University of Alberta

Performing the (Dis)abled Speaker

by

Joshua Lane St. Pierre

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Philosophy

Fall 2013
Edmonton, Alberta

Abstract

Given that normalcy is contingent upon social valuation, the theoretical and socio-political conditions that give rise to the disabled speaker must be interrogated. I contend that disabled speech is made intelligible as an embodied activity that threatens rational structures and is performed (1) against a theoretical prejudice that normalizes expectations of disclosing reason through speech, (2) as a disruption to the logic of linguistic and communicative systems, (3) and through lived experience as a flawed temporal "choreography" of the body.

Preface

This thesis grew out a summer internship in 2011 with Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada, a project at the University of Alberta funded by the Community-University Research Alliance Program at SSHRC. During the course of that summer I produced a paper entitled "The Construction of the Disabled Speaker: Locating Stuttering in Disability Studies." This paper was awarded first prize for the inaugural Canadian Disability Studies Association student paper competition, published in the Canadian Journal of Disability Studies (1.3, August 2012, pp.1-21), and is forthcoming in *Literature, Speech Disorders, and Disability: Talking Normal*, ed. Chris Eagle (Routledge, 2013). Since the topic of speech and the voice is relatively untouched within the emerging field of critical disability studies, I found that my research on speech continually prompted far more questions than I could answer. This thesis is therefore a further step in processing the complex relation between speech, embodiment, rationality, communicative systems, and ableist structures nascent in my original work.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to many people for making this thesis what it is. My committee members: Marie-Eve Morin, Robert Nichols, and Megan Strickfaden. Rob Wilson for supervising my internship and my MA, providing much needed assistance and encouragement. I am thankful to SSHRC not only for funding my internship through the Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada project via the Community-University Research Alliance Program, but also for personally funding my work through a Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarships Master's Scholarship. I am also grateful for the many conversations I have had about speech and disability with Matt Johnson and fellow grad students at the University of Alberta such as Marc Workman, Kristin Rodier, Danielle Peers, and Lindsay Eales. Lastly, I am indebted beyond words to Charis St. Pierre for her editing prowess and continual dialogue and support throughout this entire process.

Table of Contents

Introduction—Disabled Speech and the Desire for Normalcy

The activity of speaking is central to our social existence. In large measure, we come to realize ourselves as rational, social, and moral beings through our particular voice, in an attempt to "spell ourselves out" in the presence of others. As Mladen Dolar observes, "it seems that the voice stands at the axis of our social bonds, and that voices are the very texture of the social, as well as the intimate kernel of subjectivity."[1] It is not that hearing ourselves speak discloses a same-self-identity, or a pure interiority. Rather, through the voice we articulate an unfinalizable personal identity; and more particularly, our identity in relation to others. Speaking, in other words, is a socio-political act through which we continually locate ourselves as concrete human beings.

The emphasis on the voice in navigating the socio-political world puts tremendous strain to perform vocalized speech in acceptable and normalized ways. What happens when the activity of speech goes "wrong"? What are the far-reaching social, political, as well as economic consequences of using the voice incorrectly? For while vocalized speech production is incredibly variegated—created with vastly different speeds, pitches, timbres, intonations, enunciations, fluidities, vocabularies, languages, degrees of articulability, and accompanying body language—vocal diversity is not a widely held social value. Incorporation into a communicative space requires compliance to "acceptable" forms of speech production. There are of course many ways in which the voice can go "wrong," such as an atypical accent, or speaking too quietly or loudly, but I am particularly interested in so-called abnormal vocalized speech that is interpreted as disabled.

[1] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice And Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 16.

Disabled speakers are routinely marginalized for not speaking quickly and clearly enough, distorting the semantic structure of language, and "misusing" their body in the production of speech. Disabled speakers sputter, spit, contort their bodies, repeat syllables, words, phrases, and introduce uncomfortable pauses into speech. Often not taken seriously as speakers, it is accordingly not unusual for a disabled speaker to feel outside a conversation, shuffled to the fringe of a verbal interchange. Commenting on the voice which stands at the "axis of our social bonds," Kevin Paterson notes that the disabled voice is so often marginalized precisely because "subjectivity and speech are so closely articulated and because the desire for successful interactions is a moving force in the choreography of everyday life."[2] In wrinkling the communicative function of the voice, disabled speakers threaten their participation within socio-political and socio-economic spheres. Recognizing the wide range of construed disabled speech—from the slight lisp of an child, to the vocalization of one profoundly intellectually disabled—the guiding question of this project is relatively straightforward: what distinguishes so-called normal from abnormal and abled from disabled speech patterns?

The concept of normalcy has been problematized from many different angles within the emerging discipline of disability studies. Rosemarie Garland Thomson, for example, employs the neologism of the "normate" to describe the phenomenon of sequestering human variation. The normate, she writes, is "the veiled subject position of the cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate's boundaries."[3] In other words, the normate is defined by the deviant others it is not: it does not move by crawling or wheeling, it does not communicate with ASL, and it is not black, gay, or Muslim. Being defined

[2] Kevin Paterson, "It's About Time!: Understanding the Experience of Speech Impairment," in Nick Watson, Alan Roulstone, and Carol Thomas, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 171.
[3] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 8.

as what is not deviant, the normate "is the constructed identity of those who . . . can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them."[4] Regarding human corporeality, the normate therefore defines and enforces what is deviant and what is "normal" or acceptable activity. To move by wheeling instead of walking bipedally is to place oneself in the disabled position and so to lose social capital and authority. Human variety is constricted by the desire to assume the normate position.

Describing this compulsion towards normalcy and the ambiguity of the term, Eva Kittay makes a three-part distinction in her piece "Thoughts on the Desire for Normalcy." Marking first the value difference between the "anomalous," or variation, and the "abnormal," or pathological, Kittay further differentiates between simple and questionable variations. The initial distinction marks differences which are simply anomalous—for example, Lynn Cox's ability to swim in near-freezing temperatures—and pathologized differences such as profound intellectual disability which impede what is taken to be useful functioning. In carving off what she terms questionable variation from simple variation, Kittay further charts human difference on the border of normal/abnormal which may have functional repercussions due to social negotiation. Regarding questionable variation such as homosexuality, "what resolves the question in favor of pathology or variation is not a simple fact but a social valuation and, at times, even that fact may have been socially constructed."[5] Understanding that many anomalies are experienced as functional limitations simply as a result of prejudice helpfully reorientates the concept of disability around a discussion of *values* rather than biological facts.

The following project is an essay—a testing out—of the discrimination against devalued speech patterns in accordance with Kittay's tripartite distinction. The delineation of functional

[4] Ibid.
[5] Eva Kittay, "Thoughts on the Desire For Normalcy," in *Surgically Shaping Children: Technology, Ethics, and the Pursuit of Normality*, ed. Erik Parens (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 97.

speech patterns are often arbitrary, a result not of biological facts but of social evaluation that *constructs* the negative functional consequences of certain varied speech patterns. Given that normalcy is contingent upon social valuation, the theoretical and socio-political conditions that give rise to disabled speech must be interrogated. Articulating the contingency of the disabled speaker not only calls into question the "disabled speaker," but turns the proverbial tables, and reveals the disabled speaker as a function of ableist values and presumptions underlying our communicative social existence.

Surprisingly, while dominant narratives of motility and perception have been increasingly challenged—enabling resistance against pathologization for those who are blind, Deaf, or Crip, for example—speech "disorders" remain largely untheorized. The disciplines of speech pathology and therapy are very much alive and well, yet these scientific fields are most often unaware of their own theoretical assumptions and accordingly reinscribe marginalizing values and structures. Within disability studies itself, disabled speech is just beginning to gain some critical attention. Making early incursions, Dolmage (2013) and Eagle (2011) have provided a cultural-literary analysis of rhetoric and stuttering, and Paterson (2012) and I (St. Pierre 2012) have explored the social construction of disabled speech. What is still lacking, however, is a philosophical articulation of the disabled speaker in relation to associated concepts from which *the very idea* of a disabled speaker is made intelligible; concepts of reason, intersubjectivity, phonology, communication, embodiment, and temporality.

I suggest that to parse the construction of abled/disabled speech, speech must be interpreted as 1) an embodied, behavioral performance and 2) a distinctly socio-political activity. Speech is neither a purely rational nor individual activity, but primarily takes place from the perspective of having a body and is judged as a bodily performance by others. As such, while not

negating the importance of fields like linguistics and the philosophy of language which interrogate the structure of language itself, this project focuses specifically upon the *speaking* of speech as it is judged in the midst of others. Moreover, I will attend to the verbal production of speech, distinct from writing or sign, in order to appreciate the marginalization of disabled speakers *qua* speakers. Working from this interpretive horizon, my understanding of 'speech' includes the physical articulation of speech, speech sounds, as well as spoken language itself.

The constitution of the disabled speaker is not monolithic, but textured, manifold; she is made intelligible through a wide range of theoretical constructions and social valuations. Each chapter in this project therefore "tests out" the disabled speaker from a slightly different angle in order to articulate key aspects of her constitution. As such, I argue in turn that disabled speech is constructed 1) by normalized expectations of how reason is performed through speech, 2) as a disruption to linguistic, communicative systems, and 3) as a flawed temporal "choreography" of the body. Despite the polythetic nature of this analysis, there are two concurrent threads running throughout that structure its progression: embodiment and rationality. I contend that disabled speech is made intelligible as an embodied activity that threatens rational structures performed threefold against a theoretical prejudice, according to the logic of communicative systems, and through lived experience.

The first chapter accordingly introduces embodiment as an integral condition of judging the presence of reason in humans. Speech is interpreted in the midst of others as a privileged bodily performance that discloses rationality when performed in normalized fashions. Starting wide, this chapter considers the relation between the embodied performance of speech and reason by questioning the exclusion of speakers from rationality and personhood who have severe to profound intellectual disability. Often not taken to be speaking at all, the profoundly

intellectual disabled somewhat dramatically introduce the conceptual association of speech and reason. Within folk, philosophical, and medical spheres, speech is taken as a privileged embodied performance, or social externalization of reason. Stretching back to Aristotle, *logos* means both speech and reason and denotes both syntactical construction as well as the joining of signification within the realm of thought. Within this paradigm, "mature" speech is taken to disclose "mature" thought. Yet despite the privileged lineage of what might be termed "logocentricism," I argue that speech is a poor gatekeeper of reason at best and often leads astray when, for example, it is used to make judgments of moral personhood. The first chapter therefore problematizes the theoretical milieu that habitually pairs speech and reason within which all disabled speakers are located.

This initial approach interprets the exclusion of speakers who lack proper syntax, who fail to perform reason. Yet within the range of disabled speakers, there are many whose speech *is* syntactical, and are nevertheless judged as speaking abnormally or giving a flawed performance of reason. A further set of criteria is therefore needed to parse the speech of those who, for example, stutter, have autism, cerebral palsy or Tourette syndrome. The second chapter thus focuses upon the disabled linguistic *voice*; on the normalized production of speech sounds. Here, embodiment's role in constituting the disabled speaker is sharpened by examining the non-self-effacing disabled speaking body and material voice as an obstacle to the structure of linguistic structures. Judged top down from the perspective of *systems*, the embodied disabled voice disrupts the rational orderliness of linguistic and communicative structures. Through an evaluation of communication theory and Mary Douglas's analysis of purity, I argue that the disabled voice is constructed as noise and as pollution that threatens the presumed purity and stability of communication within able-bodied aural space. More than just being an

inconvenience, the dysfluent voice is devalued for dangerously subverting rational communicative systems.

Focusing on the normalized performance of the disabled voice within communicative systems reveals the exclusion of disabled speakers *qua* voices, but does not articulate the distinct forms of exclusion faced by disabled speakers as concrete subjects within a shared embodied communicative space. The third chapter shores up the analysis of the disabled voice by attending to the lived, disabled speaking body through the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. I argue that the distinct temporality of the lived, stuttering body—her "bodily time"—disturbs the normalized choreography of communication. Examining the temporality of the disabled speaking body from the perspective of both lived and objective time, the disabled speaking body should be understood as "out of step" with the normalized bodily rhythms and pace of communicative practices. The disabled speaker in this way experiences a temporal decentering and is disciplined for not according to idealized and standardized temporal speech patterns. As such, the disabled speaking body distorts not the rationality of communicative systems *per se*, but what is constructed as rational embodiment—living through the body in calculable and standardized ways. The disabled speaker is disciplined for her incalculable and therefore irrational bodily choreography judged against an socio-economically fertile normalized order of temporality and motility.

Insofar as the voice "stands at the axis of our social bonds," as Dolar notes, the social position of the 'disabled speaker' is fully intelligible only in relation to the complexity of speaking in the midst of others as an embodied and rational subject. This project is therefore an attempt to appreciate and fill out that complex, and normalized, position. Carried out through a methodology broadly construed as phenomenological, this analysis is grounded in the lived

experience of the disabled voice, whenever possible. Whether explicitly phenomenological or not, starting with the lived experience of disabled speech provides a rich, emergent analysis of a complex phenomenon that cannot properly be shoehorned by sedimented assumptions of the performance of speech. This is especially true for this project insofar as a comprehensive theory of the construction of disabled speech has not yet been undertaken.

Chapter 1—Performing Reason: Speech and the Taxonomy of Intellectual Disability

1.1 Agency and Speech

This chapter introduces the conceptual pairing of vocalized speech and reason through the somewhat dramatic instance of intellectual disability. Interpreted and made meaningful in the world, speech is an embodied social activity that can easily go "wrong" and can easily be interpreted uncharitably with exclusionary outcomes regarding identity, agency and social participation. The attribution of reason through the activity of speech is quotidian, even banal—occurring in the classroom, waiting on the bus, or in boardroom meetings. While the wide range of judging rational capacities through speech is relevant to this overall project, this chapter focuses on the far end of the continuum—the judgment of intellectual disability—in order to accentuate the philosophical milieu that engenders the normalized performance of reason through speech.

The everyday phrase "to have a voice" relies upon a double meaning that is usually left unparsed. On one hand, this phrase denotes being recognized as a moral person who possesses agency; for example, "*I* have a voice and *will be heard*." Formerly excluded groups—persons of color, women, and gays and lesbians—all insist, as Eva Kittay notes, on no longer being silenced, on having their voices acknowledged.[6] This demand to be heard requires that one be *recognized* to have a voice and offered political parity. Yet to be recognized as having a voice in this way assumes the more fundamental and often overlooked sense of "having a voice": the physical vocalization and articulation of recognizable speech. If someone cannot speak in this basic sense, she possesses little chance of demanding her recognition as a person of dignity and

[6] Eva Feder Kittay, "When Caring is Just and Justice is Caring," in *The Subject of Care: Feminist Perspectives on Dependency*, ed. Eva Feder Kittay and Ellen K. Feder (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, Inc., 2002), 258.

moral worth. It is with this distinction in mind that I bring the question of "having a voice" to bear upon the topic of intellectual disability.

The physical voicelessness[7] experienced by many with intellectual and physical disabilities has a significant influence on the taxonomy of intellectual disability. The use of speech as a gauge of rational capacities is embedded in everyday experience, as the quality of speech—speed, perspicuity and effortlessness—provides a rough-and-ready means of judging (even unintentionally) one's intelligence. When these judgments are proven wrong, we are in fact often surprised. In a more technical sense, as Anna Stubblefield observes, based on intelligence tests, the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke believes that two-thirds of those with cerebral palsy suffer from intellectual disability. "It has typically been assumed," she continues, "that inability to speak, a symptom displayed by some people with cerebral palsy, is an indicator of intellectual disability."[8] This automatic and pervasive response to speech as a gauge of rationality warrants careful study.

Speech is neither a necessary nor a sufficient diagnostic criterion for the taxonomy of intellectual disability in the DSM-IV-TR. Yet I will argue that reason is a performative capacity and as such, the judgement of rationality in folk, professional, and philosophical capacities is undergirded by an appeal to *recognizable* disclosures of reason. Among all the behavioral performances of cognition, speech stands in the foreground by having been historically understood as content-laden and dialogical. Further, speech has been given a metaphysical privilege as the originary means of disclosing rationality over alternate forms of communication such as writing or sign. As such, judgments of moral status are not straightforwardly derived

[7] My use of 'voiceless' throughout this paper will imply both the meaning of the physical inability to speak phonetically as well as the lack of agency.
[8] Anna Stubblefield, "The Entanglement of Race and Cognitive Dis/ability," in *Cognitive Disability and its Challenge to Moral Philosophy*, ed. Eva Feder Kittay and Licia Carlson (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 299.

from rational capacity—as is often argued for in mainstream analytic bioethics—but must be understood as mediated through performed capacities such as speech.

While establishing speech as the gatekeeper of rationality provides an easily definable taxonomy of intelligence and moral personhood, it exaggerates our ability to know the rational capacities of persons, obscures our appreciation of alternative forms of human communication and being-with, and easily leads to a misdiagnosis of those who lack the ability to manifest their intelligence through speech. By contesting the criterion of speech as an adequate and reliable indicator of one's rationality and moral personhood, I instead argue for epistemic humility as a response to those who lack a voice and are assumed to be intellectually disabled.

1.2 Taxonomies of Reason and Intellectual Disability

My use of the term 'reason' in this chapter is more mundane than those uses that are prevalent in the existent philosophical discourse. 'Reason' may denote the culminate Platonic Form, the Cartesian foundation of justified knowledge, a Humean practical and moral engagement (nevertheless a slave to the passions), or the Kantian arbiter of empirical truth. It is understood in terms of memory,[9] IQ, the ability to make inferences, and imagination. Yet rather than taking a determinate stance on this much debated term, I broadly construe reason to reflect the minimal threshold of cognitive functioning necessary to generate moral and sociopolitical agency. While I acknowledge that the multifaceted nature of reason is a cornerstone of philosophical inquiry, these discussions often fall to the cutting room floor when intellectual

[9] Although, it is worth noting that Hermann Ebbinghaus takes memory as a necessary yet not sufficient condition of intelligence insofar as the intellectually disabled often possess the capacity of memory. Here is an instance of categorizations of reason being used against the intellectually disabled. "Intelligence does not consist merely in a good memory, making possible the exact reproduction of experiences of long ago. A good memory in this sense contributes much toward a high degree of intelligence, but it not identical with it. Even the feeble-minded are often found to possess an astonishing capacity for retaining dates, poetry, music. But memory adapts the thought processes only to very simple and frequently recurring events. When the circumstances become complicated, it soon proves inadequate" (Hermann Ebbinghaus, *Psychology: An Elementary Text-book* (New York: Arno Press, 1908), 149).

disability is put forward within philosophy since one of the earliest distinctions made is between the rational man and the animal/intellectually disabled. It is standard practise within the history of philosophy, for example, to demarcate the human from the animal and chart the intellectually disabled somewhere in between, using the intellectually disabled as a philosophical foil, a heuristic device for thinking about the unique status of mankind as a rational being.

John Locke is representative of this philosophical tradition. Famously writing that "brutes [i.e. non-human animals] abstract not," he draws the line of humanity around the psychological capacity to abstract from particular to general, moving from simple to complex ideas. For Locke, simple ideas are the immediate objects of perception, thought, or understanding produced through sensation or reflection. The (rational human) mind puts simple ideas together into more complex forms of knowledge through the activity of combining, comparing, and abstracting. Locke grants non-human animals an imperfect ability to combine and compare ideas (within narrow parameters), and thus what ultimately distinguishes them from humans is their inability to abstract and generalize similar kinds through language. "For it is evident," he muses, "we observe no footsteps in them of making use of general signs for universal ideas; from which we have reason to imagine, that they have not the faculty of abstracting or making general ideas."[10] If the line demarking humanity is drawn alongside the ability to abstract and use language, the intellectually disabled bear an exclusively illustrative burden in detailing this border.

