring permanent attention to what might emerge (Davies, 2014) and to what reverberates with us whenever someone speaks. Listening is to be attentive to the fugacity of the sounds, to the acoustic modulation of someone's vocal expression, and to look for the resonances of those voices within ourselves (Richter; Lino, 2019). To listen philosophically is to be willing and available to be affected by how a person-of-young-age's sonority might interrupt us in our temporality as persons of not so young age. To listen philosophically could mean letting go of the burden of having all the answers, suspending what is taken for granted, and dealing with uncertainty and hesitation (Haynes; Murriss, 2012). This ethical problem could bring the voice closer to being understood as a means of participation.

Based on this approach to *voice* and *listening*, how could we apply it to listening to people-of-young-age in educational settings such as the community of philosophical inquiry? What might happen when we think philosophically with people-of-young-age, if we start from these embodied and material meanings of voice and listening? Could there be a transition from *logical talk* to *ontological talk* (Jasinski; Lewis, 2022), and thus from logical to ontological listening, in the community of philosophical inquiry? Suppose we recover the materiality of the voices of people-of-young-age. Could we disrupt a particular temporality (chronological, cumulative, progressive, productive) and open up spaces to think about the voice as an **event** (in the present and not *for* the future)? How could rescuing the corporeality of the voices in the shared acoustic of the school (particularly in the community of inquiry setting) constitute a way of reconfiguring our ways of listening? Moreover, in what ways might the shared exercise of speaking and listening in the community of philosophical inquiry be constrained by the prior recognition of certain requirements for a voice to matter (tacit requirements that shape and pervade our practices of speaking and of listening as educators and researchers)?

event(s)

We will now turn our attention to Gilles Deleuze's concept of "event". Deleuze introduced this concept in *Logique du sens* (2013) to describe instantaneous productions resulting from intrinsic interactions between different forces. Events subsist as virtualities (real inherent possibilities) and distinguish themselves only in the course of their actualization in somebody or some state due to immanent changes (Deleuze, 2013).

As the product of a synthesis of forces, events signify the internal dynamic of their interactions. Deleuze's interpretation of an event is not itself a state or happening, but something made in the state or happening. In other words, an event is a potential immanent within a confluence of forces. The event is not a disruption of a continuous state; instead, it renders every moment of the state a transformation (Deleuze, 2013).

Three characteristics highlighted by Deleuze (2007; 2013) point toward this distinctiveness. First, events are the primitive effect or changes generated in the moment of their interaction. Second, events are produced as wholly immanent, original, and creative productions. Third, as a pure effect, an event has no goal. Finally, an event is neither a beginning nor an endpoint but is always "in the middle." Events have no beginning or end, and their relation to Deleuze's notion of permanent change - 'becoming' - cannot be defined as the joining of moments or as the 'end' of a productive process. Instead, becoming 'moves through' an event, where the event represents a momentary effective intensity.

Deleuze was not only interested in the machinations that produce modes of being but was also aware of the productive potential inherent in all forces. Events do not have a determined outcome, only new possibilities that represent the moment when new forces emerge and confront each other. Specifically, his thinking does not mean that 'one thinks and thus creates,' but that thinking and creating are constituted simultaneously. As such, events offer a way of theorizing the 'immanent' creativity of thinking, challenging us to think and consider things differently. The idea is not to argue that one should think in terms of events, but rather to make 'thinking' an event by embracing the rich chaos of life and the uniqueness and potential of each moment.

What about voice and listening? Can we apply Deleuze's notion of "event" to it? If so, what can it add to this reflection?

Within this framework, we propose thinking about speaking and listening, voice and hearing, as events, *momentary productive intensities*, and moments "in the middle": *generated at the moment, wholly immanent, original, creative, and with no goal*. Through this way of approaching voice and listening, we achieve an interaction between forces: the force of the new, of what comes, and the force of the old, what is already there (not chronologically). When these forces meet, the problem is understanding the issues that this confrontation might raise in the relationship between those who use their voice and those who hear it.

For example, in our educational practices, do we delay listening to the voices of people-of-young-age – and their resonances – until they (the voices) have an "expectable body" (an adult body or, at least, some semblance of it)? Is that expectable body seen as the ideal physiological condition for the voices to have a sonority that is considered proper for thinking seriously about issues of importance (such as political decisions)? Is that expectable body what the UN text refers to when it establishes the right of people-of-young-age to participate in decisions "according to their maturity"? Is this why the sounds produced by a person-of-young-age's voice do not always seem very deep to our ears? Is this why we tend to laugh when we hear the verbalization of ideas and concepts in a child's voice (Mello, Lopes, Lima, 2021; Murris, 2020)? Would we laugh if we were with Luís Alfinete when his 10-year-old voice stated, "There are more or less two voices: the voice that makes you speak and the voice that makes you listen, understand, perceive"? Or was it the childlike sonority of that voice that made us stop and write his words down in our notebook? Are our practices tacitly advocating an ideal conception of voice as having a particular timbre and volume and demonstrating the expected level of skill at verbal articulation)?

