

LISTENING AND POLYPHONY

ECHOES OF PHENOMENOLOGY, ETHICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES

Seminar for postgraduate students

Tuesday, November 23rd, 2021
16.00–19.00 CET, online

The seminar is addressing questions about listening and polyphony as unifying concepts for discovering the overlapping horizons of philosophical insights and aesthetical experience. Listening could be studied as an openness to others, a gesture, and activity. As the mutual coexistence of one's own and surrounding environments, polyphony provides new opportunities for transdisciplinarity, starting in the field of philosophy, expanding through aesthetics and the arts, and insinuating in ethics, anthropology, and environmental humanities.

Contributing speakers

Prof Dr Lenart Škof, Alma Mater Europaea, Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis & Science and Research Centre, Institute for Philosophical Studies, Slovenia

Prof Dr Ineta Kivle, University of Latvia, Interdisciplinary Research Centre of Academic Library, Latvia

Prof Dr Raivis Bičevskis, University of Latvia, Department of Philosophy and Ethics, Latvia

Prof Dr Anne Sauka, University of Latvia, Department of Philosophy and Ethics, Latvia

Dr Maja Bjelica, Science and Research Centre, Institute for Philosophical Studies, Slovenia

About the seminar

Listening is an activity of the conscious auditory perception of sound stimuli often marked by a touch of passivity, obedience, a state of subordination, and inferiority. However, on the other hand, it can be understood as a very active and intentional gesture of a subject who establishes a relationship with their environment through auditory perception. Listening includes a dual discourse: listening to oneself and listening to others, hearing one's inner voice and the voice of the other, and listening to the world around us. An opening in silence, where the ear stretches and its tension already carries its meaning, exposes the listener to sensual meaning and sense. Meaning(s) and sense(s) are co-created from listening to polyphony—being in the world is

always polyphonic. The vibrations of polyphony keep meaning and sense dynamic, infinite, and intersubjective. Polyphony can be understood as a particular form of dialogue, and it also characterizes complications of multi-layered phenomena: literature, theater, painting, or performance.

The seminar is a part of the bilateral research project, focusing on exploring listening as a gesture and activity and the sonority of the world, as well as exploring polyphony as “being in the world”. Commencing with the resonances from phenomenology, ethics and musicology, this encounter of thoughts aims to deepen the understanding of listening and polyphony based on their transdisciplinary polylogue.

Programme

- 16.00 **Lenart Škof: A Path Towards Listening**
- 16.20 **Ineta Kivle: Phenomenological and Non-phenomenological Approaches to Polyphony: Husserl, Deleuze, Ingarden, Ihde**
- 16.40 **Raivis Bičevskis: Paradoxical monotony**
- 17.00 Discussion
- 17.20 *Break*
- 17.40 **Anne Sauka: Beyond the Skin Line: Tuning into the Body-Environment**
- 18.00 **Maja Bjelica: Re-listening Deeply for an Eco-central Ethics**
- 18.20 Discussion

Registration

Please, fill in the registration form to receive the link to the online meeting:

https://almamater-si.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcvcO-oqzgsG93EAPBtbBh24S_U4QYDICAJ.

For more information e-mail to ifs@zrs-kp.si.

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Abstracts

Lenart Škof

Alma Mater Europaea, Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis & Science and Research Centre, Institute for Philosophical Studies, Slovenia

A Path Towards Listening

In his introduction to the seminar, Lenart Škof will present ethical elements of listening. In a way of coming to the stage of ethics, he will read an excerpt from Zeami Motokiyo - a Japanese thinker of Noh theatre. We will then embark on a path towards intersubjective ethics of listening in a close dialogue with Luce Irigaray's philosophy. The first element of this path will be attentiveness, presented as an ethical disposition towards the other, based on the enhanced and radically subjective mode of self-affection. This will be followed by the elaboration of silence as a preliminary mode of openness towards the other – of letting-be of her ethical being. As a mode of preserving the threshold between me and the other, silence will lead us towards breath as a third element before listening, securing the places of intermediality between my world and the world of the other. Finally, listening will be presented as an active mode and a final element of the ethics we wish to outline here. We will elaborate on listening as a mode of pre-cognitive responsiveness-towards-other, and finally present it as a disposition being closely related to attentiveness, silence, and breath.

Ineta Kivle

University of Latvia, Interdisciplinary Research Centre of Academic Library, Latvia

Phenomenological and Non-phenomenological Approaches to Polyphony: Husserl, Deleuze, Ingarden, Ihde

A philosophical approach to polyphony differs not only by adherence to one or another philosophical tradition but also within one philosophical approach. A comparison of the philosophies of Husserl and Deleuze, Ingarden and Ihde, shows different ways how complicated and multi-layered phenomena act together and form a common simultaneous process. The phenomenological approach (Husserl, Ingarden, Ihde) moves away from the natural world to the constitution of phenomenological and ontological structures. Postmodernism (Deleuze) turns away from subjectivism and transcendental philosophy and relates to reality where the human is viewed not as a central object of investigation but only as an element determined by others.