Brutes may abstract not, but Locke is not so definitive regarding the intellectually disabled. "How far idiots are concerned in the want or weakness of any or all of the foregoing faculties," writes Locke, "an exact observation of their several ways of faltering, would no doubt discover. For those who either perceive but dully, or retain the ideas that come into their minds

[10] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995), II 11:10, 105.

but ill, who cannot readily excite or compound them will have little matter to think on."[11] Evident in this quotation, precisely where intellectual disability falls in the spectrum of humanity and animality is difficult pin down (especially because a unified theory of intellectual disability is a relatively recent invention). Yet representing the negative limit of the faculty of abstraction, the intellectually disabled, who "make very few or no propositions, and reason scarce at all,"[12] are accordingly not full human persons for Locke. The intellectually disabled evince defects which seem "to proceed from want of quickness, activity, and motion in the intellectual faculties, whereby they are deprived of reason."[13] The intellectually disabled are simply used heuristically by Locke to define the intellectual capacity belonging properly to the human.

The correlation of intellectual disability with animality is in philosophical vogue. Revising "traditional" beliefs about the moral status of the intellectually disabled by raising questions of the moral status of animals, Jeff McMahan reflects that, "killing animals, and allowing them to die, are morally far more serious matters than we have supposed. But allowing severely retarded human beings to die, and perhaps even killing them, are correspondingly less serious maters than we have believed."[14] Associating the profoundly intellectually disabled with animality assigns them a minimalist form of rationality at best. Peter Singer, for example, has requested to know what morally relevant psychological capacities the intellectually disabled possess by which they would be superior to pigs or dogs or animals of that sort.[15] Working from the dominant literature, I accordingly understand 'reason' in this project to reflect the minimal threshold of cognitive capacities sufficient to generate moral and sociopolitical agency. For

[11] Ibid., II 11:12-13, 105.
[12] Ibid., II 11:13, 105.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Jeff McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 230.
[15] Eva Feder Kittay. "The Personal is Philosophical is Political: A Philosopher and Mother of a Cognitively Disabled Person Sends Notes from the Battlefield." In *Cognitive Disability and its Challenge to Moral Philosophy*, ed. Eva Feder Kittay and Licia Carlson (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 408.

whether defined against normalized standards in educational development, moral philosophy, neurobiology, developmental psychology, metaphysics, or the philosophy of mind, the intellectually disabled are by and large interpreted as deficient. The lexical variation throughout this chapter—cognitive functioning, rationality, intelligence, psychological capacities—is therefore reflective of the wide range of descriptors used *against* the intellectually disabled, denying them the capacity of reason on numerous fronts at a fundamentally basic level that would demarcate them as fully human.

The most authoritative taxonomy of defects of reason is likely found in the DSM-IV-TR, which classifies intellectual disability—or to follow its terminology, mental retardation—as a disorder usually diagnosed in infancy, childhood, or adolescence and established by three necessary criteria. Criterion A is the presence of a "significantly subaverage intellectual functioning: an IQ of approximately 70 or below on an individually administered IQ test."[16] Mental retardation scales from mild, those who have an IQ level of 50-55 to approximately 70, to profound, in the IQ level below 20 or 25. Subaverage intellectual functioning, as the essential feature of mental retardation, must also be accompanied by Criterion B: " significant limitations in adaptive functioning in at least two of the following skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social/interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self-direction, functional academic skills, work, leisure, health, and safety."[17] And lastly, Criterion C requires that the onset of mental retardation must occur before age 18 years.[18] What is relevant for the purpose of determining the relationship of speech to the taxonomy of intellectual disability is primarily Criterion B, and secondarily Criterion A insofar as it is affected by Criterion B.

[16] American Psychiatric Association, "Mental Retardation," *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed., text rev.). Washington, DC: Author, 2000.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

Prima facie, the classification of intellectual disability in the DSM-IV-TR leaves ample room for those who lack the capacity of speech to avoid diagnosis. Criterion B is concerned with symptoms of adaptive functioning which "refers to how effectively individuals cope with common life demands and how well they meet the standards of personal independence expected of someone in their particular age group, sociocultural background, and community setting."[19] Because only two symptoms are here required, it is possible (strictly speaking) that a severe deficiency in 'communication' may be overlooked in the diagnosis of intellectual disability. As such, in the first read, communication (an ambiguous term to be clarified) does not play a primary role in the taxonomy of intellectual disability.

However, I suggest that communication serves a more basic and pervasive function in the judgment of rational capacity insofar as Criterion B does not provide a uniform list of equal and distinct adaptive skills, but is a conglomerate of interrelated skills. Communication is not just one skill among many, but is instead foundational in manifesting these other modes of adaptive functioning. Moreover, communication plays a pragmatic role in the determination of intellectual disability. While the essential feature of intellectual disability in the DSM-IV-TR is a significantly subaverage intellectual functioning measured by IQ tests (Criterion A), as pointed out earlier by Stubblefield, many who cannot communicate (at least in recognizable ways) do poorly on IQ tests irrespective of their cognitive capacities simply because they cannot demonstrate their cognition. The DSM-IV-TR recognizes this link between reason and communication, noting that "deficits in communication skills may result in an inability to provide an adequate history."[20] Yet this admission does not proceed beyond a mere description of the pragmatic problem to the deeper understanding of the performative nature of reason. As

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

such, while the DSM-IV-TR provides *one* method of taxonomizing intellectual disability, this taxonomy underestimates the influence of speech in the cultural imaginary and is therefore insufficient for understanding folk judgments, philosophical discourse and medical assessments of rational capacities.

1.3 Reason as Performative

Central to the failure of these scientific taxonomies to gain traction is the assumption that judgments of rationality are self-evident and can be derived neutrally from empirical observation. In arguing that speech in particular is given privilege as a performance of reason, I am not arguing that the performative power of language itself via perlocutionary acts is what discloses reason intersubjectively. Rather, I am suggesting that reason as "interior" is publically "externalized" or inverted through recognizable bodily, behavioural acts. Behavioral performances are the means through which reason becomes sociopolitically visible and intelligible.

For the purpose of identifying quotidian forms of exclusion via the relation of speech and reason in this chapter, I confine the discussion of rational performance to an internalist theory of mind, making a clear division between inner and outer activities/faculties.[21] This view of reason as distinctly interior occupies the dominant folk understanding of cognition, for as Jonathan Rée observes, "It is hard to get away from the idea that we have a concealed inner life as well as a public, outer one; our own secret garden where we can be alone with our thoughts, our private memories, hopes and fears, behind a wall of appearances that we present to the outside world."[22] This common-sense view of cognition is not limited to folk understandings, but has also enjoyed

[21] My decision to situate the discussion of reason as performative within an internalist theory of mind is not undercut by alternative "externalist" understandings of the mind being social or interpersonal. For in this instance, external behaviors are themselves performative functions depending on recognition to be attributable.
[22] Jonathan Rée, *I See a Voice: Deafness, Language and the Senses—A Philosophical History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999), 58.

a high lineage in Western philosophy, famously evidenced in Descartes's distinction between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* and in Lockean 'ideas' as representations of external objects in the mind. In localizing thinking as a strictly internal activity, thought becomes a private affair and lies hidden from the world. From this perspective, one's rational capacities therefore must be put on display in order for their existence to be verifiable.

Reactions to the situation of Jean-Dominique Bauby provide a dramatic example of how the view of thinking as an interior function interacts with ascriptions of rationality. At the age of 43, Bauby—then editor-in-chief of the French fashion magazine *ELLE*—suffered a massive stroke but survived with "locked-in syndrome." As Bauby describes it, this leaves one "paralyzed from head to toe, . . . mind intact, . . . imprisoned inside [one's] own body, unable to speak or move. In my case, blinking my left eyelid is my only means of communication."[23] Bauby's experience of being "locked" within his body but retaining his mental capacities is useful here for three reasons. In the first place, it dramatizes the commonsense theme of interiority/exteriority, wherein as Charles Taylor notes, "there is a sense of 'inside' which designates the thought or desires or intentions which we hold back for ourselves, as against those which we express in speech and action."[24] Bauby *had* rational capacities, but they were unrecognizable and hidden. As such, his rationality was often called into question, as demonstrated by an overheard discussion that he reports:

> The gossipers were as greedy as vultures who have just discovered a disembowelled antelope. 'Did you know that Bauby is now a total vegetable?' said one. 'Yes, I heard. A complete vegetable,' came the reply. . . . The tone of voice left no doubt that henceforth I belonged on a vegetable stall and not to the human race. France was at peace; one couldn't

[23] Jean-Dominique Bauby, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, trans. Jeremy Leggatt (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 4.
[24] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 113.

> shoot the bearers of bad news. Instead, I would have to rely on myself if I wanted to prove that my IQ was still higher than a turnip's.[25]

Secondly, as indicated by this last line, Bauby dramatizes the worry of failing to put reason out on show. This worry will become even more pronounced as we turn from Bauby to the discussion of intellectual disability proper, where no previous communication has been established signaling reason. And thirdly, Bauby's experience demonstrates that there is no necessary congruence between overt behavior and overt ability, a worrisome move for psychologists like John W. Jacobson, James A. Mulick, and Allen A. Schwartz who take this relation to be the cornerstone of psychological analysis and assessment. For example, facilitated communication is a "method, or group of methods, for providing assistance to nonverbal persons in typing letters, words, phrases, or sentences using a typewriter, computer keyboard, or alphabet facsimile"[26] which bears striking likenesses to the situation of Bauby. Criticizing this practice, Jacobson et al. contend that facilitated communication belies the central conviction of the scientific-practitioner standpoint that

> the everyday facility with which people with autism or [intellectual disability] use a language . . . is an accurate depiction of their ability to do so and that there is no clinically significant phenomenon that inhibits the overt production of communication and "masks" normative communication skills (i.e., actual production is representative of 'internal' speech skill).[27]

However, like the experience of Bauby and others to be discussed in this paper, the assumption that outward behavior mirrors cognitive abilities is an idealization and does not hold necessarily, if at all. Cognitive capacities are *always* mediated through the body and the judgment of these capacities is filtered through background beliefs interpreting only certain behaviors as rational. For these reasons, I suggest that reason is not given self-evidently but requires recognizable

[25] Bauby, *The Diving Bell*, 82.
[26] John W. Jacobson, James A. Mulick, Allen A. Schwartz, "A History of Facilitated Communication: Science, Pseudoscience, and Antiscience," *American Psychologist*, Vol. 50, No. 9 (September 1995): 750
[27] Ibid., 757.

demonstrations to be attributable. As evidenced by Bauby, what *counts* as a valid performance of reason is highly contestable. Speech is a principal factor in establishing the validity of one's rational performance, and I now focus upon it through a discussion of language and thought.

1.4 *Logos:* Speech as a Privileged Form of Language

I have argued that Locke exemplifies the philosophical habit of associating the intellectually disabled with non-human animals, yet he also represents the philosophical privilege given to language as disclosive of reason. Emphasizing language as related to power of abstraction, Locke writes that "those who cannot distinguish, compare, and abstract would hardly be able to understand and make use of language, or judge, or reason, to any tolerable degree."[28] In this manner, the "want of quickness, activity and motion" in the intellectual faculties of the "idiot" is reflected by the want of these same qualities in speech. That is, slow or absent speech is so often judged as slow or absent intellectual functioning. While Locke does not connect the qualia or absence of speech as disclosing reason himself, he sets the stage to make this judgment an easy one. This theoretical connection between language and reason exemplified by Locke requires further elucidation.

There is a two-way relationship between language and thought; we can ask about either the dependence of language on thinking, or the dependence of thinking on language. The first movement is fairly straightforward, for language is primarily used to express thoughts. The dependence of language on thought is manifest since, as Donald Davidson notes, "Someone who utters the sentence 'The candle is out' as a sentence of English must intend to utter words that are true if and only if an indicated candle is out at the time of utterance, and he must believe that by

[28] Locke, *Essay*, II 11:12, 105.

making the sounds he does he is uttering words that are true only under those circumstances."[29] The issue therefore, as Davidson goes on to explain, lies on the other side of the relationship: can there be thought without language? To answer this question, it is necessary to back up a step and define a thought.

Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny write that "thoughts are inner states of people . . . that have their causal powers partly in virtue of their representational content and partly in virtue of the relation people have to these contents."[30] This means that a thought requires both representational content—being about something—as well as taking a stand on that content—desiring it, trusting it, fearing it, etc. Davidson fills in this definition by arguing that a "thought is defined by a system of beliefs, but is itself autonomous with respect to belief."[31] To use Davidson's example, to have the thought 'the gun is loaded' requires a background of beliefs that the gun is a weapon and that the gun is an enduring physical object, etc.

What then of the dependence of thought on language? Davidson lands squarely on the side that thinking requires the capacity of language. His primary thesis is that "a creature cannot have thoughts unless it is an interpreter of the speech of another."[32] Rather than attempting to make either language or thought primary, Davidson takes the line of attributing thoughts through the interpretation of language. For as he concludes, "We have the idea of belief only from the role of belief in the interpretation of language, for as a private attitude it is not intelligible except as an adjustment to the public norm provided by language. It follows that a creature must be a member of a speech community if it is to have the concept of belief."[33] Being part of speech

[29] Donald Davidson, *Inquires into Truth and Interpretation* (New York: OUP, 2001), 155.
[30] Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny, *Language and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language, second ed.* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 138.
[31] Davidson, *Inquiries*, 157.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid, 170.

community enables one to uncover an interpretive pattern of beliefs against with thoughts can be identified.

Devitt and Sterelny qualify this point, noting that *all* thinking cannot be in a public language since animals and prelingustic children think even though they have no language. As such, "the thesis must be that the *most mature* human thought consists in having attitudes of believing, desiring, trusting, hoping, etc., to mental sentences in a public language."[34] What therefore arises from these accounts of language and thought is that thinking can exist without language, but the most mature human thought requires having attitudes about the contents of one's thought available in a public language that can be identified and interpreted. The emphasis on mature thought signals a connection to the discussion of intellectual disability. For the taxonomical question regarding intellectual disability is primarily not whether or not thought is present, but *how much* thought and *what sorts* of thinking exist. Working towards the significance of *speech* in judging rational capacities, I must clarify the relation of speech vs. other forms of language to establish that speech is a privileged performance of rationality.

Given that "mature thinking" is understood to be dependent on language, why is *speech* in particular the privileged form? Why do philosophers of language and mind, such as Davidson, Devitt and Sterelny, consistently refer to 'speech' in their discussions of 'language'? Along these lines, why are alternative forms of communication (or performances of rationality) such as left eyelid fluttering, pointing, touch, gesture, eye contact, and even more subtle forms of being-with another not or seldom recognized as sufficient in indicating rational capacities? A recognition of the conceptual intertwining of speech and reason—logos—is requisite to answer these questions adequately.

[34] Devitt and Sterelny, *Language and Reality*, 141.

Carl Elliott reflects that "for most people, thinking and speaking are tied together in complicated and rather mysterious ways. We hold imaginary conversations in our heads. We 'think out loud.' We learn to read first by speaking the written words aloud, then suppressing the speech and 'hearing' the words."[35] This correlation existing in the folk imaginary has often been reinscribed theoretically. Writing in the nineteenth century, for example, John Henry Newman somewhat ambivalently considers that "the Greek word *logos* 'stands' both for *reason* and for *speech*, and it is difficult to say what it means more properly. It means both at once: why? Because really they cannot be divided—because they are in a true sense one."[36] The theoretical relationship of speech and reason is not endemic to Newman or the nineteenth century, but is, as Emmanuel Levinas notes, representative of the whole metaphysical tradition in which, "*logos* as discourse is completely confused with *logos* as reason."[37] In her work, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, Adriana Cavarero traces this history, noting that '*logos*' is derived from the Greek verb *legein*, and means both "speaking" as well as "gathering," "binding," "joining."[38] In its ordinary use, *logos* refers to the activity of speaking, the activity of linking the parts of speech together in the right way. This vocal activity of joining words together is the expression of the system of signification taking place within the realm of thought. Understood by Plato as "a silent discourse within the soul with itself," [39] thought retains

[35] Carl Elliott, *Better Than Well: American Medicine Meets the American Dream* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 15.
[36] John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), Part 2, Discourse 2, §4, pg. 270; quoted in Robert Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 39.
[37] Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 45; quoted in Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward A Philosophy Of Vocal Expression* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 33.
[38] Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 33.
[39] Ibid., 46; Cavarero goes on to argue that moving from Plato to Plotinus, *logos* becomes understood as a "static, panoramic, and simultaneous vision of the order of signifieds" (Ibid., 43). Existing within the realm of vision rather than the voice, *logos* is conceptualized as a contemplative activity that has no need of dialogue or movement within its perfect and immobile order. While the devocalization of *logos* weakens the conceptual intertwining of speech and

the structure of "joining" found in *logos*. Spoken discourse is therefore sonorized thought, as the (dia)*logos* within the soul streams through the mouth, taking on a physical form. While much of these early distinctions have been obscured or left behind, the metaphysical pairing of speech and reason continues to exert a metaphorical power, informing the contemporary cultural and philosophical imaginary.

Undergirded by the conceptual influence of *logos*, the first way in which speech stands out as a privileged form of disclosing rationality is that, unlike alternate forms of communication such as touch, speech is understood as dialogically content-laden. Through speech, intentions and desires can be specified to a degree impossible with other forms of communication. As Dmitri Nikulin notes, "One can express much with a look, with a gesture, with a touch, with a smell. Yet, one cannot dialogically communicate through any one of them in an increasing number of rejoinders."[40] Speech opens the possibility not only of expressing complex states of affairs, but also of developing them dialogically. It is for this reason that impassioned yet unintelligible sounds do not indicate a high-level of cognition. As a medium for content that can be verified and deliberated over, speech enables the articulation of truth and as such has occupied a privileged position in the Western philosophical tradition.

With this being said, writing and sign are of course also content-laden and dialogical/dialectical; however, they are distinct from speech as speech is also taken to be the original developmental form of communication. As expressed by Devitt and Sterelny, gestures such as pointing, laughing, and smiling in children are understood as ways of responding to one's situation, but do not (presumably) demonstrate mature thoughts. Speech is thus taken within this paradigm as the first way of articulating oneself in the world as a genuine thinking

---

reason, I contend that speech has nevertheless retained a lasting privilege in Western philosophy not severely undercut by the metaphysical tradition.

[40] Dmitri Nikulin, *On Dialogue* (New York: Lexington Books, 2006), 46.

subject over against other forms of communicating such as touch, writing and sign. This privilege should not, however, be understood as a mere temporal originarity—that speech simply "happened" to be developed before writing and sign—but rather as a metaphysical originarity. While the subordination of alternate means of communicating is not uniform insofar as touch may be thought of as a precursor to speech, sign as genuine alternative to speech, and writing as based on and therefore derivative of speech, what is common in all three instances is a metaphysical privileging of speech as a means of signification.

Rée tracks the metaphysical privileging of speech in his history of (the resistance to) deafness and sign in the West. The voice, he argues, has historically been imbued with superstition as philosophers have possessed the "deluded idea that articulate sounds possessed a 'mysterious special power'."[41] Johann Gottfried Herder, for example, wrote in the late eighteenth century that "the breath of our mouths is the picture of the world, the type that exhibits our thoughts and feelings to the mind of another. If this divine breath had not inspired us, and floated like a charm on our lips we should all have still been wanderers in the woods."[42] Employing a different metaphysics, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel similarly contended it is "primarily through the voice that people make known their inwardness, for they put into it what they are."[43] This privilege accorded to speech is not restricted to the past, but continues on in contemporary philosophical literature.