So, what happens if we follow Deleuze's notion of event and seek to understand people-of-young-age's voices as something "in the middle"? How might we think of the voice as something in between? We should keep in mind that the voice happens: it does not depend on us, the adults; we do not have the power

to make what is already there. Therefore, we should consider whether instead we need to work on ourselves as educators and researchers, on how we relate to people-of-young-age and their voices, that is, on our listening. We need to start by paying attention to the voices that already exist, are already there, and do not depend on us to be what they are. Furthermore, we may realize that what is being delayed is not the people-of-young-age's voices – which have always been there – but our *listening as an event*.

Moreover, when we do things this way the challenge becomes how to be attentive to the events that emerge between the voice and the listening... or, rather, the challenge is to stop acting like if the voice is something to give or to allow. What if it is not just about the voices but also about our availability to hear? About our awareness of how difficult it is to be open to an event, to a confrontation of forces? Finally, what does this say about the materiality of the listening? What can our educational practices of voice and listening tell us about the **power** relations in our classrooms?

power(s)

When the voices thought to be significant are listened to in the public sphere, not all speakers are understood on equal footing. This idea is somehow grounded in Western thought, which privileged the “voice of thought” instead of the body's guttural voice. According to contemporary critical readings (Bezerra, 2021), this has led to granting primacy to silent thought over the spoken word and distancing the one who speaks from what is said (taking the former as a particular instance to be overcome and the latter as a universal instance to be taken into account) (Cavarero, 2005).

Thus, age is one of the factors that most influences what is accepted as legitimate and appropriate in public communication. Adultism is thus understood as a prejudice that denies agency to specific individuals based on their chronological age, excluding them from the privilege of having a voice and effective participation in their environment (Rollo, 2020). Alongside the superiority granted to human environments over non-human environments, to male perspectives over female perspectives (Haraway, 2007), to the so-called developed countries over

undeveloped ones, hegemonic Western history has been prodigious in constructing and perpetuating discourses based on privileging the adult perspective over that of the child. These discursive assumptions follow from how we address people-of-young-age and the places we allow them to occupy in their relationship with their surroundings.

For example, things usually happen in this way in a philosophical community of inquiry, since established and unquestioned hierarchies privilege those who speak in a particular way, especially when it comes to persons of young age. The criteria of this privilege-granting are the universality of logical-discursive reason, i.e, the acoustic space tends to be occupied by those who can articulate their thoughts in an orderly way and explicitly connect ideas. Forgetting this implicit bias of spoken communication and thereby neutralizing the political power of all voices may thus enable the appearance of biased discourses and invisible subjects (those who do not fit the standardized discursive and oral criteria for “having a voice”). When we fail to carry out this ethical and political reflection, we may systematically translate - and normalize - to adult perspectives the insights that people-of-young-age can offer. Therefore, being open to the possibility of being affected by people-of-young-age’s voices means considering the one hundred languages (Edwards; Gandini; Forman, 1993); that is, realizing that oral or written language alone cannot exhaust the possibilities for children’s participation. To listen to people-of-young-age’s voices is to be open to a hundred possibilities, or as Bronwyn Davies (2014) would put it, of being open to encounters in the sense of “listening without knowing.”

What happens if we connect this to our previous questions about the materiality of voice and listening, also following the Deleuzian notion of event? We would have to conclude that to listen, it is necessary to abandon a position of power that welcomes certain vocalizations and validates and accepts specific criteria for what matters in an educational acoustic space and time, translating what does not fit into recognizable utterances. All these are mechanisms of exclusion that we reproduce, disregarding the fact that voices have different kinds of power (mainly political) and granting different degrees of credibility to utterances (taking into

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account the specific sonorities of the voices that utter them, at times seeing them as “childish” and risible).

How, then, does the experience of listening to the material singularity of voices affect what happens in the community of philosophical inquiry? How can we think about a possible re-signification of these educational encounters and relationships based on the physicality and materiality of the voices? Is a **philosophical community of voices** possible?

in a philosophical community of voices...