The concepts of monophony and polyphony emphasize the fundamental difference between Husserl's and Deleuze's findings. Husserl is a Cartesian thinker who placed great value on Descartes' contribution to the development of a new philosophy of subjectivism (monophony). But Deleuze's philosophy (polyphony) distances itself from the Cartesian tradition and is more related to Nietzsche's impulsive vitalism.

There are also different approaches within the phenomenological tradition. Roman Ingarden investigates ontological stratification of the polyphony of artworks and views concretization of polyphony in particular concerns and performances. Ingarden shows how these two polyphonies are interweaved and the second one is possible on the basis of the first one.

Don Ihde opposes monophonic and polyphonic listening and binds them with perceptual and imaginative modes: In the monophonic situations, the listener is primarily a 'perceiver and receiver', and no more. Listening becomes polyphonic when the listener listens not only by perception but also by imagination synced in polyphonic situations.

Raivis Bičevskis

University of Latvia, Department of Philosophy and Ethics, Latvia

Paradoxical monotony

If one looks at the impressions and influences of Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788) in the context of Livonia and Courland from the point of view of the production of texts and thoughts, then it is clear that J. Chr. Beren's project of the enlightened trade republic in Riga appears as the first episode and as a far-reaching complex of ideas. Indeed, in his studies, which have a philosophical-cameralistic character, Hamann delivered a far-reaching modern vision in fragments. But the complex of ideas, where the recourse to the Latvian folk song appears in "Aesthetica in nuce" (1762), rests on this ground. The passage at the end of "Aesthetica" was once instrumentalized in terms of identity politics, consolidated, and mythologized within the framework of Latvian national culture. However, it is a text passage that is extraordinarily complex and interwoven with several layers of context in Hamann's contemporary environment. With recourse to "Socratic Memorabilia" and various passages from "Aesthetica in nuce", the essay shows that this folk poetry passage is only more understandable against the background of Hamann's main ideas. Since singing and a possible poet occur with Hamann, a series of Hamann thoughts "God-Nature-Language-Senses-Poets" is turned and consolidated nationally with the help of Herder's motifs. There is no such consolidation at Hamann. It is true that his theological-eschatological philology contains a prefiguration at the end of the "Aesthetica", which is taken up and continued on this side of Hamann's statements in the modern age. The central concept here is "tonality". Hamann hears peasant songs and hears the rhythm of Homer's epos. The end of "Aesthetica in nuce" leads to hearing the tone that sounds everywhere. All you need is ears that listen to it.

Anne Sauka

University of Latvia, Department of Philosophy and Ethics, Latvia; Postdoctoral researcher at the project "Onto-genealogies: The Body and Environmental Ethics in Latvia" (2021–2023)

Beyond the Skin Line: *Tuning into the Body-Environment*

Despite prolific scholarly engagement with the transcorporeal and processual character of the embodied selfhood, an ontological shift toward a non-essentialist, processual, embedded, and embodied understanding of the self as engaged with the environment is still questionable, and dualist and reductionist cultural imaginaries continue haunting the social field.

The presentation argues that if an ontological shift is possible, it is to be sought within the experiential field as an already present, although underrepresented felt sense. The research goes on to explore embodied critical thinking (ECT), and one of the "thinking at the edge" (TAE) tools – *instancing*, for engaging with the enfleshed and trans-corporeal self on an affectual and experiential level. By discussing three exemplifying affectual instances that expose the experiential level of processuality, emergence, and intercardinality, the article goes to show the methodological use of ECT as a fruitful approach to developing embodied ontologies and a toolkit for experiential reflection of one's enfleshment, as *tuning in* to the body-environment.

It is a move from *inspecting* to *listening* to the experiential dimension of lived materialities and an embodied reflection, with the aim to reconcile the notion of selfhood with the polyphonous character of a processual envired embodiment.

Maja Bjelica

Science and Research Centre, Institute for Philosophical Studies, Slovenia

Re-listening Deeply for an Eco-central Ethics

The presentation invites participant co-listeners towards a possibility of a practice of deep re-listening to the environment, to the world, that might exceed the field of a mere acoustic soundscape to which the ear refers by hearing. The author connects the aesthetic, artistic process of deep listening, brought to practice by the musician Pauline Oliveros, to the conceptual and embodied practices of thinkers in the fields of ethics. Through this the importance and possibilities of another ethics of listening that would consider not only the human other, but also every possible other matter or being as a co-subject, will be presented. Moreover, specific fields of research of the environment that involve sound and listening will be exposed as possible paths to rethink human attitudes to the more-than-human world.