In *On Dialogue*, for example, Nikulin argues that "when communicating, a person is *fully present* in her voice and is recognized both by and from that voice."[44] The voice wholly discloses

[41] Rée, *I See a Voice*, 213.
[42] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschicte der Menschheit* (1784-91), 2 Vols, Leipzig, Johann Hartnock, 1841, Vol. 1 pp. 295-6, trans T. Churchhill, *Outlines of a Philosophy of a History of Man*, London, J. Johnson, 1800, pp. 232; quoted in Rée, *I See a Voice*, 65.
[43] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind* (1830), §401; quoted in Rée, *I See a Voice*, 60.
[44] Nikulin, *On Dialogue*, 44; emphasis added. To be fair, from the start Nikulin recognizes that voice is the capacity to communicate and "'words' here do not necessarily mean only spoken, uttered, or verbal words. Rather, they

oneself to the world not only as a thinking subject, but also as a full and distinct person. "Every person," writes Nikulin, "has a unique voice with its peculiar overtones and intonations. A person is primarily present and accessible in and as a voice. The voice, then, gives a person the chance to reveal herself to the other, and thus—as if for the first time—also to herself."[45] While the strong register of Nikulin's position is dubious—is anyone ever fully present in his or her voice and through his or her speech? Do the mute not have an identity disclosed to themselves and the world?—it remains a salient example of the privileged position occupied by speech and the voice.[46]

As has been well noted by Jacques Derrida in his critique of "phonocentricism," this privileging of speech over alternate forms of communicating such as writing or sign does not logically follow, but is rather "the most original and powerful ethnocentrisms."[47] While writing is arguably derived from speech, writing is disclosive of both personhood and the structure of thinking by employing the same syntactic structure used in speech. The example of sign provides an even more salient example of how the primacy of speech is a *prejudice*, referred to as "audism" within Deaf Studies, inherited from a long philosophical lineage. As Rée notes, nineteenth-century France witnessed significant resistance to the implementation of sign in mute-deaf communities. Stemming from "metaphysical prejudice," as Rée terms it, it was thought that

---

embrace verbal utterances and communicative gestures: a deaf mute may equally exchange words with others (*On Dialogue*, 39). Yet what is interesting is that Nikulin then leaves alternate forms of voice behind, carrying on in his chapter entitled "Voice" to describe the spoken voice—discussing phonetics, the "sounding voice," "generating sounds," "hearing the voice"—all which indicate that the discussion of voice is already cast for Nikulin as one principally concerned with speech.

[45] Ibid, 41.

[46] Supplementing Nikulin's position, Sokolowski contends that it is specifically *grammar* that indicates the mind of the other in use and discloses it to the world: "The grammar of words is lodged deeply into our minds. It shapes our minds and their activity, and when we speak, the grammar of the sentences we utter spreads our minds out into the open. This exposure of our minds, through the grammar of our speech, manifests our thinking more directly than any sort of brain scan could do. When we hear the grammar of a speech, we get as deeply into a person's mind as we are ever going to get (Quoted in Sokolowski, *Phenomenology*, 87).)

[47] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 3.

> the use of signs interfered with the pupils' direct understanding of French, and concluded that, having learned to read and write, the deaf should be given intensive instruction both in 'the labial alphabet, or the art of reading from the lips' and in 'the oral alphabet, or artificial pronunciation'. For only speech would allow the deaf to become citizens of the world, and once a deaf child had acquired speech, its need for signs would wither away.[48]

The deaf were accordingly often not taught written language at all, on the "specious grounds that it could not be made meaningful to those who were unable to understand spoken words."[49] Even against alternate, content-laden forms of communication, speech rises to the top relevance of this prejudice within the discussion of speech as a gatekeeper of reason in the taxonomy of intellectual disability as the originary, most flexible and most trustworthy sign of conveying one's personhood and rationality. Despite this privilege, not all speech is created equal; the validity of speech as disclosing "mature thoughts" relies upon having mature speech.

Borrowing from Derek Bickerton, Robert Sokolowski employs the term "protolanguage" as an intermediary between animal sounds and meaningful human speech.[50] Protolanguage employs something equivalent to semantics but lacks syntax; that is, protolanguage as exemplified in young children is the stringing together of indications without an explicit grammar. "Me cookie eat hungry" is a mimicry of speech, but lacks grammar, and is consequently understood to be a mere string of ideas that does not express true thoughts. Syntax therefore differentiates protolanguage from true speech, as somewhat melodramatically stated by William H. Calvin and Bickerton: "Syntax is the magic key that unlocks the floodgates of language."[51]

Aristotle backs this distinction between protolanguage and "mature speech." In the *Poetics*, Aristotle defines *logos* as *phone semantike*, the signifying voice, and is quite clear that

---

[48] Rée, *I See a Voice*, 215.
[49] Ibid., 214.
[50] This discussion of protolanguage is derived from Sokolowski, *Phenomenology*, 35-39.
[51] William H. Calvin and Derek Bickerton, *Lingua ex Machina: Reconciling Darwin and Chomsky with the Human Brain* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 52; quoted in Sokolowski, *Phenomenology*, 36.

humans alone possess this capacity. The voice of animals is therefore an empty voice, capable only of indicating pain or displeasure. The result of privileging the semantic is that the role of the *phone*, or vocal expression, becomes auxiliary, "entirely bound up with the role of vocalizing concepts, so that whatever is left over is an insignificant remain, an excess that is disturbingly close to animality." [52] The subordination of the voice to the signified not only prioritizes the activity of thinking, but conditions the voice as human only "insofar as the sounds emitted from man are put in the service of the entities of reason."[53] In this regard, the voice is only within the realm of *logos* and only indicates the presence of reason insofar as it employs the proper structure of language, fulfilling its instrumental role.

If protolanguage is the babble of children and speech as *logos* is the sophisticated language of fully developed humans expressing genuine thoughts, then speech once again becomes the gatekeeper of rational capacity. For it is not only children who fall below the line of true speech production; Sokolowski indicates three other instances of protolanguage: trained animals, stunted speakers and disturbed speakers. 'Stunted speakers' are exemplified by Sokolowski as children who were kept in isolation or missed grammatical education and lack the ability to speak grammatically. It is not a very far stretch to imagine one with severe to profound intellectual disability as making this list as well, being situated somewhere between prelinguistic children and stunted speakers. Sokolowski avoids the implications of explicitly writing that stunted and disturbed speakers possess protolanguage—alongside trained animals no less—but the point is made even so. One with a severe cognitive disability who cannot speak syntactically lacks the means of organizing ideas into full-blown, mature thoughts. Of course, it may in fact be the case that many "stunted" or "disturbed" speakers are unable to think syntactically. Yet what

[52] Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 34.
[53] Cavarero, "The Voiced Body: *Extract From* A Philosophical Encyclopedia of the Body" *Qui Parle* Vol. 2. No. 1 (Fall/Winter, 2012): 74.

interests me here is not developmental linguistics, but the normative claims being made by Sokolowski about the inability of those with protolanguage to express true and mature thoughts, *à la* Devitt and Sterelny.

In sum, it is evident that when speech is used as a gatekeeper of reason, the dual meaning of *logos* as both speech and reason is being employed co-extensively. To be recognized as speaking, one must be recognized as employing rationality in the various ways described above. Likewise, to be recognized as possessing mature thoughts, one must be capable of speaking. While there are theoretical grounds for the speech-reason connection, I argue that in practice speech is far too unreliable an indicator to measure rational capacity. The qualia (and presence/absence) of one's speech often tells us *something* about their cognitive faculties, yet this judgment is necessarily structured by normalized expectations and is thus open wide to "misdiagnosis." This discussion can now be brought into dialogue with the taxonomy of intellectual disability. In doing so, I contend not only that the dual meaning of *logos* is accepted and employed uncritically, but that the parameters for recognizing "speech" and reason are both constructed and contingent. In demonstrating that speech is used as a ready indicator in our judgments of rational capacities, two types of judgments will be examined: first, judgments of those who possess no (recognizable) speech and are wrongfully presumed to be intellectually disabled and second, judgments of those who are intellectually disabled, but whose lack of proper speech curtails our judgment of their capacities.

1.5 Speech as the Gatekeeper of Reason

Grafting the privilege given to speech into the notion of rationality as an inner process gives rise to speech as a transportation of thoughts—the pinnacle of rationality and *the* means of connecting to the world as a rational being. Speech as the transportation of ideas between minds

has been argued for by linguist Jerrold Katz. As Katz describes it, communication takes place when: 1) the speaker choses the thought she wants to convey, 2) she encodes it in a phonetic representation, 3) this representation is sent to her articulatory organs, 4) the proper phonetic shape is uttered, 5) the receiver picks up this phonetic shape by his auditory organs, 6) the speech sounds are converted into a neural signal equivalent to that of the sender's, and finally 7) the representation is decoded by the receiver into the same message intended by the speaker.[54] Katz does not of course believe that speech is the *only* means of communicating and transporting thoughts. However, like Davidson, Devitt and Sterelny, Harder, Hegel, Nikulin, and Sokolowski, Katz frames the context of communication as one that is already focused on speech.

> Natural languages are vehicles for communication in which syntactically structured and acoustically realized objects transmit meaningful messages from one messenger to another. They are not the only vehicles for communication that humans have at their disposal, *but they are, without a doubt, the most flexible and important ones*.[55]

Persistently conflating communication with speech strikingly indicates the manner in which speech becomes the focal point for demonstrating thoughts. As such, in this commonsense manner, the private thoughts of one are transferred into the mind of another, moving from inner experience to outer experience and back to inner. Within this paradigm, it is not that speech itself is the result of serious cognitive labour, but rather that speech is prerogatively disclosive and therefore if one cannot speak, one has no way of demonstrating *that* one has high-level cognition. As such, speech provides a stringent taxonomy for the diagnosis of rational capacities.

To see how this theoretical prejudice plays out in the lived experience of disabled speakers, consider the case of Anne McDonald. In 1964, at the age of three, McDonald was placed in St. Nicholas Hospital, a government institution for those with severe disabilities. Unable to communicate with adults until she was sixteen due to severe athetosis—a form of

[54] J.J. Katz, *The Philosophy of Language* (New York: Harper & Rox, 1966), 103.
[55] Ibid, 98; emphasis added.

cerebral palsy that results in uncontrollable movement and for McDonald, extreme muscle tension—it was simply presumed that McDonald could not think *because* she could not speak. In this manner, cut off from her interior states, her body, along with statistical evidence of intellectual disability in those with athetosis, was (presumably) all that was available to her doctors and therapists to make judgements of her cognitive capacities. They could not see a mind inside her body[56] because they presumably had no access to her mind. Being "locked" in her body, McDonald was acutely aware of the necessity of extricating her thoughts, and notes that "for busting out of confinement, speech seemed more desirable [than walking]. We knew there were kids in St. Nicholas who could walk, but none who could talk properly. All our imaginings depended for their fulfillment on speech."[57]

This experience of being locked within one's body, unable to verify one's rational capacities not only holds true for many with cerebral palsy, but also applies to persons located on the autistic spectrum. There are many instances of speech wrongfully being used as an indicator of rational capacities[58] and Nick Petzell relays a strikingly similar account to that of McDonald's:

> During my first thirteen years, for the most part, I was unable to communicate clearly with the neurotypical world. I was diagnosed as severely mentally impaired with the ability of a baby in its first year of life. People suspected that I was smarter than I let on, but expectations were very low. I was taught skills, not information; any communication strategies were need-based. My behavior was undisciplined since I was not thought to be responsible, or I often was misunderstood when I tried to use behavior to communicate.[59]

---

[56] Rosemary Crossley and Anne McDonald, *Annie's Coming Out* (e-published: DEAL books, 2010), 4.
[57] Ibid., 24.
[58] See Sue Rubin, "FC: The Key to Success," in *Sharing our Wisdom,* ed. Gail Gillingham and Sandra McClennen (Durham, N.H.: Autism National Committee), 133-42; Amanda Baggs, "In My Language," (video) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jny1M1hI2jc; Lucy Blackman, *Lucy's Story: Autism and Other Adventures* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2001); Jenn Seybert, "Inclusion . . . Finally!," in *Sharing Our Wisdom,* 101-8; Sharissa Joy Kochmeister, "To Have a Voice," in *Sharing Our Wisdom,* 117-32; and Jamie Burke, "Life's a Beach," in *Sharing Our Wisdom,* 109-12; this list was compiled from Stubblefield, "Race and Cognitive Disability," 299.
[59] Nick Pentzell, "Cultural Commentary: Dissed Ability: Grappling With Stereotypes And The Internalized Oppression Of Babyliss," *Disability Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 30, No. 1 (2010), (accessed April 1, 2010) "http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1054/1241.

Understanding thinking as an interior activity places great pressure on speech to verify *that* one has cognitive faculties sufficient to be attributed full moral and social status. Yet while the inability to speak makes the diagnosis of rational capacities difficult, this in itself does not explain why the diagnosis of McDonald's cognitive capacities, for example, was negative instead of simply "we don't know." It seems that when the most obvious mark of cognition is lacking, distorted or underdeveloped, the default is not to withhold judgment, but to shift the burden of proof and demand further evidence. If rationality must be continually put on display to be verified, lacking a recognized *form* of rational performance leads to disqualification. It is this performativity that calls into question the use of speech in gauging rational capacity.

Thus, to return to the taxonomy of intellectual disability within the DSM-IV-TR, speech is not simply an equal criterion within the list of symptoms of adaptive functioning,[60] but is rather interpreted as the *sine qua non* of rational capacity. As such, the taxonomy of intellectual disability in the DSM-IV-TR severely underestimates the philosophical and folk privilege given to speech and the manner in which this privilege translates in our judgment of rationality. As a diagnostic authority, the DSM-IV-TR is the backdrop against which a wide range of judgments of rationality—mediated through performances such as speech—in folk, professional, and medical spheres are sanctioned. The danger of the DSM-IV-TR's apolitical methodology is that coupled with its authority, the judgments of reason enmeshed within a wide range of socio-political situations are interpreted as apolitical. The reliance upon recognizable performances is obscured.

---

[60] E.g. Communication, self-care, home living, social/interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self-direction, functional academic skills, work, leisure, health, and safety.

Recognizing the performative nature of reason and the privilege given to speech should further modify our judgment of those who are, indeed, intellectually disabled. Reflecting on her daughter Sesha who has a severe to profound intellectual disability, Eva Kittay writes:

> Now what cognitive capacities Sesha possesses *I* do not know, nor do others. And it is hubris to presume to know. I am often surprised [to] find out that Sesha has understood something or is capable of something I did not expect. These surprises can only keep coming when she and her friends are treated in a manner based not on the limitations we know they have but on our understanding that *our* knowledge is limited.[61]

The hubris to which Kittay alludes is that which sets up speech as a gatekeeper in the first place. The unverifiability of Sesha's cognitive capacities should lead the philosopher and taxonomist not to ask whether the gatekeeper is doing his job sufficiently—keeping the right people in and the wrong people out—but to question why the borders of reason need to be policed at all. The unpredictability represented by Sesha should not lead us to patrol the taxonomy of reason more carefully, but to recognize the limits of our knowledge and respond with openness to those who are voiceless and (assumed to be) intellectually disabled.

The position of epistemic humility taken up by Kittay is described by Sandra Harding as "strong objectivity," a position which "requires that we investigate the relation between subject and object rather than deny the existence of, or seek unilateral control over, this relation."[62] Acknowledging the performed nature of reason is a means of uncovering this very relation. Of course, recognizing this politicized relation between subject and object is not a terminal exercise but makes the further demand upon us to, as Harding puts it, "start thought in the perspective . . . of the life of the Other."[63] In this way, experiencing the world of those recognized as voiceless

---

[61] Kittay, "The Personal is Philosophical is Political: A Philosopher and Mother of a Cognitively Disabled Person Sends Notes from the Battlefield," in *Cognitive Disability*, 405.

[62] Sandra G. Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking From Woman's Lives* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 150; quoted in Kittay, "The Personal Is Philosophical is Political," 407.

[63] Ibid.

requires a bracketing of our philosophical assumptions of *logos* and an openness to be caught off guard by alternate forms of disclosing intelligence and personhood.

Relying on speech to convey rational capacity is not merely setting the bar too high: it is asking the wrong question. In acknowledging that the judgment of reason is mediated by the *recognition* of performed reason, the response to the "voiceless"—in both meanings of the term—should not be "does this person possess reason?" but should rather prompt a critical reflection on the way we define the borders of 'reason'. For, those who dispense proper care and/or moral status to the (presumably) intellectually disabled may constantly renegotiate which performances are disclosive of rationality. Appreciating that the parameters by which one recognizes reason are both constructed and contestable enables the aligning of taxonomies with disabled experience and not the other way around.

Revisiting the question of agency that opened up this chapter, characterizing the severe to profoundly intellectually disabled as "voiceless" can now be seen as an ironic misdescription at best. What the (presumed) intellectually disabled lack is not a voice, but the *recognition* of alternative means of communicating personhood and intelligence outside of normalized parameters. Without recognition of its privileged phonological function, the voice ceases to exist in its metaphorical function as a site of agency. This negation results from a lack of imagination, a resistance to recognizing reason outside of sedimented interpretive schemas.

The presumed intellectually disabled dramatically exemplify that speech is used as a gatekeeper of reason. Widening our focus, it is not only those who "do not speak at all," but also those who do not speak in the *right way* who are excluded for failing to perform reason within normalized parameters. Interpreted through the same logic that identifies the intellectually disabled as "voiceless," the embodied performance of disabled speech by those with Tourette's

syndrome or those who stutter results in a suspension of agency, and calls into question the rationality denoted by their speech. This marginalization largely occurs not as much within debates of personhood or worries of institutionalization, but through often visceral reactions to abnormal speech within face-to-face, everyday, mundane interactions. In parsing out the construction of the embodied disabled speaker, and the concurrent exclusion underlying disabled speech, I focus next on these voices.

Chapter 2—Noise in the System: The (Linguistic) Disabled Voice

2.1 Body and the Voice

The discussion of the ubiquitous privilege given to voiced speech shifts when the intellectually disabled are no longer the referent. While the voices of the severe to profoundly intellectually disabled are not given recognition as true speech since they do not discharge their linguistic function, there are many atypical voices which *are* recognized as meaning-laden yet nevertheless are interpreted as disabled and disabling. At stake for those who stutter, for example, is not proving *that* one possess sufficient rational capacities for agency, like Anne McDonald, since normal patterns of speech are produced which happen to break unpredictably. Rather, at stake is maintaining this judgment in a stable and uninterrupted manner. Framing it in terms of the previous chapter, the abnormal voice may disclose reason, but this voice nevertheless is a flawed performance.