This article began with a sentence uttered by a person-of-young-age. However, what Luís said is not just a rhetorical device, an elegant way of introducing something said by a person-of-young-age at the beginning of a talk or article about the voice of people-of-young-age. Far from it. These reflections began with Luís’s voice and the words because his intervention inspired us to think about these issues. We started with when Luís intervened with his voice as a material event of listening and affectation, of how his words – and, even more, how he pronounced them – challenged us to reflect on *voice* and *listening*. This event took place in a community of philosophical inquiry, which leads us to consider how this educational setting could open itself up to the experience of voices in their materiality (timbre, tone, articulation, intensity), and what importance this materiality might have to the shared thought constructed in the community. What would a philosophical community of voices look like?

A community of philosophical inquiry open to the philosophical exploration (or experience) of the voices, we believe, could be a space to question (or at least suspend) a particular mechanism of educational authority, one that is based on the non-recognition of those voices that have not yet reached maturity (in the adult sense). “Voice” is a construct, we claim. We, as educators and researchers, inherited a construct long before we heard the singular voices that crossed our acoustic spaces. And, most importantly, there seem to exist prior, normative conceptions of what counts as an appropriate voice. In this sense, as educators and researchers in a philosophical setting, we have the challenge of suspending such conceptions, putting them in parentheses, and being available and attentive to listening to all

singular voices. In this way, perhaps, the community of inquiry can open up spaces and times to explore that singularity (in the sense of participation and opinion, but also the sense of materiality). And this might be a way to grant philosophical relevance to that same singularity.

One might object, not without cause, that perhaps the focus on the materiality of the voice that we propose here could exclude those people-of-young-age who do not usually express themselves verbally, who are shy or afraid of using their voices in public spaces. However, this openness of the voice is, first and foremost, an openness to experimenting with its materiality, as it is not focused solely on the quality of what is expressed but also makes it possible to try, to grope, to babble. According to Jasinski and Lewis, babbling is not an inarticulate discourse but rather the very expression of communicability, the faculty of speaking that remains in potentiality (Jasinski; Lewis, 2016; 2022). In this sense, babbling, even for those who do not usually speak much, opens up the possibility of experiencing “that very process of turning experience into truth; their experience, that is, and their truth” (Jasinski; Lewis, 2016, p. 11). And so, speaking, experiencing the voice in its materiality, hesitating, stuttering, babbling, gives rise to encountering one’s voice: a point at which both the conception of the voice as a way of thinking and the voice as a sonorous expression of singularity come together (Bocchetti; Gonçalves, 2022).

What if people-of-a-young-age’s voices were heard this way in the community of philosophical inquiry or even in the entire school? What if we could build philosophical communities of voices? In conversation with Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze suspected that if these voices were heard, the entire educational system would blow up (Foucault, 1977). Deleuze is probably referring to the voice as opinion and participation. Still, his idea enables us to ask: what would happen if the materiality of the voices of all people-of-young-age had an acoustic space and time in the school? What if schools were, first and foremost, this space and time?

Indeed, this seems to come up in the classroom when the insistence on speaking in turn is suspended, when some person-of-young-age speaks here, and others speak there, sometimes all at the same time or at least with overlapping voices. Then the voices rise in pitch, and it seems they are about to take over the

entire physical space. The sound is a buzz, and the buzz turns into what is called “noise”. The noise turns into an acoustic tornado. Finally, it often happens that someone, usually a person-of-not-so-young-age, calls for silence, and it seems that everything returns to its usual course, and only the remnant of the imminent explosion remains.

Nevertheless, what would happen if such an explosion did occur? What would happen if those voices, beginning with their materiality, were heard and welcomed? What if they could spread this babbling across acoustic space and take over the classroom, the school, and the world? What if the experience of speaking, of affirming the voice in its materiality, hesitating, stuttering, babbling, could give rise to an encounter with one’s voice? What if the community of philosophical inquiry could serve as a moment in which both the conception of the voice as a way of thinking and the voice as a sonorous expression of singularity could come together? What if it could also be a philosophical community of voices?

Deleuze says that one of Foucault’s teachings concerns the indignity of speaking for others (Deleuze in Foucault, 1977). Can a philosophical community of voices be that space in which everyone is invited to experience the voice for themselves, where everyone finds the time to experience their own voice, where we can experience the extent to which the sonority of our voices is also a part of our thinking together? And, we could ask, is this community already made of the materiality of the voices of those who built it (even if we insist on not recognizing it)? What do we miss if we “silence” or disregard those sounds? How many voices are there, after all?

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