To address the complexity of the flawed performance of reason I therefore turn to examine a particular aspect of spoken language—the material, sonorous voice. Insofar as one with Tourette syndrome produces "mature" speech, though stretched and stuttered, the primary concern is not diagnosis, which would focus the discussion squarely on language production itself. Rather, I believe the particular qualia and presentation of the phonic—the speech *sounds*—are that which primarily distinguish the so-called normal speaker from the abnormal in speech disorders such as cleft palate, cerebral palsy, stuttering, autism, or Tourette syndrome. The material voice used in service of language is as such the primary category under investigation. While the voice is of course used for other modes of expression such as song or guttural screams, these functions are set aside in this chapter. This consideration is particularly appropriate since the linguistic function of the voice is construed, from Aristotle to modern linguistics, as the apex

of human rationality. In comparison, the screaming or singing voice is base, belonging more properly to the realm of the feminine[64] or the disabled[65] rather than to the "fully rational." As such, the disabled voice will be used heuristically in this chapter to explore the ways in which the phonic aspect of the voice plays into the judgment of normalized speech. The primary example to be employed in this chapter is the stuttering voice, not because it is most representative of disabled voices, but simply because I possess first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon and politics of the stuttering voice within normalized aural spaces.[66]

This chapter will accordingly focus on the disruption of the linguistic voice. Attending to this role advances the theme of the last chapter, examining how the disabled voice troubles speech as a performance of reason. The disabled voice is a flawed performance of reason that draws attention to the materiality of the signifier, distorting the temporal structure and semantic linearity of speech. Furthermore, the disabled voice blurs the distinction between speech and noise, and can be understood through the work of Mary Douglas on purity and danger as pollution of aural space. This multiform disruption of communicative systems is the primary logic through which the disabled voice is excluded *qua* voice and is manifest in the ableist policing of aural spaces. Directing attention to the ways in which the disabled voice seemingly fails as a voice through the linguistic register discloses the mechanics underpinning the normalization of sociopolitical speech production.

---

[64] See Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 6.; "Symptomatically, the symbolic patriarchal order that identifies the masculine with reason and the feminine with the body is precisely an order that privileges the semantic with respect to the vocal. In other words, even the androcentric tradition knows that the voice comes from 'the vibration of a throat of flesh' and, precisely because it knows this, it catalogs the voice with the body. This voice becomes secondary, ephemeral, and inessential—reserved for women. Feminized from the start, the vocal aspect of speech and, furthermore, of song appear together as antagonistic elements in a rational, masculine sphere that centers itself, instead, on the semantic. To put it formulaically: woman sings, man thinks."

[65] See, for example, Amanda Baggs, *In My Language*, 2007, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnylM1hI2jc&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

[66] Recognizing that the stuttering voice is not singular, and that there is a wide range of intensity and experiences (both positive and negative) of this disabled voice, it is my intention in this chapter to underline a common logic of oppression of stuttering, and more broadly, disabled voices.

To set up this discussion, it is necessary to introduce the voice in relation to the body. For if, as I have argued, reason is evaluated as an embodied behavioral performance, it follows that the voice, which modifies the performance of speech, must also be interpreted through this matrix. While it is not often given due attention, the voice is inextricably conjoined with the body; expelled from fleshy, deep crevices and existing as a material, sonorous emission. This linkage between voice and body is emphasized by Adriana Cavarero, who writes that "the voice belongs to the living; it communicates the presence of an existent in flesh and bone; it signals a throat, a particular body."[67] Following the trajectory of the voice belonging to a particular and singular body, I contend that the voice must be understood as an aspect of the *behavior* of speech which, as Lawrence Hass indicates, is "performed by and through living bodies—creatures who have lungs, who pass air through their larynxes and past their tongues."[68] While so often overlooked or shortchanged, speech is always mediated through the body. The disabled voice thus gives us pause, literally, allowing us to attend phenomenologically to this ubiquitous, yet fundamental aspect of speech.

There are, however, two complications in the assessment of the voice as embodied, the first of which will delineate the territory of the investigation of the disabled voice, and the second of which motivates the discussion. In this first place, "posthuman" productions of voice—be they mechanical, electronic, or computerized—seemingly undercut the claim of the embodied nature of the voice. In 1804, Wolfgan von Kempelen completed *The Speaking Machine*, a speaking wooden box connected to bellows on one side (serving as lungs) and a rubber funnel on the other side (serving as the mouth) which was articulated by the hands.[69]

[67] Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 177.
[68] Lawrence Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 182.
[69] Dolar, *A Voice And Nothing More*, 7.

Toured around Europe, Kempelen's machine modeled the human voice eerily well. One spectator put it this way:

> You cannot believe, my dear friend, how we were all seized by a magic feeling when we first heard the human voice and human speech which apparently didn't come from a human mouth. We looked at each other in silence and consternation and we all had goose-flesh produced by horror in the first moments.[70]

The consternation expressed here affirms, in one respect, that the voice typically *is* linked to the human body in our everyday thought; yet this affirmation emerges precisely because it is *possible* to unmoor the voice from the body. The feeling of uncanniness—das *Unheimliche*—provoked by *The Speaking Machine* thus simultaneously acknowledges while undermining embodiedness as a constitutive aspect of the voice.

Digitization pushes the voice further into posthumanist territory, destabilizing to an even greater degree the necessity of the body for the production of voice. While speech produced by *The Speaking Machine* was not fashioned by human lungs and mouth, it nevertheless mimicked these processes and required human hands to animate its uncanny voice. On the other hand, voice synthesizers, such as the one used by Stephen Hawking, are removed once more from their embodied human origins. Hawking interfaces with the program Equalizer, which converts compiled sentences into voiced speech, a necessity since he is almost entirely paralyzed due to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. His computerized voice is as such created irrespective of his own human breath and articulation, somewhat humorously producing an American accent which he at first found distasteful.[71]

In a similar manner, in her video *In My Language*, Amanda Baggs discusses her non-symbolic language as an autistic (interacting with her world through singing, movement, smell, etc.) through the medium of computerized text-to-speech. Baggs emphasizes that she is only

[70] Quoted in Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More,* 7.
[71] Elliott, *Better Than Well*, 2.

recognized as communicating when she types her thoughts out in a recognizable language. Her bodily voice fails to gain recognition, so her posthuman voice is thus the means available to be acknowledged as human.

In one register, the ability to unchain the voice from the human body indeed presents a challenge to the claim of the embodiment of speech, if embodiment is viewed as a necessary condition of the voice. However, posthuman voices do not inescapably undercut this project, but can rather be understood to delineate its limits and highlight possible dangers in carrying this argument forward. Noting that the voice can be disembodied (and that seemingly "pure" human voice is increasingly elusive in our world of cell phones, radios, microphones, and other digitizing and voice modifying technologies), it remains true that the vast majority of people experience and live through their voices as deeply embodied. This is particularly true of disabled voices, which stubbornly focus attention on the body. Acknowledging that there is further work to be done in thinking the posthuman and disabled voice together, this project is intended as a corrective to the all too common abstraction from the body.

The second complication in taking up the embodiment of the voice is that the principal functions of the voice are threatened and destabilized if the embodied nature and materiality of the voice are too greatly attended to. For example, the voice is in one aspect the material carrier of language, yet the materiality of the voice must self-effacingly recede in order for the meaning of the utterance to carry through. In other words, the interlocutor is not supposed to get caught up on the signifier and miss the signified. A tension therefore arises between the body as necessarily self-effacing *and* as the condition of possibility of the voice. This peculiar relation of the body to voice is exemplified well in the instance of the disabled voice that resists self-effacement and threatens the multiform functions of the voice. Focusing on stuttering therefore details the

relation between the body and voice and opens up the discussion of why—and how—the disabled voice is judged qua disabled in relation to the production of speech as an embodied sociopolitical act.

2.2 The Voice as Carrier of Language

From the outset, allow me first to define the linguistic terms that will be employed throughout. Following the distinctions made in contemporary linguistics, I am using 'phoneme' as a linguistic unit consisting of a speech sound bringing about a change in meaning. The phoneme consists of two parts: the phonological and phonetic. The phonological is the meaning laden, immaterial aspect of the phoneme, while the phonetic is the material support for the phonological aspect of the phoneme. The voice, linking together phonemes in the production of language, thus exhibits two modalities while nevertheless being simple, as the phonological and phonetic are fused together throughout the brief existence of the phoneme.[72] However, if as the history of the conceptualization of *logos* would have us believe, the primary function of speech is the production of language expressing mature thoughts, the phonetic voice is reduced to the essential, yet auxiliary role of the medium for language.

The relationship between the voice and language is well established. As Mladen Dolar comments, "What singles out the voice against the vast ocean of sounds and noises, what defines the voice as special among the infinite array of acoustic phenomena, is its inner relationship with meaning."[73] The voice forming speech sounds indicates, in other words, that meaning is about to

[72] Dolar also explores the significance of Saussure's theory of differential signifiers on the voice. "If we are to take seriously the negative nature of the linguistic sign, its purely differential and oppositive value," he writes, "then the voice—as the supposedly natural soil of speech, its seemingly positive substance—has to be put into question" (Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 17). Taking the Saussaurean line, the voice disappears almost entirely since it has only a *negative* presence. While I do not follow the argument through in this project, the insistence of the materiality of the voice—existing more than as a mere remainder—provides an interesting challenge to a theory of differential signifiers.

[73] Dolar, *A Voice And Nothing More*, 14.

be conveyed. Following this line, the principal function of the voice is to exist as a sonorous field within which language and meaning are produced. Understanding the role of the voice in terms of a 'field', however, is misleading insofar as voice is not a persistent medium against which language emerges and dissipates. Rather, the emergence and dissipation of the phonological aspect of speech is tethered to the phonetic; the phonetic voice conveys meaning and is then consumed. The semantic aspect of speech production—the phonological—is therefore dependent upon the materiality of speech—the phonic—for its production and (brief) existence. Framing the relationship of the phonetic and the phonological in terms of dependency, the voice, as the material, sonorous carrier of language, can be understood as that which links speech to the body.

Yet the dependency of speech upon the body and materiality is at best a begrudging one. Dolar elaborates this relationship, contending that

> the voice is the instrument, the vehicle, the medium, and the meaning is the goal. This gives rise to the spontaneous opposition where the voice appears as materiality opposed to the ideality of meaning. The ideality of meaning can emerge only through the materiality of the means, but the means does not seem to contribute to meaning.[74]

Not only is the voice understood here not to add *anything* to the production of meaning through language, but the voice is a husk to be discarded when meaning has been conveyed. The very purpose of the phonic voice here is to be as inconspicuous as possible while in use and then disappear when the function has been fulfilled. In his work, *The Absent Body*, Drew Leder helpfully comments that in this regard, "a symbol which interests us *also* as an object is distracting. It does not convey its meaning without obstruction."[75] He gives the example of replacing the word 'plenty' with a ripe, succulent real peach which would have the effect of drawing attention away from the intended meaning as the signifier obstructs the signified. Leder

[74] Ibid., 15.
[75] Drew Leder, *The Absent Body*, (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1990), 75.

suggests that conversely, "little noises [phonemes] are ideal conveyors of concepts, for they give us nothing but their meaning."[76] Leder thus understands spoken language to be efficacious in conveying meaning precisely because (or alternatively, when) the sonorous voice is transparent and self-effacing.

What happens when the voice is not ephemeral, fading as soon as it is produced? Understanding the phonetic voice as transparent is an idealization which pulls away from the embodied nature of speech, a point well exemplified in the instance of stuttering. When the stuttering voice lingers and obtrudes, stretching, twisting, fracturing, and repeating phonemes, the phonetic draws attention away from the phonological and thereby subverts its very purpose. The stutterer not only threatens the (supposed) primary function of the voice, but also, as Jay Dolmage helpfully remarks, "powerfully reminds the word of the body, the audience of the speaker, the utterance of its context, in spite of our efforts to forget them."[77] From the outset, the stuttering voice thus reveals a degree of phenomenological imprecision within the existing literature on the relation between the voice and the body.

In his assessment of the voice however, Dolar thankfully recognizes that the phonic is never *fully* consumed by the phonological; that a remainder always exists. The problem with the operation of speech, he remarks, is that it "always produces a remainder which cannot be made a signifier or disappear in meaning; the remainder that doesn't make sense, a leftover, a cast-off."[78] Dolar contends that while the voice does not contribute to meaning and is therefore inconspicuous when the semantic operation of speech is properly carried out, there is always *something* that is leftover, whether accent, individuality, or other tonal qualia. The role assigned to the remainder of the voice is somewhat peculiar. On the one hand, the remainder is an

[76] Ibid.
[77] Jay Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 229.
[78] Dolar, *A Voice And Nothing More*, 20.

obstruction which is overcome when one becomes adjusted to a different accent, for example, and can focus simply upon the intended meaning. The voice in this regard is simply an impediment to the operation of language, or perhaps, to the "ideal speech situation." Yet on the other hand, Dolar notes that a voice devoid of any remainder would merge with mechanical iterability and thus lose its human characteristic.

> Paradoxically, it is the mechanical voice which confronts us with the object voice, its disturbing and uncanny nature, whereas the human touch helps us keep it at bay. The obstacle it appears to present actually enhances the sense-making effect; the seeming distraction contributes to the better fulfillment of the goal.[79]

The side-effect of the voice enables its recognizability and identification as a human voice. The line implied by Dolar here is that there is a narrow zone sheltering the *human* voice in-between the mechanical and noise—between merely iterating signifiers and chaotic distractors. Both ends of the spectrum distract from the linguistic purpose of the voice.

I take Dolar's explication of the remainder of the voice as a helpful corrective to Leder's somewhat simplistic explanation of the voice as immaterial and transparent in its proper function. However, understanding the phonic as a remainder is also problematic, despite the nod Dolar gives to its role in conveying meaning. Taking the phonological as primary, Dolar works through the various manifestations of the remainder as a *challenge* to the principal function of the voice. It is strikingly bizarre in this regard that intonation would be framed as remainder in the conveyance of meaning, rather than as a constitutive aspect of meaning. Yet perhaps this move is not so surprising, since as Cavarero asserts, "when the register of speech is totalized—for instance, when it is identified with a language system of which the voice would be a mere function—it is indeed inevitable that the vocal emission not headed for speech is nothing but a

[79] Ibid., 22.

remainder."[80] The effect of construing the voice as an inevitable leftover shifts from curious to pernicious when non-normative, disabled voices are focused upon.[81] Interjecting the stuttering voice into this discussion disrupts the fluidity with which Dolar and Leder can pass over the body and therein render the material voice invisible or a remainder.

As has already been signaled, the stuttering voice powerfully subverts the primary function of the linguistic voice. The finely tuned relation between the body, the phonological and the phonetic aspects of the voice can easily collapse and interfere with the production of semantic meaning. Interference can of course happen with any voice, but the stuttering voice is particularly susceptible to so-called breakdown. On one hand, if devoid of inflection and other tonal qualia, the voice distractingly ceases to be "human." This is decidedly *not* the stutterer's problem, though to note in passing, speech therapy regularly disciplines the stutterer to draw out one's syllables slowly, evenly and monotonically, overcorrecting for the wild fanfare of the stuttering voice. Rather, as I have indicated above, the stutterer fails on the account of an *excess* of voice, recalcitrant to theorists who assure us the voice is a transparent, immaterial signifier.[82]

The stuttering voice overthrows the asymmetrical relation between the voice as the carrier of language and language itself. In its typical role, the materiality of speech must be passive, allowed to be shaped by the phonological as required—through intonation, enunciation, etc.—without imposing itself upon the intended meaning. It is precisely here that the stuttering voice falters, having a mind of its own much like the Sorcerer's Apprentice imagined by Goethe. The stuttering voice is seemingly unpredictable and uncontrollable: in some instances it lingers,

[80] Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 12–13.
[81] The discussion of "disabled" voices need not be restricted to "physical" disabilities as other non-normative voices disabled by social structures and values—such as strong accents—could also fall under the analysis.
[82] Furthermore, When the body itself obtrudes in the production of disabled speech—tongue sticking out, facial tics, etc.—the origin of the voice becomes opaque (a point I will return to in chapter three).

repeating syllables and vowels, taking up more conversational space that it has been allotted. Other times, it blocks completely and doesn't come when expected (or perhaps summoned).

Yet, and here lies the twist, the stuttering voice can also switch registers on a whim, settling into typical patterns that do not significantly disrupt the process of signification at all. It is this ability to flip between transparent and opaque that incites confusion and dis-ease on behalf of the listener, leaving the stuttering voice not simply disqualified as a performance of reason, as in the instance of intellectual disability. Rather, having purchase within the sphere of "normal," rational speech, the stuttering voice threatens to unravel the boundary of rational, disclosive speech from within. Detailing the two registers in which the stuttering voice disrupts the phonological—temporally and as noise—will demonstrate the precise means through which the stuttering voice emerges as an unstable performance of reason and is marginalized for disrupting boundaries from within.

2.3 Temporality and the Disabled Voice

The phenomenon of sight and sounds are apprehended quite differently with regard to temporality. "Sight," notes Cavarero, "perceives every object that is in front of the onlooker—objects that are characterized by a certain permanence in space and time. They are stable, lasting, present. Moreover, sight perceives more objects simultaneously and sees them as distinct from one another, in their discrete difference."[83] In one respect, this is a simplification of sight, insofar as the whole of an object is apprehended diachronically by moving around it. Yet there is nevertheless something true about the nature of sight characterizing objects with a certain permanence and discreet difference, especially when contrasted with hearing, which Cavarero maintains is "bound to temporality and perceives distinct sounds only in their dynamic

[83] Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 37.

succession: melody is not generated by a sequence; it is a sequence."[84] A surrounding sound-scape is not characterized as an array of definite spatio-temporal positions, but is rather a flux temporally apprehended. Listening to the sound of an oncoming car, for example, the distance between you and the car is judged temporally, by attending to the shifting volume of sound rather than pinpointing the objects in their spatial difference. Along this line, Salome Voegelin adds, "listening is not a receptive mode but a method of exploration, a mode of 'walking' through the soundscape/the sound work. What I hear is discovered, not received, and this discovery is generative."[85] This kinship between hearing and temporality affects how the stuttered voice is heard and interpreted and is in fact entrenched by the structure of spoken language.

In the first and most basic sense, stuttering ruptures the temporal structure of the spoken signifier. If stuttering were written out, prolonged consonants would bbbbbbbbbbbe easily understood, the empty spaces representing silent blocks would cause little concern, and the re re re re re repeated syllables would likewise be quickly skipped over. This is because the *process* of reading the previous sentence is diachronic, but the written signifier is most often, unlike a teleprompter, given at once. The voice on the other hand is necessarily apprehended diachronically, unfolding through time, and cannot be represented spatially as stable and whole without ceasing to be a voice proper. In this way the blocks and repetitions of stuttering cut against the very temporal unfolding of speech.

Yet secondly, language (at least forms of Indo-European language) is structured linearly, further tightening the requirements upon the linguistic voice to carry out its passive function. Ferdinand de Saussure considers that the spoken signifier: "a) represents a span, and b) the span

[84] Ibid.
[85] Salome Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 4.

is measurable in a *single dimension; it is a line*."[86] While this characteristic is perhaps so obvious that it is often overlooked, Saussure argues that the whole mechanism of (spoken) language depends upon it. "In contrast to visual signifiers," he contends, "auditory signifiers have at their command only the dimension of time."[87] The linguistic voice is required to be fluid so as to avoid misrepresenting the linear structure of language within the heightened dimension of time. The stuttering voice, conversely, is not a straight line but wavers, doubles, and breaks the structure of language in its linear operation.

While semantic structure may be conceived as a line, the voice itself needn't be unwavering insofar as vocalic rhythm *contributes* to the production of spoken language. As Brian Massumi indicates:

> Rhythm is the most perceptually salient dimension of language. Phonemes disappear into their meaning. You don't hear them to the exact degree to which you understand them. But their rhythm asserts itself, an experienced something-extra that conveys an emphasis, accent, tone or mood. *The rhythm carries the force of the phrase, above and beyond its structure and meaning*.[88]

Vocalic rhythm carries language along, providing a cadence which structures the temporal unfurling of the linguistic voice while infusing speech with affective overtones. In a double movement, cadence supplies momentum while rhythmic forces entice speech forward. Rhythm, in other words, can perhaps be thought of as that which provides orderly movement to the linearity of speech.

In this regard, the repetition of the stuttering voice is interestingly a *type* of rhythm. Songwriters have often picked up this, as Fefe Dobson's lyrics to the 2010 song "Stuttering"

---

[86] Ferdinand de Saussure, "Nature of the Linguistic Sign," in David H. Richter, ed., *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends* (New York: Bedford Books, 2006), 844.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Paul Hegarty, Michael Goddard, and Benjamin Halligan, *Reverberations: The Philosophy, Aesthetics and Politics of Noise*, ed. Michael Goddard (New York: Continuum, 2012), 42; emphasis added.

attest to: "Oh oh oh oh oh ey ey ey ey ey oh oh oh oh whoa, Yeah you're stuttering."[89] Yet the rhythm of the stutter is in many ways a mockery of the predictable cadence propelling typical speech patterns. More often than not, the dys-fluid stuttering voice is anything *but* rhythmic, breaking and stalling unexpectedly. Instead of providing momentum, the stuttering voice thus cuts against the rhythmic drive *and* the linearity of language in one movement. Playing with the structure of language in this way disrupts the uptake of speech, for as Lennard Davis insists, "we do not so much listen to a speaker as try to fit that speech into preconstructed categories. . . . The limpid clarity of speech is itself an illusion that conceals the extent to which the receiver of speech is continually improvising to make the act of talking make sense."[90] Dys-fluidly displacing parts of speech from their proper semantic order catches ears off guard which already are rigorously anticipating the temporal unfolding of a sentence. As I have argued elsewhere, the difficulty interpreting the structure of the disabled voice is not shared equally amongst interlocutors, but is borne unproportionally by the disabled voice, the disabled speaker.[91]

Taken together, the temporal disruptions of the dys-fluid voice—resisting the transience of the signifier and fracturing the linearity of language—posture the stuttering voice as a haphazard carrier of language, an untrustworthy (and perhaps rebellious) medium of signification. While it is tempting to say at this point that the stuttering voice is disabled by the temporal nature of the auditory signifier, this would be a misnomer. For what construes the stuttering voice as a liability or impediment with respect to these structures is the instrumental purpose or use bestowed upon the linguistic voice. As such, I turn now to orientate the linguistic

[89] Fefe Dobson, "Stuttering," *Joy*, Island Records, 2010.
[90] Lennard Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy* (New York: Verso Press USA, 1996), 19.
[91] Cf. Joshua St. Pierre, "The Construction of the Disabled Speaker: Locating Stuttering in Disability Studies," *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 1.3; especially pp. 6-11.

voice within what Walter Benjamin ironically termed the "bourgeois conception of language," according to which the *essential* function of speech is communicating a given content.[92]

2.4 Noise and the Disabled Voice

Benjamin's wry term alludes to the economic overtones in the widely held conceptualization of speech as the communication of given contents. Within this economic framework it is perhaps proper to consider, alongside Benjamin, that the "means of communication is the word, its object factual, and its addressee a human being."[93] The purpose of speech, put differently, is to deliver messages, and I might add, quickly and without distortion as it is bad business to mix or alter a message from its intended form before it is sent out. Semantic accuracy and efficiency are as such highly valued when language is construed in this way.

The instrumentalization of speech may contiguously be understood, without pronounced economic overtones, following Voegelin, as a modernist or positivist project. By this I mean a broad methodological framework concerned with empirical and logical verifiability in the establishment of meaningful judgments, a position still widely held within the academy. When the purpose of speech is to communicate semantic content in the service of certainty and truth, a binary arises between communication and noise. Voegelin indicates that "in relation to such philosophical attitudes [as positivism], noise simply manifests the failure to communicate, it becomes the negative of what is beautiful, permissive and harmonic."[94] As such, it is my contention that the goal of efficient and reliable communication renders the stuttering voice *as*

[92] Cf. Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 21–22.
[93] Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: HUP, 1996), I:65; Quoted in Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 21-2.
[94] Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence*, 59.

noise; a semantic—and thereby an epistemic, economic, aesthetic, and social—liability and thus a flawed performance of reason.

Noise is a multifarious concept. It can describe the phenomenon of an excess in quantity of a singular sound, an excess of plural sounds, a transgression of appropriate sound, sound that breaks with language, pleasant sounds in the wrong spaces and times, or aesthetically distasteful or threatening sounds. It manifests itself in a wash of vocal chatter, lawnmowers, fingers on chalkboards, crying babies, droning news reporters, white, and pink noise. Yet what gathers these associative phenomenon together is that, by and large, noise is pejorative, "considered ugly and destructive of meaning or, in other words, [that which] functions as the disturbance or interference of a meaningful sonic system."[95] It is this ugliness and interference of meaning within sonic systems that resonates with the phenomenon of the disabled voice in service of communication. Folding the disabled voice into the discussion of noise, the stuttering voice can be understood through four interrelated modalities which build towards a political understanding of the noisy disabled voice: acoustic, an impediment to systems of communication, temporal boundaries, and acoustic "dirt."

In the first instance, the stuttering voice blurs the distinction between the *sound* of speech and noise. A syntactically whole sentence can, at any point, morph from ordered speech to what sounds like babbling[96] as words are split, repeated in part, and fused together in a desultory fashion. Indeed, there can come a point when even the stutterer herself gets lost in the sounds being produced and cannot rightly distinguish signifying from non-signifying sounds, noise from the intended speech. The disheveled rhythm of the stuttering voice thus not only belies the temporal cadence of speech but also diffuses the boundary between speech and noise. The

[95] Hegarty, Goddard, and Halligan, "Introduction," in *Reverberations*, 2.
[96] In this regard, the stuttering voice perhaps aligns more with Julia Kristeva'a notion of the semiotic—the instinctive, rhythmic and infantile aspect of language—over the symbolic, or meaning laden facet of language.

stuttering voice is never *simply* noise, it is not static, but may unexpectedly fluctuate between fluency and dysfluency, easily traversing between speech and noise. The (paradoxically) fluid movement between speech and acoustic/semantic noise not only makes it hard to define but positions the stuttering voice as an impediment within a communicative system where it can neither be wholly excluded or included. This ambiguity is why "a stuttering voice makes speech elusive, painful, never quite or wholly transparently present, never easily or fully graspable."[97] To understand the disabled voice as semantic noise, it is necessary to orientate the disabled voice within the paradigm of communication systems.

Norbert Weiner, considered a father of information theory, conceived communication as a kind of game played against noise. "We often find," he notes, "a message contaminated by extraneous disturbances which we call *background noise.* We then face the problem of restoring the original message . . . by an operator applied to the corrupted message."[98] Noise for Wiener corresponds with entropy, the decay of informational pattern into disorganization.[99] Commenting on Weiner's contemptuous reading of noise, Kai Eriksson remarks that "noise represented a danger that constantly threatened to submerge communication: once unleashed, noise meant the inevitable death of communication."[100] In order to stave off the effects of noise, Weiner therefore imagined a type of alliance created between a sender and receiver against the third party of noise. Excluding noise from the process of communication opens up a space where dialogue and communication can exist, unimpeded by the destructive effects of noise. Building upon Weiner's

[97] Norie Neumark, Ross Gibson, and Theo van Leeuwen, eds., *VOICE: Vocal Aesthetics in Digital Arts and Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010), xxvi.
[98] Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1965), 10.
[99] Put in terms of entropy, Weiner remarks that "just as the amount of information in a system is a measure of its degree of organization, so the entropy of a system is a measure of its disorganization: and the one is simply the negative of the other" (Weiner, *Cybernetics*, 11). Entropy, or noise, is positioned for Weiner against the flow of information.
[100] Kai Eriksson, "Networks and the Philosophy of Noise," *Culture and Organization* 14, no. 3 (2008): 280.

theory, Michel Serres argues that the exclusion of the third party has been formalized, and in this way, as Eriksson remarks, "the pursuit of a common code, form, or method, has characterized the modern history of communication. This protected meaningful communication from misunderstanding and interference." [101] This formalization is not restricted to mechanical or computerized communication systems but is also manifest within embodied human communication practices such as speech. Expectations of what sort of speech is appropriate and communicatively efficacious within given contexts solidifies into communicative rules embedded in the social fabric, rules which exclude certain voices and behaviors as noise.

Translating communication theory into intersubjective terms, Serres retools Hegel's dialectical opposition of Self/Other, arguing that this relationship should not be thought dyadically, but rather triadically. The struggle for recognition, argues Serres, is best understood as a struggle for communication, not an antagonistic and annihilating duel between the two parties. As such, Serres contends that the Self and Other are indeed engaged in a struggle, "united against a common enemy, the parasitical third party called noise, in whose interest it is to interfere and promote confusion."[102] The true struggle between Self and Other is the struggle to be recognized above the noise. Imagining noise as a "third man" within the dialectical game of communication, Serres writes, "To hold a dialogue is to suppose a third man and to seek to exclude him; a successful communication is the exclusion of the third man."[103]

In one regard, claiming that exclusion lies at the heart of communication is benign, even banal, corroborated by every-day experience. When talking to a friend, one may lean in close, turn off the distracting television, or relocate the conversation to a quieter room. When external

[101] Ibid., 280–281.
[102] Ibid., 63.
[103] Michel Serres "Platonic Dialogue," in *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 67**;** quoted in William Rasch, "Injecting Noise into the System: Hermeneutics and the Necessity of Misunderstanding," *SubStance* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 1992): 63.

noise has been excluded, one may ask the friend to repeat a confusing sentence or ask questions to discard possible meanings not intended by her speech. Without the exclusion of noise, communication indeed would often be difficult. Yet latent within Serre's argument is a more injurious form of exclusion: the third man may actually be a third man.

Noise exists ubiquitously, but it also coalesces around particular objects *and* subjects within the world. Just as some types of objects are more prone to be noisy than others (a diesel engine over a rock), so are certain types of voices emanating from bodies more noisy than others. The judgment of noise inhering in embodied sounds and voices is an inherently political one for as Khadijah White indicates, "people use the *language* of noise to marginalize sounds (and sound-makers) that violate social mores while expanding the sphere for other dominant conceptions of appropriate sound."[104] The exclusion of the third man can thus manifest itself as the exclusion of certain embodied voices disposed to noise. The disabled, stuttering voice is one such third man.

Not only is the sound of stuttering comparable to extraneous noise excluded from communicative space, but, as has been demonstrated above, the stuttering voice is a haphazard carrier of language and can be understood as semantic noise: interrupting the fluid transition of meaning. The disruption may take explicit or implicit forms. To hide the obvious, audible markings of noise, the stutterer will often replace difficult words part way through the sentence, or modify the sentence altogether. For example, feeling a stutter looming over the word 'Edmonton," a stutterer may alter the sentence "I was raised in Edmonton" mid-way to "I was raised up north." This interpolation alters the intended meaning only subtly, but aggregated over the course of an entire conversation (which most often does not follow the telescoping structure

[104] Khadijah White, "Considering Sound: Reflecting on the Language, Meaning and Entailments of Noise," in Hegarty, Goddard, and Halligan, *Reverberations*, 237.

of a flow chart), word substitution can have a drastic semantic effect. Audible noise may therefore seem to be avoided but still present a threat to communication. It is common in this regard for some stutterers to order only what they can fluently say on the menu, get haircuts they don't want, or consent to arguments they disagree with.

As a whole,[105] through audible or inaudible noise, the stuttering voice represents and embodies Weiner's fear: noise as the constant danger to communication. This danger is amplified in the disabled voice since the stuttering voice is, somewhat uniquely, noise external and internal to the sphere of communication. By diffusing the boundary between speech and noise, the stuttering voice unexpectedly materializes and is unmasked as noise within the thick of the dialogue itself.[106] This feature of the disabled voice makes noise difficult to isolate and exclude, at least without drastic measures. A stutterer cannot turn off her stutter like a chatty radio, and asking her to repeat herself may only double the amount of noise. The disabled speaker routinely has sentences finished for her, is spoken for by others, or is even ignored within conversation. The exclusion of noise in these ways may take the form of the exclusion of one's speech altogether: the exclusion of the speaker from the system, the speaking body from the situation.

[105] Vocal noise must be understood in this context as a whole existing within a system. As noise, the stuttering voice can either be a "dead zone" of signification or else an excess of possible meaning via semantic imprecision. What defines the stuttering voice as noise, is that in each instance the stuttering voice shows up as noise against the background of a common, meaning-laden space. The stuttering voice as a Gestalt form emerges as noise only *in relation* to this space.

[106] It is here worth considering the stuttering voice in relation to what is termed 'channel conditions' within information theory. Fred Dretske defines the channel of communication as: "that set of existing conditions (on which the signal depends) that either (1) generate no (relevant) information, or (2) generate only redundant information (from the point of the view of the receiver) (Fred I. Dretske, *Knowledge and the Flow of Information* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999), 115)." Put otherwise, channel conditions are the (relatively) static or fixed variables against which a change in the signal can be measured. Within human communication systems, syntax and phonetic structure are such channel conditions. However, these are precisely what the stuttering voice disrupts. Therefore the disabled voice cannot reliably be considered a channel condition, a fixed medium that conveys information unaltered, since it fluctuates between generating relevant and non-relevant information. Once again, the disabled voice is positioned in a liminal and threatening position.

This exclusion can further be detailed by attending to the key features of 'the public' and 'commonality' within communication systems. Underlying the theory of noise given by Wiener and Serres is an impulse towards commonality. "The mechanism of exclusion," explains Eriksson, "eliminates all that could not be shared. In other words, the 'irrational' part of communication: noise."[107] The emphasis on common ground excludes idiosyncrasies, individualities and other aberrations threatening to disrupt the system. Concerning spoken communication, what *can* be shared, and thus what needs to be sheltered, is the commonality of semantic meaning given through conventional accents, idioms, behaviors, etc. The exclusion of deviant modes of expression and signification are thus *attempts* to clear a homogenous space.

Yet while exclusion may be a regular and necessary aspect of communication, the degree of "appropriate" noise will vary across situational systems. In a relaxed atmosphere with friends well acquainted with one another, accents and stutters are incorporated into the system because efficiency is not highly valued and aberrations can be accepted, even enjoyed, as constitutive aspects of one's voice. This aural space is constructed with different rules since there is a wide range of commonality within this space which does not require policing. In public, professional, and other aural spaces with significantly fewer common denominators and lower tolerance of communicative error however, the challenge of maintaining communicative, meaning-laden space against the threat of noise places greater restrictions on the degree of permitted noise. As such, formalized rules which are used to shelter common semantic meaning exclude the disabled voice which is constructed as isolating and dangerous to the maintenance of a public, common space. In this regard, the marginalization of disabled voices overlaps with classist, sexist, racist, and ageist forms of excluding voices from public spaces. The desire for a homogenous space

[107] Eriksson, "Networks and the Philosophy of Noise," 281.

violently forces aside a wide range of vocal differences deemed inappropriate, unintelligible or unintelligent.[108]

In analyzing the relation between noise and disabled voices, communicative systems must be situated within their sociopolitical context since the expectations and the formalization of communicative rules are always contingent and formed in relation to what sorts of voices and sounds are deemed appropriate and valued within an aural public. Noisiness coheres in persons, and is a marginalizing force governing what *counts* as incommunicable and extraneous. Any discussion of noise in relation to disabled voices therefore cannot be disassociated from the context of public (or common) aural spaces which constrict particular voices on ableist terms. This underlying political force is revealed through the constitution of temporal boundaries.

Bringing 'noise' into dialogue with the diachronicity of the (disabled) voice previously established, the physical noise of stuttering which disrupts systems of communication can be politically contextualized in relation to time. White highlights the relationship of noise and time, citing a conflict over African drumming in Marcus Garvey Park, Harlem, New York in which a resident in a nearby luxury apartment protested that "African drumming is wonderful for the first few hours, but after that, it's pure, unadulterated noise. We couldn't see straight anymore. . . It was like a huge boom box in the living room, the bedroom, the kitchen. You had no way to escape except to leave the apartment."[109] While there are other boundaries being transgressed

[108] Consider for example the normalization of voices with regard to gender expectations. Those who are transgendered painstakingly work to match their voices with newly acquired gender and failing to do often incites marginalization and violence. These voices highlight that the homogenization of aural space has texture, though it is extremely limited. Voices taken to be common or universal exist in both male and female forms (though of course the female voice is construed as emotional or weak in relation to the male voice which dominates claims to universality), yet the range of acceptable vocal gender performance is incredibly narrow. To mismatch one's voice with gender expectations disrupts communication—more specifically, the homogenized rational communicative sphere—and is therefore a type of a flawed performance of reason. This example reinscribes once again that communication is thoroughly embodied and communicative bodies which draw attention to this fact are so often punished.

[109] White, "Considering Sound," 237.

here, it is interesting that the complainant particularly identifies time, rather than the drumming itself or the decibel level as the primary reason for her complaint. "A period of four hours," comments White, "becomes the resident's established boundary for the drumming before it becomes noise."[110] Alongside the purity or contamination of bounded space, the boundary between noise and sound can thus also be delineated by time.

This play of temporal boundaries differentiating noise from sound is also codified within voiced communication practices. Here, however, the range is not measured in hours, but in seconds, even milliseconds. Those voices which take too long to reply, prolongate words or block hard on a word which stalls the meaning of a sentence may swiftly cross the boundary from (signifying) sound to noise. As "sound corresponds to time, creating a noise wherever and whenever sound appears out of 'appropriate' context,"[111] voices phonetically decipherable which nevertheless do not fit within appropriate conversational spaces are often not taken seriously as *signifying* voices. In exceeding its allotted temporal space, the stuttering voice easily morphs into an irritable noise to be tuned out or interrupted, especially when an interlocutor has a guess at the intended meaning of the prolonged phrase. Since there is little pragmatic reason for this exclusion (is time really that sparse a commodity?), White's notion of temporal boundaries is a constructive lens to analyze the ableist marginalization faced by disabled voices as noise within these spaces. Emphasizing the political and hegemonic nature of temporal boundaries of sound, White helpfully contends that

> Temporal restrictions regarding noise also reveal how, through assigning sound versus noise designations, one also designates what is allowed in a space and identifies those who retain the power to set and enforce codified norms. . . . .The establishment of temporal and

[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

> aural boundaries alludes to the 'noise' of the deviant 'other' and functions to exclude those 'others' from a space, while embracing the sounds of more valued individuals or groups.[112]

The boundary between noise and sound/voice in White's estimation is not somehow given *a priori* but is staked *a posteriori* as a sociopolitical mechanism of exclusion. Cashed out in terms of efficiency, rationality, or appropriateness, temporal boundaries are suggestive of a more basic designation: which embodied voices are valued within society, which sounds and voices we *want* to hear and which we do not. In this regard, thinking of 'noise' associatively highlights the affective manner in which the disabled voice is excluded.

2.5 Dirty Noise

Drawing upon the "appropriateness" of sounds in a given context and the aversion to the stuttering voice, there is an underlying parallel to be made between 'noise' and 'dirt'. In her study of the cultural concepts of pollution and taboo, Mary Douglas has famously defined dirt as "matter out of place." This suggestive approach implies two conditions: ordered relations and violation of that order. As Douglas states,

> Dirt, then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. The idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity.[113]

Translating this analysis, which has primarily been applied to *visible* cultural artifacts, to the realm of communication systems, I believe it helpful to think of noise as *acoustic dirt.* When we attend to the materiality of the voice, the notion of acoustic dirt follows Douglas's analysis easily. Noise is sonorous matter out of place which meets the two conditions stipulated by Douglas: ordered relations and a violation of that order. The stuttering, stalling, repeating voice,

---

[112] Ibid.
[113] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 1966), 44.

is not an isolated event but is a Gestalt form that emerges *as* noise against the backdrop of a communicative system. In this regard, the stuttering voice is an impediment and is inappropriate precisely because it is an unwanted by-product of a system.

A Douglasian analysis of the stuttering voice is particularly applicable due to the long and thinly veiled history of associating dirtiness and the disabled. Aesthetically, morally, and hygienically, disability functions as social dirt, "[lying] outside the normative ordering system and can only be included and apprehended under Douglas's classifications of 'aberrant' or anomalous'."[114] Thinking the concepts of noise and dirt together translates this ongoing discussion, which predominately has focused on visible disabilities, into aural spaces of disability. Through the concept of acoustic dirt, the analysis of the disabled voice is advanced beyond the *functional* 'disruption' of communicative systems, to the more visceral responses of anger, disgust, or fear which often accompany the manifestation of disabled, disruptive voices. Focusing upon the symbolic function of acoustic dirt—thinking of 'dirt' in relation to the symbolic power of 'purity'—betrays the aesthetic and moral deviance of the disabled voice.

In teasing out the "dirtiness" of the disabled voice, I return to Voegelin, who argues that in relation to communicative systems, "noise simply manifests the failure to communicate, it becomes the negative of what is beautiful, permissive and harmonic."[115] That which fails to communicate is affixed with associative and symbolic power in relation to an ideal of pure communication. It seems odd at first to consider a linguistic voice dirty or impure, especially because the tonal qualities of the voice are not being examined. That is, the gruffness of one voice compared to a beautiful, silky tenor is not here under examination, at least not primarily. "Dirty" voices are rather those which disrupt the purity of the system of signification and

[114] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 33.
[115] Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence*, 59.

communication and are as such symbolically and affectively antithetical to that which is beautiful and harmonious.

As an example of "dirty" voices, consider girl bands who perform ugliness as resistance. Karina Eileraas notes that these singers have often employed an ugly voice for cathartic expression, using their voices as weapons. Through acts like screaming and babbling, "the 'ugly' voice constitutes a form of revolt against the grammar and syntax of phallocentrism,"[116] which may broadly be understood in this context as the desire for pure, singular communication. Considering Patti Smith's album *Babelogue*, Eileraas argues that, taken as a whole, it "teems with the language of incoherency, babbling, and primal utterance that can be seen as an ugly rebellion against the structures of patriarchal language."[117] Of course, it is difficult to examine the aesthetic aspect of a voice distinct from tonal qualities and the bodily origin of the voice insofar as the voice is deeply embodied. The performance of ugliness is fully understood in the context of the artist's attire, gestures, movement, lyrics, tonal quality, etc. Nevertheless, it is possible, and I believe instructive, to attend in the first place to these voices as dirty, ugly, and even dangerous within the linguistic register. It is in their linguistic capacity that ugly voices "approach vocal terrorism," as "their noise, sound debris, and frequent laughter *damage* language."[118] Clarifying Elierass's position, it is not merely language which is being damaged in these instances, but language employed within a system of communication. Related to the notion of acoustic dirt, these are voices intentionally deformed and strategically put "out of place" in order to subvert the order of communication.

[116] Karina Eileraas, "Witches, Bitches & Fluids: Girl Bands Performing Ugliness as Resistance," *TDR* 41, No. 3 (Autumn, 1997): 125.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Eileraas, "Witches, Bitches & Fluids," 126.

Much like the so-called ugly voices of girl bands, the stuttering voice is a form of revolt against the formalized rules of grammar and signification within systems of communication. The stuttering voice often babbles, strains, and is incoherent, "damaging" language. Displacing sounds (phonemes) within the order of language, the stuttering voice is displaced within the system of communication. If signification and communication are meant to be an ordered, streamlined, efficient, and seemingly pure process, the stuttering voice is indeed dirty.[119] Yet there is an obvious difference here between Patti Smith and the disabled voice modifying the way in which the symbolic force of acoustic dirt permeates these voices: namely, the disabled voice is most often an *unintentional* revolt against the order of communication. The disabled voice does not intend to subvert the patriarchal and ableist structures of language and communication through its stuttering. Stuttering rather "happens" upon one unsolicited. The disabled voice *can* be taken up politically, but most often this is not the case as the stutterer may desperately desire to be fixed, to minimize the effect of the disabled voice and thereby speak and communicate as purely as possible.

Conversely, using her voice as a weapon, Smith purposefully collects dirt, sounding as dirty, ugly, and inharmonious as she can in every possible register. Dirtiness materializes in her voice, but her *revolt* is actually that which unites various phonic, phonological, and visual modalities of ugliness and dirtiness. In other words, Smith intends to sound ugly and she is capable of adjusting the purity of her voice as called for by the situation and context—her voice is a function of revolt. As an involuntary revolt however, the disabled voice is caked with layers of dirt unified by the voice itself—revolt is a function of the disabled voice. Caught up in

[119] Within this paradigm, disciplinary activities such as speech therapy may be understood as preventative methods of "cleaning," sorting matter into its proper place. A far more prevalent and efficient method of cleaning, however, is silencing and ignoring these aberrant "sounds" through a control of aural space via mechanisms of temporal and spatial boundaries.

signification beyond its control, the disabled voice is affected by the symbolic power of dirt to a far greater degree than staged performances. Disabled voices traverse public, private, religious, conversational, political, and corporate aural spaces, trawling unintended signification behind. One powerful association generated that reveals the moral valence of exclusion is the concept of pollution.[120]

The idea of acoustic dirt intertwines with the more common notion of noise pollution. Pollution modifies the concept of noise by referring to matter out of place that is often invisible to the naked eye, particles insidiously diluting the purity of a common medium such as water or air. Pollution is carried by the wind or mixed into water and is dangerous not only because it disrupts order, but because the disruption permeates space in a manner difficult to isolate. As a pollutant, noise contaminates the purity of silence or of desirable sounds, and in our late capitalist society is becoming increasingly prevalent. White notes that "in the US noise as containment became such an active entailment that the government assigned the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate noise alongside other ecological hazards such as toxic waste and noxious fumes."[121] Noise pollution such as aircraft engines or loud music seeps unwanted into aural spaces it does not belong and in this regard is invasive, trespassing in a manner exceedingly difficult to guard against. This seeming danger of noise pollution is intensified insofar as hearing is often taken to be passive. More than any other sense, the ears are exposed, cocked open to the world, lacking the ability to simply "look away." We are, as Leder says, "at the mercy of sounds" as they "press upon us even without our consent, abolishing

[120] It is worth noting that the "dirtiness" of speech is also evocative of the colloquial "having a dirty mouth" and being threatened by one's grandmother to "wash your mouth out with soap!" While trading on a slightly different notion of dirt, there is an interesting overlap in the moral imperative to have a "clean" mouth and to not "pollute" with one's voice.
[121] White, "Considering Sound," in Hegarty, Goddard, and Halligan, *Reverberations*, 241.

distance in sometimes discomforting ways."[122] In this way we are acutely susceptible to noise pollution.

Besides emanating from objects, noise pollution also occurs within and from spoken conversation. Everyone has experienced a boisterous group of teenage boys broadcasting their exploits loudly enough for everyone to hear, or a couple vehemently hashing out their relationship woes on a crowded train. In these instances, sound trespasses into the codified civility of a public aural space. Construed as such, the disabled voice may *also* be a pollutant. In a similar way that disabled people were restricted from the public sphere according to the infamous 19th and 20th century American "Ugly Laws,"[123] so do ableist structures, expectations, and values govern the space of the aural public. Understood as shameful and deviant, disabled voices are not fully welcome in public spaces; they do not properly belong.

Consider a recent event: in a Houston restaurant a family asked to be moved away from a table with a 5 year old boy with Down's syndrome named Milo who was showing off his new words and whose speech was, in the words of the article, "a little delayed." In response to the situation and the disparaging comments made about her son, the mother wrote: "Was he loud? Maybe a little in the moment, but honestly, the adults at our table were three times louder than he was. . . . If he had been obnoxious, which like any other 5-year-old he can be, I wouldn't have thought twice about the family asking to move." [124] The notion of (disabled) noise pollution provides one lens for interpreting this situation. The volume was not the issue here, rather it was the deviance of one voice seeping into ableist space that evoked the complainant to say, "Special

[122] Drew Leder, "A Tale of Two Bodies: The Cartesian Corpse and the Lived Body," in Drew Leder, ed., *The Body in Medical Thought and Practice* (Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 124.
[123] See Susan M. Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 3.
[124] "Waiter Hailed as Hero after Standing up for Boy with Down Syndrome," *Waiter Hailed as Hero after Standing up for Boy with Down Syndrome*, accessed January 24, 2013, http://www.today.com/moms/waiter-hailed-hero-after-standing-boy-down-syndrome-1B8038223.

needs children need to be special somewhere else."[125] In this instance, the common aural space within the restaurant, assumed by the complainants to be the territory of the able-bodied, was disrupted by disability. Milo's voice was matter out of place.

The media's strong backlash against the complainant, support for Milo and his family, and heralding of the waiter who refused the complainants service—the article is, after all, entitled "Waiter Hailed as Hero After Standing up for Boy with Down Syndrome"—seems to indicate a strong resistance to the ableist governance of aural space. Who, reading this story, is likely to side with the complainant over Milo? Provocatively illustrating the exclusion of disabled voices within common aural spaces, this example is perhaps *too* dramatic since the complainant can be read as simply offensive, using noise as an excuse for discomfort around the disabled Other. The media reaction plays off the equally ableist response to the disabled (particularly to the intellectually disabled) of pity and patronization and thus the reader is left shocked at the attempted ableist control of aural space. "What horrible people; surely *I* would never do that!" Yet if we understand noise pollution not chiefly as a stark protrusion, but rather as a disquieting *irritant* within aural space, ableist policing overwhelmingly occurs not in vitriolic eruptions, but quotidianly through indistinct cues: sidelong looks, embarrassed grimaces, or slipping in earphones, in such a way that would implicate far more of us. Is the jumping in to finish a stutterer's sentence an attempt to be helpful, or rather a move to cut off the stutterer's polluted version of the phrase? [126] It is through subtle negotiations like these that the purity of aural space is predominantly contested, policed indirectly—panoptically—rather than

[125] Ibid.
[126] My thanks to Charis St. Pierre for this insight.

relying on brusque tactics which attract attention and skew responses towards pity and patronization.[127]

The true force behind Douglas's analytic of "matter out of place" is the moral obligation it generates. "A polluting person," Douglas explains, "is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone."[128] Touching someone's food is not merely annoying, but induces anger and disgust precisely because it is morally aberrant. A danger has been introduced. This danger may take a hygienic form—spreading unknown pathogens into food could pose health risks—but following Douglas, the reaction of condemnation, of moral disgust, is more deeply rooted in the danger posed by obscuring or contradicting valued classifications. Touching food traverses the boundary of the body and crosses multiple social boundaries of order; the act is a threat to order*liness*. This fear of pollution, and subsequent disgust, is aroused only when rejected matter is *recognizably* out of place, as "their half-identity still clings to them and the clarity of the scene in which they obtrude is impaired by their presence."[129] It is the very liminal nature of dirt that incites danger and moralized responses.

The moral disgust of pollution similarly underlies the ableist policing of aural spaces. Disabled voices regularly *feel* that they do not belong in public space, lacking the full right to be present and heard. In this regard, stutterers are not denied jobs as news broadcasters simply because they would cut into advertising time, but because putting the stuttering voice (unironically) on show is inappropriate. Even disabled voices operating in the background, like Milo's, are an affront to the purity and orderliness of aural spaces. What lends this regulation

[127] While I have not followed this line through, the disciplining of bodies within aural space is particularly amenable to a Foucauldian analysis.
[128] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 140.
[129] Ibid., 198.

potency is that the *proper* response to pollution is disgust and anger. It is not only convenient to shuffle disabled voices into the corner but also necessary in order to preserve the cleanliness of public space. The moral valence of this response to polluting voices justifies and engenders visceral reactions, leaving disabled voices morally vulnerable in their exclusion.

2.6 Voicing Disabled Resistance

The primary logic excluding the disabled voice is the disruption of communicative systems. Despite the overpowering nature of this logic, possible resistance is facilitated through one final aspect of noise to be considered in relation to the disabled voice. For all its negative associations transferred to the disabled voice—isolating interlocutors and breaking down the reliability of communication—noise is nevertheless, in an interesting turn, understood by some theorists as a condition of possibility for communication. According to Serres, communication only occurs against the backdrop of noise, representing interference, yet more primally, indistinguishability and multiplicity. "Communication can only come into being," explains Eriksson, "via a movement expressed through what can be termed as noise (e.g. ambiguous writing styles, regional accents, technical interruptions and so on) with regard to an ideal form, while simultaneously attempting to distinguish itself from this noise."[130] Noise cannot be separated from the system of communication because it is the raw material of indeterminacy and indistinguishability from which communication emerges.

Noise for Serres does not here represent an absence of meaning but *too much* possible meaning, a distinction noted by Serres in the archaic French word *noise*, referring to a "pure multiplicity."[131] As the fertile possibility of meaning, noise designates a sphere of

[130] Eriksson, "Networks and the Philosophy of Noise," 281.
[131] Ibid.

undifferentiation, the "incommunicable origin of all communication."[132] Noise in this regard is not meaninglessness, a cognitive empty signifier in the style of the Vienna Circle, but is quite the opposite. Communication is the act of separating the message from the noise, of finding commonality within the thick of indeterminacy and difference, of sorting through and excluding possible meanings. Within this paradigm, noise can never be fully excluded from the system because it is a precondition *of* the system, a field against which communication is made possible.

The movement of exclusion inherent within communication thus simultaneously takes place within and against noise. Not only is the exclusion of noise never totalizing, but this exclusion can be understood as a bluff, an inside joke played at the expense of those striving for homogeneity and stability. In light of this theoretical readjustment, the nature of the exclusion of the third man, the disabled, stuttering voice, must be reconsidered. Running interference against seemingly pure communication, the stuttering voice is not simply an impediment, but is a generative source of randomness and indistinguishability, the empirical "material" of noise grounding communication. The disabled voice embodies the struggle for communication not despite, but *through* the inescapability and necessity of "misfire."

Listening from this perspective demands a more nuanced relationship between the disabled voice and noise. The disabled voice is positioned antagonistically against communication when communication is understood as a pure and homogenous space reserved for clear and distinct meaningful articulation between the Self and Other. Yet, if noise indeed is a condition of communication, it follows that there is no pure space. Like the ugly voices of the girl bands attempt to demonstrate through their revolt against phallocentrism, disorder is inescapably part of the system. There is no conceivable public space impermeable to disruption and even highly policed aural spaces, such as corporate spaces, are always already soiled by

[132] Ibid., 281.

noise. This consideration is sustained by Douglas, who observes that "the final paradox of the search for purity is that it is an attempt to force experience into logical categories of noncontradiction. But experience is not amenable and those who make the attempt find themselves led into contradiction."[133] The search for absolute purity can only be met in the end by contradiction or hypocrisy. As such, attempts to purge noise from the system, to exterminate voices which "damage" language and dirty the (supposed) limpid communicative sphere, is not only misguided but may perhaps be understood as *ressentiment*, an effort of scapegoating blame and exonerating the purity of the system. In any case, recognizing the inherent disorder within aural spaces reveals possible modes of political resistance for disabled voices which have been denied under naïve, broadly positivist understandings of communication.

The disabled voice is capable of calling the integrity and purity of the system into question. In refusing to comply with the normalizing "appropriate" order of aural spaces, the disabled voice highlights that communication is by nature a struggle achieved within and from the indeterminacy of noise. As Dolmage argues, the disabled voice is "the very possibility (and concurrently the uncertainty) of human communication and knowledge. Disability then also resituates rhetoric, not as the flawless delivery of pure ideas, but as the embodied struggle for meaning."[134] Embodying this resistance is a perilous task since dirt pollutes and is unwanted, even if it is also inescapable. Is there anything more irritating than dirt which swirls back into the house after it has painstakingly been cleared out? The unintended revolt of the disabled voice as such affords the possibility of demonstrating that systems of human communication are unstable all the way down, as Serres puts it, to the "incommunicable origin of all communication." Threatening the integrity of the system and bringing to light its fundamental instability further

[133] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 200.
[134] Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric*, 228.

demonstrates, somewhat paradoxically, that the *particular* structures of exclusion within human communication are not self-given, not simply part of the system.

Given that noise is constitutive of any system, the systematic exclusion of *certain* voices from aural spheres is a result of the previous determination of what voices are deemed appropriate, beautiful, trustworthy, or rational and accordingly should belong within the ordered sphere of communication. The stuttering voice is particularly capable of highlighting the contingency of these rules and calling out the power structures from within since it unpredictably oscillates between noise and information, fluent one moment and dys-fluent the next. By traversing this border easily and often, the stuttering voice can neither be fully included nor excluded and thereby draws attention to this contingent boundary delineating systems of human communication. The possibility therefore exists for the disabled voice to stutter willfully and publically, to disregard smothering tactics and incite and expose the ableism regulating aural space.

There is, of course, push-back to this resistance insofar as the system is motivated by an instrumental logic. While communication is grounded in noise, its telos is achieved by striking a balance between noise and a common form. There must be *just enough* noise and randomness within the system so that new possibilities of meaning and common understanding may unfold, without being scuttled by complete indistinguishability. As the activity of maintaining tension between the generative and erosive aspects of noise and thereby prying open a meaning-full space, communication is driven by a logic of optimization. It is this logic in particular that animates the interlocking impediments of the disabled voice—disjointing signifiers, breaking temporally, manifesting as noise and pollution—as a multivalent threat to communicative systems. Unlike slurred, slow, or quiet voices, voices which also destabilize

communication, the disabled voice is not simply inefficient, nor simply difficult to interpret. Rather, the disabled voice embodies (and emerges from) a confluence of ableist structures and assumptions that systematically categorize, pathologize, and subserviate in a deft movement.

The variegated threat of the disabled voice is manifest and cashed out in four overlapping ways. Within socio-economic spheres, the instability of the disabled voice firstly equates an unwanted variable, a wildcard in the social dynamics of doing business. The stuttering voice may be excluded because it is not efficient, not aggressive enough, or linguistically unreliable in translating and proliferating economic-laden meaning accurately. Secondly, the threat of the disabled voice is manifest in socio-political systems, as it undermines the assumed rational homogeneity of the political sphere. In theories of deliberative democracy, for example, the goal of deliberation is consensus, and collective judgment and speakers are assumed to be equal through a bracketing out of political and economic power. The disabled voice ruptures the universality and posited equality within political models of deliberation. More broadly, the disabled voice thirdly represents an epistemic liability, as the stuttering voice cannot dependably be trusted to produce and reproduce knowledge—even outside purely instrumental goals—without distortion. Interjecting a degree of uncertainty into systems of signification is an unnecessary risk when knowledge itself is the object of study. Within academic systems, or any system, that values the production of knowledge above all, the stuttering voice is often pushed to the margins and excluded from central roles such as teaching and lecturing. Interlocking with these modalities of disruption is, *fourthly*, the aestheticization of aural space. Human systems of communication are not only ideally efficient and rational, but corresponding with notions of purity, are harmonious and aesthetically ordered. The ugliness of the disabled voice, in linguistic,

tonal, and visual registers, augments its overall affective disruption, acting as a catalyst for its exclusion within and from all systems of communication.

Gathering all these manifestations of disruption together is, to pick up a theme from chapter one, the performance of rationality. As speech and reason are so tightly correlated through the linguistic function of the voice, performing the voice in any way that unsettles the production of meaning within communicative systems calls into question the rationality of the performer "behind" the voice. While the stuttering voice is not *outright* rejected as a signifying voice like the voices of the (presumed) intellectually disabled, recognition can nevertheless be denied in degree. Put differently, while stuttering is ostensibly no more than a motor problem of externalizing language, the uptake of the stuttering voice in average, everyday experience cuts much deeper. When language is "broken up" and put "out of place" by a disabled voice, the judgment of reason is correspondingly interrupted and cast into doubt. The failure to signify in a quotidian manner results in a desperate struggle for the disabled voice to maintain a uniform performance of reason if it wishes to be afforded the privileges of full participation given to those deemed rational. Consider in this regard speech pathologist Smiley Blanton's words:

> The person who graduates from school or college unable to speak his mother tongue clearly, rhythmically, and idiomatically both in public and private, is not educated. It, of course, follows that no child should leave school with a defect of speech if it is possible to remedy it. . . . Especially should that serious speech disorder, stuttering, receive the attention of teachers everywhere. For stuttering not only causes a blocking or hesitation in the outward speech, but disturbs the emotions so that clear thinking is often impossible.[135]

These words are shocking yet reveal the correlation between the judgment of reason and the limpid quality of speech. Blaton's position is assuredly outdated within the *discipline* of speech pathology (written in the 50s), yet this doubt and suspension of recognition echoing from the disabled voice has by no means been silenced. Those who stutter are in constant awareness of

[135] Smiley Blaton, "Stuttering," in Dominick A. Barbara, *New Directions in Stuttering: Theory and Practice* (Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas Publisher, 1965).

this dynamic; the threat of Blaton's judgment coming to pass very often motivates avoidance techniques and other ways of masking the disabled voice.

In conclusion, while the disabled voice is excluded for putting stress upon the finely tuned linguistic voice—the relation between the phonetic, phonic, and the body, linearity and rhythm, noise and communication—this marginalization is largely dependent upon a presumptuous construal of the voice as *primarily* linguistic. Speech is not necessarily the essential destination of the voice, which is used for far more than conveying reliable messages. Yet this remains a common-sense and ubiquitous assumption. Besides singing (an activity which itself becomes secondary, inessential, and dangerous in the metaphysical tradition—evidenced by Plato's disdain for music freed from the structure of *logos* in *The Republic*, Book III),[136] what is the voice for if not producing meaning-laden speech? If we start with this narrow construal, "disabled" voices will inevitably occupy a deficient role. Conceiving the stuttering voice as noise, an impediment, and a threat to communication is as such contingent upon this flat and instrumental reading of the voice. I do not mean that the stuttering voice would have no disabling effects outside this paradigm, but simply that the marginalization of disabled voices must not be thought as somehow self-given or inherent within the voice itself.

Highlighting Cavarero's earlier assessment of the metaphysical prejudice afforded the phonological over the phonic, the exclusion of the disabled voice as the carrier of language may likewise be understood as a result of privilege, a privilege to be questioned. For while it is obviously *one* reading of the function of the voice, taking the linguistic voice as primary alongside the "bourgeois conception of language" systematically ignores much of the

[136] Putting a feminist twist on the reduction of the singing voice, Cavarero argues, "Feminized from the start, the vocal aspect of speech and, furthermore, of song appear together as antagonistic elements in a rational, masculine sphere that centers itself, instead, on the semantic. To put it formulaically: woman sings, man thinks" (*For More Than One Voice*, 6).

phenomenological experience of speaking *and* communicating. Thinking primarily in terms of systems strips the practice of voiced human communication down from the thickness of embodied and intersubjective experiences into quasi-mechanical, vapid processes. When we stop and reflect on the phenomenon, the voice funnels our attention back to its embodied source. To understand properly the lived experience of the voice in relation to disability, I follow Cavarero in resisting the lure of the phonological over the phonic and attending not to *what* is said, but the embodied *saying* of the said. To this end, I turn next to the speaking body.

Chapter 3—Distending Time: The "Failure" of the Disabled Speaking Body

3.1 The Fashionable Stammerer and Embodied Choreography

In November 1970, *the Globe and Mail* published a curious piece entitled "Stammer Becomes Fashionable: Essential Mark of the English Gentleman," an exposé of a wildly counter-intuitive British phenomenon. The cultivation of a distinguished, yet fake, stammer is described as indicating good breeding and fashion. For example, speech impediments in the British Parliament were reportedly displayed commonly and unashamedly, and the article details stammering as a passport to elite circles, a means of holding a listener's attention so one's words are appreciated more. This strategic feign is developed early in certain private school traditions. "In the more extreme cases," explains Oxford professor David Jenkins, "it's a very visible affectation. It's also a sign of complete self-assurance. You take your time, knowing you are master of the situation."[137] As endemically British, this phenomenon is undoubtedly inflected by cultural appropriations of language. Nevertheless, stammering pretentiously is a peculiar reversal of the marginalization induced by a "real" stutter; an anomaly that problematizes the incontrovertible reading of stammering as a social and communicative impediment. In the terms of the article, what fine line distinguishes an affectation from an affliction? How does the temporal distension of "taking one's time" function as debilitating in the one case and as an exertion of power in the other?

The fashionable stammer motivates the analysis of the temporality of the disabled speaking body and embodied communicative situation. While the previous chapter established the destabilizing and polluting threat the disabled voice poses to the integrity of communicative systems, disabled speakers exist not first and foremost in communicative *systems*, but in lived,

[137] Israel Shenker, "Stammer Becomes Fashionable: Essential Mark of the English Gentleman," *The Globe and Mail*, November, 1970, 12:12, Toronto.

corporeal, intersubjective experience. As such, by attending to the distinct temporality of the disabled speaking body, I argue that unlike the "authentic" stutterer, the fashionable stammerer evades the marginalizing effects of his temporal distension insofar as he "owns" time both phenomenologically and socio-politically. Keeping in step with the lived experience of disabled speakers, I accordingly orientate the so-called failed temporal choreography of the disabled speaker around the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. Understood through a corporeal existential phenomenology, disabled speech is not a mechanical breakdown, but an existential frustration of the normalized bodily choreography of signification—participating in the creation of a shared world. This normalized choreography is disturbed by the delayed, unpredictable, and unmalleable temporality of the disabled speaking body.

As it is lived, temporality is constructed around able-bodies and abstracted from the potentiality of able-bodies. Highlighting the idealization of "bodily time" by Merleau-Ponty and Alfred Schutz, I argue that the disabled speaker experiences a violent and persistent temporal decentering as she is folded into uncomfortable rhythms and tempos orientated around the bodily time of her interlocutor or the posited bodily time of a dominant group. The disabled speaker is further decentered by the unchanging objective or "clock time" which disciplines speakers to move in standardized, efficient motions and therein conform to strict temporal parameters. Lastly, I argue that the dysfluid motility of the disabled speaker can be understood as a function of clock time; a failure to embody rational, calculable, and therefore economically useful movement.

Using 'choreography' as an analytic for human communication has been well established by Nick Crossley through an appropriation of Pierre Bourdieu, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jürgen Habermas, alongside the "social performance" theory of Victor Turner and

Erving Goffman. In general, social choreography examines how perception, action, and speech cohere together in the communicative event. Resisting the abstraction of communication theory, a choreography of human communication grounds this activity in the body itself. As Crossley maintains, speaking bodies are interconnected in communication, as rhythms and tempos of movement and speech are perceived, mirrored, and reciprocated. In his words, body-subjects "respond to [others] and are absorbed in a common action. Each action by the one calls forth an action in the other, which calls forth an action on the first, and so on."[138] Recognizing this dynamic interplay pulls abstracted theories of communication back to the lived experience of embodied speakers, a promising move for disability theory.

Translating Crossley's work into a new context, Kevin Paterson helpfully employs the matrix of 'choreography' to probe the exclusion of disabled speakers, arguing that "'communication disablement' is not a problem of 'botching' a carnal performance (giving the wrong verbal or non-verbal cue). It is a matter of being estranged by the dominant choreography of everyday life."[139] Choreography taken for granted by able-bodied speakers is not simply a neutral script guiding human communication, but consists of normalized rules played *against* disabled speaking bodies who cannot hit the right cues, or speak quickly or fluidly enough. In this manner, the disabled speaker aligns with what might be considered the paradigm case of deviant embodied choreography: the slowness of bodies disabled in ways that place them on crutches, in wheelchairs, or with artificial lower limbs. Like disabled speakers, these bodies fail to keep up with the dominant choreography, or fail to organize the movement of their bodies according to normalized rules, or both. What the choreography of disabled speech highlights in particular is the deviant navigation of communicative structures which do not trade on spatiality,

[138] Nick Crossley, *Intersubjectivity: The Fabric of Social Becoming* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 32.
[139] Paterson, "It's About Time!," 171.

as in the slowness of someone using crutches, but take place almost exclusively within the temporal register.[140]

As such, while Paterson has made important strides in parsing the marginalization of disabled speech, I argue that his analysis of choreography is stopped short. He constructively argues that "People with speech impairment become pure body-objects, in the negotiation of everyday encounters, because they are perceived as being in-deficient, culturally,"[141] adding that their objectification and disablement is a result of belonging to a *different* communicative culture. Highlighting the delineation of able-bodied communicative practices is an important move, yet I suggest that the notion of 'choreography' has much more to offer a theory of disabled speech by detailing the particularities of the lived stuttering body which give shape and texture to the delineation and negotiation of able-bodied "communicative cultures."

It is at this junction I take up my project, considering bodily time as the principal axis around which the normalized choreography of speech is organized. Within this category, I make a distinction between individual and intersubjective choreography. To pull off normalized speech, one must choreograph the body in a proper tempo and rhythm similarly to the analogue of dance, as the "correct" production of speech relies upon an exceedingly intricate coordination of breathing, articulation, facial expression, bodily stances, and gestures. This taken-for-granted performance is one that disabled speakers regularly fail at within normalized parameters. Moreover, an intersubjective choreography must also be taken into consideration. As will be

[140] The embodied choreography of the disabled speaker is further highlighted in contrasting "slow talkers" and "fast talkers" more generally. These two speech patterns differ purely in their temporal choreography, yet the judgment of fast speech is often impressive, indicative of a sharp mind and greater intelligence (even if this speech may disrupt communication). Conversely, speaking slowly often results in a judgment of slower intelligence. In this manner, the temporal choreography of disabled speech patterns intersects with the analysis of speech as a judgment of reason established in chapter one. To speak slowly is not only to be temporally decentred and judged as a waste of time, as will be seen, but also to be judged as lacking intelligence in accordance with the prejudice afforded speech as disclosive of reason.

[141] Ibid.

evidenced, not only does the disabled speaker choreograph her body "improperly" in relation to itself, but also in relation to other body-subjects. This perspective aligns more closely with Crossley and Patterson's work on the politics of corporeal communication. To frame the temporal choreography of the disabled speaking body, I turn to a phenomenology of the body through which temporality is not a mechanical by-product of having a body, but constitutive of its lived existence.

3.2 Phenomenology and the (Disabled) Speaking Body

Merleau-Ponty enters phenomenology with the original contribution of grounding phenomenology in the body. It is odd that this would be an original move insofar as phenomenology is famously a call "back to the things themselves." Even though largely overlooked by Heidegger, Husserl recognizes that consciousness is necessarily embodied and he strongly resists naturalistic presuppositions regarding the body.[142] He marks the important distinction between *Körper*—the body as a spatially extended object—and *Leib*—my body as it is lived—emphasizing that the body is not merely a psychophysical object, but is the basis of carrying out everyday possibilities in the world. Moreover, the body—*Leib*—is for Husserl the "nullpoint" of our spatio-temporal orientation. "In order to be able to have an open horizon of unperceived things existing in themselves for me," he writes, "I myself must already exist as a bodily organism for myself and thus constitute the nullpoint or null-member of the world and of things."[143] The body is that from which I have access to the world as well as the "centre" which makes the experience of left/right/up/down possible. Yet despite these important phenomenological clarifications, the body remains somewhat ancillary within Husserl's project

[142] See Edmund G. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), §9h.
[143] Husserl, *Ms. D 3, 10a [1920]* quoted in Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach, *Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 138.

of building a foundation for a science of pure consciousness. In large part then, it is Merleau-Ponty who explicitly develops the themes of embodiment introduced by Husserl (and largely ignored by Heidegger), grounding his phenomenology in the lived body rather than a transcendental reduction.

In his cardinal work, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty offers a phenomenological account of our perceptual relation to the world. Following Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty takes human existence as radically different from the existence of an object. Whereas a book is related to the world spatially, humans inhabit and are related *situationally* to the world, "secreting signification." We have, in Heideggerian terms, an existential structure of "being-in-the-world." The human-world relation for Merleau-Ponty is as such not a relation of subject-object which takes perception as a projection onto a fully determined world standing in objective relation to me. Rather, as a mode of being-in-the-world, perception is my means of dialectically grasping a world of significance. Mark S. Muldoon explains this dialectical relationship, noting that "environments are not just envelopes of chaotic stimuli. Behavior is better understood as a dialogue or dialectic between an organism and its environment where each patterns the other, instead of simple environmental conditioning."[144] Consider in this regard the experience of learning to climb. To a non-climber, a rock face looks like a sheer obstacle. When basic motor skills are acquired, a climber learns to see possibilities in the cliff, to see basic fissures and juts *as* hand and foot holds. A dialectical relationship is established between the body and the cliff: the task of climbing modifies the perception of the cliff, which in turn calls

[144] Mark Muldoon, *Tricks of Time: Bergson, Merleau-Ponty And Ricoeur in Search of Time, Self And Meaning* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2006), 127.

certain movements out of the climber.[145] In this way, perception is not a linear movement, but is dialectical: one perceives and is called upon to respond by the environing situation.

Evident in this example, intentionality is not for Merleau-Ponty an act of pure consciousness, but an embodied perception, a bodily *engagement* with the world which allows us to move through it meaningfully. "Consciousness," he writes, "is being toward the thing through the intermediary of the body."[146] It spreads itself out through the body in a practical engagement with the world such that—echoing Husserl—consciousness is not primarily an "I think that," but an "I can." Like the climber, our bodily perceptions and capabilities give shape to the world around us and structure the existential *possibilities* available to us to engage in projects and relationships in the world. For a blind person, for example, the world would not "call forth" certain possibilities of visual signification and interaction. However, it is important to note that for Merleau-Ponty, people who are disabled still have a world. Insofar as the body is the core of signification, a stretching out into the world, even when "signification aimed at cannot be reached by the natural means of the body . . . we then construct an instrument, and the body projects a cultural world around itself."[147] The use of a cane is as such not a deficient mode of existence for Merleau-Ponty, but is incorporated into a *different* totality of "lived significations that moves towards its equilibrium."[148] The existential structure of disabled bodies is no different from abled bodies; both strike an equilibrium between the body and projected goals in the world through a practical engagement.[149]

---

[145] This example is borrowed from Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 77–78.
[146] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 140.
[147] Ibid., 148.
[148] Ibid., 155.
[149] It is worth noting in passing that Merleau-Ponty does overlook the able-bodied configuration of the world which doubtlessly makes it more difficult for some to "latch" onto than others—e.g. lack of accessibility for wheelchairs. While an equilibrium *is* reached, a greater difficulty in gearing into the world makes certain projects far more difficult to attain for disabled bodies.

If living bodies are not mechanistic objects, but "organic bodies who open up an array of *possible* actions, an intentional arc, in their holistic orientation to the world,"[150] then likewise, speech must be understood as an existential movement, a bodily engagement with the world. Much like perception, speech is a means of "communion," calling forth (and being called by) meaning from situations around us. For Merleau-Ponty the categorical distinction between gestural behavior and the rational, signifying activity of speech gives way to a continuity of "expressive" actions enacted by the body. "There are different layers of signification," he writes, "from the visual signification of the word up to its conceptual signification, passing through the verbal concept. We will never understand these two ideas simultaneously if we continue to oscillate between the notions of 'motricity' and 'intelligence.'"[151] Speech is as such neither an intellectual nor a motor operation for Merleau-Ponty, but both. Dividing the speech act into thought and language or bodily act and external meaning relies upon a fracturing of the intentional arc of the speaking body. Rather, as performed by the lived body, "the intention to speak can only be found in an open experience: it appears, as boiling appears in a liquid, when, in the thickness of being, empty zones are constituted and move outward."[152] Put otherwise, speech is an activity of establishing a world never fully determined.

Merleau-Ponty makes a distinction at this point between a "speaking speech" and a "spoken speech," a contrast that structures the following analysis of disabled speech. The former refers to language in a primary stage where meaningful intentions are nascent and in the process of coming into being. In this moment what is sought in speech is an empirical support to materialize our relation with others and the world. Speaking speech is, for example, the fumbling at the edges of our vocabulary in an attempt to participate in shaping a common world of

[150] Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*, 182.
[151] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 2012, 201.
[152] Ibid., 202.

significance. Once expressed, the act of speech "constitutes a linguistic and cultural world, it makes that which stretched beyond fall back into being."[153] The fall back into common significance results in "spoken speech" which is open to the wide range of culturally sedimented significations.

In the last chapter, I argued that the disabled voice can be construed as noise, distinct from information or signal. Through Merleau-Ponty, we might further consider disabled speech as a suspension in the movement of speaking speech. Although Merleau-Ponty does not draw this connection, speaking speech is structured relative to our bodily possibilities. We fumble for words not only on linguistic frontiers, but when we just wake up or are suffering from a migraine. The existential movement is the same. Disabled speech—tightening muscles, shaking, thrusting out fractured syllables, rocking or swinging the arms to "push out" desired speech—is thus the straining of the entire body to articulate speaking speech. To re-appropriate Merleau-Ponty's metaphor, disabled speech simmers just below the boiling point, exerting the whole body in an attempt to release the voice into being. The silent blocks of the stutterer, for example, are an existentially corporeal event, the strained and frustrated desire of the body to push speaking speech into the realm of familiarity, of meaningful engagement with a situation. As such, it is precisely at this moment of transition into familiarity that the disabled speaker lives, as the existential impulse towards speech is outstripped by the delimiting possibilities of the body. Reflecting on his experience of stuttering, Marty Jezer substantiates this existential interpretation. Probing the interpretation of stuttering as the blockage of intended speech by motor discoordination, Jezer explains that while "we call this stuttering, . . . the actual violation cuts much deeper than the temporary interruption of the ability to communicate. Stuttering is not only a blockage of speech; it is a blow to the psyche, an impediment to the fulfillment of a basic

[153] Ibid., 203.

inner need."[154] While not employing Merleau-Pontian language, Jezer nevertheless arrives at the same experience derived from a corporeal existential phenomenology.

Jezer describes this "basic inner need" or better, this existential intention, as motivated by a desperate belief that if he didn't assert himself through speech he would somehow disappear. A more precise reading is that Jezer worried his *subjectivity* would disappear if he didn't assert himself through speech and establish himself within the common ground of dialogue. Correlatively, the worry of disappearing is a worry of being read as an object, as merely a body that lacks subjectivity. This dual worriment is awakened by the ambiguous nature of the body existing as both subject and object. "To say that I have a body," Merleau-Ponty writes in context of the sexed body, "is thus a way of saying that I can be seen as an object and that *I seek to be seen as a subject*, that another person can be my master or my slave."[155] The very fact of existing as a body commits me to the possibility of being reduced to an object under the gaze of another. In this manner, "the importance attached to the body and the paradoxes of love are linked, then, to a more general drama drawn from the metaphysical structure of my body, at once an object and a subject for me."[156] This reading of the body extends beyond sexuality; those who experience disability are painfully aware that the ambiguity of the body leaves them never safe intersubjectively since they are always in danger of being reduced to a behavior or object in the perceptual field of the Other. This occurs, for example, when interlocutors slowly edge disabled

[154] Marty Jezer, *Stuttering: A Life Bound Up in Words* (Toronto, ON: HarperCollins Canada / Basic Books, 1997), xix.
[155] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 2012, 170.; emphasis added.
[156] Ibid. While Merleau-Ponty has rightly been taken to task by feminist scholars such as Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, and Elizabeth Grosz for overlooking the (gendered) power dynamics inherent in the reversibility of the body (see for example, Butler, "Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description: A Feminist Critique of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*," in *The Thinking Muse*, ed. Allen and Young (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp.85-100, Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, First Edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), and Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).), Merleau-Ponty outlines a framework within which such an analysis can take place.

speakers out of communicative space through shifting uncomfortably, averting eyes, directing rejoinders to others, cutting disabled speakers off, and drifting their attention. It is through existential actions like these that the subjectivity of the speaker is obscured. The movement may be subtle or abrupt, but the fear of being reduced to an object is ever-present for the disabled speaker.

I argue that recognition as a speaking participant in the world is dependent upon a normalized choreography of the body in communication. The disabled speaker 1) is a body engaged concretely in the world, who 2) is constituted by a delayed or frustrated movement into being, and 3) risks being reduced to an object or behavior through speech, yet disabled speech is inherently a complete mode of existence. The stutterer experiences her speech as a frustrated movement into being that risks her subjectivity only relative to the normalized choreography of speech. In particular, I argue that the normalization of communicative space is disturbed by the delayed, unpredictable, and unmalleable temporality of the disabled speaking body. Failing to keep "in step" with other speakers disqualifies the stutterer from shared participation in signification.

3.3 Choreographing Bodily Time in Speech

The disabled speaker accentuates the temporal turn in disability studies, for unlike many forms of disability, the exclusion of the disabled speaker does not *primarily* result from spatial politics. Social and structural barriers faced by the disabled speaker do not as much centre around the navigation of space as around the navigation of time, which is central to the structure of communication. Given diachronically, each conversation has a particular rhythm and temporal flow to it. Pauses of various lengths alter the meaning of a word or phrase. The tempo of the conversation as a whole may infuse it with intensity and urgency, or let it breathe, naturally and

without hurry. Furthermore, as relational speech is bound to time since "it does not know in advance where it is going, and it entrusts itself to the unpredictable nature of what the interlocutors say."[157] In this manner, Crossley notes that if "subjects are to join in an action or a meaning, then the temporal horizons of their respective actions and words must fuse to form a shared horizon."[158] Yet while time is the shared horizon making embodied human communication possible, the choreography of temporal rhythm is also often turned against disabled speakers. Following Merleau-Ponty, the significance of communicative time must be orientated around the axis of the lived body; we must not start with objective or clock time, but bodily time.

Just as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty take the body as the "null point" of spatial orientation and perception, so does the body ground our experience of time. "In every moment of focusing," Merleau-Ponty writes, "my body ties a present, a past, and a future together. It secretes time, or rather it becomes that place in nature where for the first time events, rather than pushing each other into being, project a double horizon of the past and future around the present and acquire an historical orientation."[159] Through engagement with the world, the body forms a lived "now" from which time spreads out in both directions. This is not a Kantian form of intuition applied to experience, but a bodily power which unifies events from the continual perspective of a present, the "the unbroken chain of the fields of presence, by which I am guaranteed access to the past itself."[160] Time is not constituted by consciousness, nor is it a feature of the objective world, but is an *aspect* of embodied subjectivity; the body is continually centered in a ceaseless "springing

[157] Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 175.
[158] Crossley, *Intersubjectivity*, 37.
[159] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 2012, 249.
[160] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 491.

forth of time"[161] that flows through me. This phenomenological centreing allows Alfred Schutz to say that, like the spatial orientation organized around the body, "my actual Now is the origin of all the time perspectives under which I organize the events within the world such as the categories of fore and aft, past and future, simultaneity and succession, etc."[162] 'Bodily time' as such refers to the organization and experience of time in relation to the lived body. Yet what neither Merleau-Ponty nor Schutz attend to is the variation of bodies which create diverse, and often conflicting, temporalities.

Gail Weiss takes Schutz to mean in the previous quotation that insofar as "human bodies share basic physiological similarities despite their manifest differences of age, sex, skin, hair, eye color, height, weight, and so on, there will be corresponding structural similarities in our temporal experiences."[163] Weiss continues, critiquing the assumed structural *similarities* in our spatial experience from the angle of disability studies. Differences in bodily motility and posture create dissimilar spatialities and temporalities; for example, the spatial "centre of coordinates" for a quadriplegic results in a differing spatiality than that of an able-bodied person walking upright. The dominant spatiality of the able-bodied creates inhospitable spatial environments for those who are disabled—narrow doorways, stairs, piled snow on curb cuts, etc. In light of the potent challenge her critique offers to rudimentary phenomenological assumptions, it is curious that Weiss does not truly attend to the temporalization of disabled bodies, merely giving them a passing nod along the way.

Nevertheless, inhospitable *temporal* environments are also constructed by the assumed commonality of human bodily existence. The plurality of embodied temporalities is particularly

[161] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 2012, 451.
[162] Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers I. The Problem of Social Reality*, ed. H. L. van Breda and M. A. Natanson (Hingham, MA: Kluwer Boston, Inc., 1974), 222.
[163] Gail Weiss, "Sharing Time Across Unshared Horizons," Christina Schues, Dorothea E. Olkowski, and Helen A. Fielding, eds., *Time in Feminist Phenomenology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 172.

evident through the activity of speech, which focuses primarily on the temporal rather than the spatial dimension of embodied social existence. Diverse physiological, cultural, emotional and psychological facticities constituting the plurality of bodies result in a wide range of speaking habits, enunciations, volumes, paces, and tempos. Yet through generalization, through an (un)phenomenological positing of average, everyday existence, certain types of human variation are subsumed and obscured. Parameters of how fast and clearly bodies can speak—and are *expected* to speak—are generated from "basic similarities" which reflect the dominant able-bodied mode of temporal existence. Read off the capabilities of a universalized body, communicative rules are codified that discipline *all* bodies to fit within the range of the dominant group. However, before the disciplinary nature of time can be examined properly, it is necessary to take one step back and examine the experience of time as lived by the disabled speaker. To elucidate the temporal decentering *experienced* by the disabled speaker, constitutive of bodily time, I will draw upon the Bergsonian distinction between duration and outer time.

3.3.1 Lived Time and Disabled Speech

Like Merleau-Ponty, Bergson stresses the time of the subject as it is lived, which is opposed to the worldly objective time of scientific and economic vivisection. Bergson eschews the interpretation of time as a succession of "nows" through a critique we might retrospectively term phenomenological. In Bergson's view, the lived experience of time does not consist of distinct moments marked evenly against a spatial backdrop, but is rather a continuity of successions which "melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, without any tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another, and without any affiliation to number."[164] This lived experience of time as seamless heterogeneity is what Bergson terms

[164] Muldoon, *Tricks of Time*, 80.

durée, or "duration." As a continual flow of experience that cannot be separated into discreet units, duration is characterized by progression and continuity rather than a succession of separate moments. Bergson does not deny that time implies succession. "But that succession is first presented to our consciousness, like the distinction of a 'before' and 'after' set side by side, is what I cannot admit."[165] Duration is an act of consciousness, but in light of Merleau-Ponty for whom consciousness is spread throughout the body, I argue more specifically that the lived experience of time is necessarily structured by the particularities of embodiment. This distinction is marked by referring to duration as "lived time." Only when we abstract from this primordial experience of time is it possible to cut experience into a series of nows related externally to each other as a "before" or an "after," and constitute an objective, measurable, outer time. I here contrast lived time with two forms of outer time. In the first place, outer time is understood, most generally, as time that is measure*able* though not necessarily measured and standardized in daily life. A more precise form of outer time is denoted by 'clock time', which refers to standardized outer time accruing an explicit economic and disciplinary valence. I start with the first.

The distinction between lived and outer time accordingly enables a phenomenological description of the disabled speaker's temporal experience. Just as duration exists with varying intensities and qualitative features—e.g. lived time possess a fluidity when listening to a symphony, or stretches during a hot afternoon class—so is duration inflected by the capabilities and possibilities of the body. Jezer is quite lucid on this point.

> I do not understand—or perhaps I cannot accept—the lateral movement of time. . . . My urge is always to telescope time into itself . . . and speed it up. People with a normal sense of time can count "one, two, three, four, five" systematically. I, on the other hand, would count out five as "one, two, threefourfive." . . . I may start off in control of my speaking technique, but the middle gets muddled as I rush to achieve the relief that can come only

[165] Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Dover Publications, 2010), 149.

> from finishing what I have to say. The words collapse upon themselves. My urge is to blast through them as fast as I can, to make a sandwich of them, to compress them together.[166]

The duration experienced by the stutterer is uneven, compressing and expanding unpredictably with the continual labor of bringing speech into being. This distinct experience of lived time is not restrained to the activity of speech for Jezer, but overflows into daily, mundane activities. For example, Jezer describes in some detail his compulsion to flush a urinal before he is finished, unable to wait even when he wants to. His experience of lived time, in other words, is always slightly ahead of objective time through his struggle to spit out words as quickly as possible and thereby keep up with the outer world.[167] Or, rather than using language which falls back into the non-phenomenological description of objective time, one might say that the lived time of the disabled speaker is anxious, dysfluid, and rushed, as successions pile into each other and merge overwhelmingly like a geographical mélange.

Yet in itself, a compressed lived time is nothing but phenomenological variation. That the stutterer experiences and organizes time differently is simply an aspect of her embodied existence. The temporal choreography of her bodily movement and her lived time dialectically structure each other; her lived time is shaped by the (delimiting) possibilities of her body and the coordination of her body correspondingly moves to the particular intensity and rhythms of lived time. Taken together, this dialectical movement constitutes the embodied temporalization of disabled speech—her particular bodily time. However, the stutterer's experience of compressed time distending as she blocks on a word and rapidly contracting as a fluent moment unfolds in front of her is only partially structured around her own temporalizing body. More fully, the

---

[166] Jezer, *Stuttering*, 11.

[167] Jezer even muses that his compression of (lived) time may be scientifically verifiable. "If stutterers and a control group of nonstutterers were to guess when, say, thirty seconds have passed," he writes, "I predict that stutterers would speed up time and say that thirty seconds passed in twenty seconds, and that nonstutterers would come closer to guessing the duration of thirty seconds" (Jezer, *Stuttering*, 12).

experience of compression and distension is a dialectical response to the assumed temporality of the Other. The stutterer senses time is distending through a judgment of how fast she *should* be talking in relation to her interlocutors. Put otherwise, making the move from individual to intersubjective temporal choreography, only when the disabled speaker relates to other temporalizing subjects through communication is her experience of time de-perspectivized and evaluated as deficient and abnormal.

Violent or not, the synchronization of bodily time is fundamental to human relations. We do this constantly: matching our walking pace with that of a group of friends, sitting through a lecture, or sharing a meal with a guest. Particularly evident in the last example, sharing time is central to living and engaging meaningfully with others. Enjoying a meal with others requires that parties fold their particular temporalities into a communal view and so enter into a shared situation. This movement becomes more challenging—yet remains crucial to human relation—when the differential between temporalities (and spatialities) increases; for instance, when the able-bodied align themselves to the temporal order of disabled, ill, or elderly people. To care for another person means adapting to that person's time structure. Caring well for a person with dementia, for example, may require that one patiently repeat conversations, readjusting her own temporal expectations in relation to the Other's rhythms of bodily time.

To varying degrees, these experiences necessitate a synchronization of outer time, but not lived time. A family can share a meal without being present with one another, and a caregiver may learn to live more slowly and patiently in a manner discordant with her lived time which rushes "ahead." But in instances such as spoken and written communication, making music or love with another, the success of that endeavor requires de-perspectivizing one's own temporal structuring of the world; merging one's *lived* time with the Other's. It is precisely upon this point

that the disabled speaker finds her temporalizing body seemingly deficient insofar as it impedes what Schutz refers to as the "mutual tuning-in relationship": a living through of a common experience which grounds communication.

Through the example of making music together, Schutz describes (an idealization of) the intersubjective synchronization of lived and outer time. Making music together, and more broadly, experiencing music together, takes place not in outer, but in lived time. The form of music's existence, argues Schutz, is accordingly not to be found in outer time, but in its *durée*. Two movements of a symphony—one *prestissimo* and the other *largo*—may have an objective "equal length," but in living through these movements, one "lives in a dimension of time incomparable with that which can be subdivided into homogeneous parts"[168] and as such "equal length" here holds no meaning. For music to be shared, or lived through with another, not only the outer time of the two subjects must be aligned in relation to the music—i.e. being in spatial proximity for the objective length of the musical piece—but also *durée*. This is true in the experience of listening to music as well as co-performing music. The difference between these two experiences resides in the extra step required when performing music of aligning one's outer performance to the shared *durée*. Two cellists, for example, interpret each other's bodily movement, posture, facial expressions, and gestures in handling their instruments as indications or commands of the proper response in co-performing a piece. While all acts of communication rely on a coordination of events in the outer world, the corporeal synchronization between the cellists only becomes meaningful in relation to the performance through a further "linking up" of lived time where music is lived. It is within this temporal dimension that "the flux of the musical events unfolds, a dimension in which each performer re-creates in polythetic steps the musical

[168] Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers II. Studies in Social Theory* (Hingham, MA: Kluwer Boston, Inc., 1976), 171.

thought of the . . . composer and by which he is also connected with the listener."[169] It is thus not tonal sounds nor the beating of the metronome in objective space that creates a shared experience between the two cellists and the audience, but rather the diachronic, polythetic progression—that is, the carrying forward of some but not all characteristics of the past into the present—through the ongoing flux of music that unites the performers and listeners together in a communicative present.

The relation between making music together and the temporal experience of spoken dialogue hardly needs clarification, though it does require problematization. In spoken dialogue, Schutz argues, the two fluxes of lived time similarly become synchronous with each other in relation to an event in outer time—the speech act itself. "The stream of articulating cogitations of the speaker," he explicates, "is thus simultaneous with the outer event of producing the sounds of speech, and the perceiving of the latter simultaneously with the comprehending cogitations of the listener."[170] Through the organizing activity of (objective) speech patterns, two speakers—or a speaker and a listener—become united in a common time dimension and thus live through a communicative present together.[171] Put otherwise, the speaker and listener are "tuned-in" to one another not merely through a common measurable time, but more foundationally through a dialogical co-performance in simultaneity of the polythetic steps by which a "We" is constituted.[172] This formulation describes with some clarity both the synergistic experience of two collaborators excitedly dialoguing, and that of being held in rapt attention by a skilled orator,

[169] Ibid., 177.
[170] Schutz, *Collected Papers I*, 324.
[171] Schutz also notes that, "The reading of a written communication establishes in the same sense a quasisimultaneity between the events within the lived time of the writer and that of the reader" (Schutz Col I, 324). This "quasisimultaneity" is also achieved when a listener plays a recorded audio clip; the listener and hearer here live through the experience together without being organized around a shared outer event.
[172] It is worth noting that the constitution of a shared present relies as much upon the "skill" of the listener as the speaker. In this way, the disabled speaker does not bear the sole responsibility for the temporal communicative "disconnect."

proverbially hanging on his every word not in outer time (which disappears), but in lived time as the meaning of his words unfold masterfully in polythetic steps. In both of these cases, the former correlating with the "tuning-in" between the cellists and the latter to the audience-performer relationship, we live together in a common present. Merleau-Ponty describes this mutual tuning-in relationship in terms of speech being called forth by the commonality between two interlocutors.

> In the experience of dialogue, a common ground is constituted between me and another; my thought and his form a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion and are inserted into a shared operation where neither of us is the creator. . . . We are, for each other, collaborators in perfect reciprocity: our perspectives slip into each other, we coexist through a single world.[173]

Similar to the cliff that calls actions out of the climber, the shared communicative situation calls joint possibilities out of interlocutors. For both Schutz and Merleau-Ponty then, the constitution of a shared world underlies our "perception" of, or lived engagement with others through the performance of speech.

Despite the lucidity of this phenomenological explication, both Schutz and Merleau-Ponty problematically assume a basic communicative temporality derived from a generalized bodily time. The result is an idealization that obscures the average, everyday experience of the wide range of speaking bodies. Living intersubjectively through the present relies upon a great number of equivalencies unacknowledged by either Schutz or Merleau-Ponty. For example, the communicative present is broken if a listener is not intellectually capable of following the polythetic steps as quickly as the speaker, or if the (disabled, tired, or distracted) speaker cannot move from thought to speech instantaneously as Merleau-Ponty assumes. He curiously writes in this regard that, "the orator does not think prior to speaking, nor even while speaking; his speech

[173] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 2012, 370.

is his thoughts. The listener similarly does not think about the signs."[174] This is not only a bit of phenomenological imprecision, but an idealization of the very fabric of communication as it is daily lived. Speakers may constitute a common world through speech, but the ground is always partial and fractured, not seamless.

Thus, even though communication is regularly structured across asymmetrical temporalities, it is true that the delimiting possibilities of the disabled speaking body interrupt the mutual tuning-in relationship, and impede the constitution of a shared present. By virtue of the outer activity of stuttering, the listener may have difficulty entering into a synchronous relation with the stutterer since the temporal choreography of the stuttering body is wildly unpredictable and is not easily matched. Moreover, like Jezer, the lived and outer time of the stutterer *herself* often do not align, obstructing the protention of disabled speech from the stutterer's perspective, but even more so from the perspective of the interlocutor attempting to enter a shared present. The listener may as such get frustrated or distracted because the uneven polythetic steps being taken by the stuttering body are not transparently open to interpretation through a shared lived time. Correspondingly, the listener may rush "ahead" to interpret what he believes the outer activity of the stuttering body is attempting to call into being, or lag "behind" trying to decipher unclear articulations. Through the failure to match pace with the tempo of normalized speech patterns, the stutterer not merely a communicative liability, but also hazards her recognition as a speaking subject. Resisting the temporal flux of the shared present, the stutterer is often displaced within everyday practices of communication and subsequently denied full participation as a speaker. Reversing Merleau-Ponty's assessment of dialogue as a shared ground, the stuttering body thus risks being reduced to a behavior or object in the transcendental field of the listener rather than existing alongside an interlocutor in a shared present.

[174] Ibid., 185.

Time, as it is lived, "gets away from us" the more it is decentered from our own experience and orientated around the bodily time of another, or further, around the posited bodily time of a dominant group. For the disabled speaker this means that speech will almost inevitably result in a violent decentering of her temporal structure that risks her subjectivity as she is folded into uncomfortable rhythms and tempos in an attempt to establish a shared horizon. In one sense temporal decentering is a common experience, occurring when listening to anybody speak or in reading a book. Yet the disabled speaker is decentered with relation to the dominant temporal choreography of communication, meaning that the experience is both persistent and pervasive. It is difficult to escape this violence or offer resistance if one wants to speak at all. Exposing the phenomenological idealization of speech reveals that time both consolidates lived experience and prejudicially constricts it in the same movement. This angle is particularly constructive in relation to the dominant mechanical/behavioral reading of the body in which the temporal choreography of the stutterer is an after-effect of a physiological pathology, rather than a constitutive aspect of an embodied, existential movement.

The distinction between lived and outer time sheds light on the fashionable stammerer who evades the marginalizing effects of the disabled speaker's temporal choreography. While true that he purposefully constrains himself to the very temporal flux that excludes the authentic stutterer, the fashionable stammerer dissimilarly "controls" lived time. For the authentic stutterer, as has been demonstrated, time is compressed relative to the dominant choreography of speech within society and thus presents itself as an obstacle. The fashionable stammerer, on the other hand, experiences the decentering of his temporality not as compression but as expansion, which results not in violence, but luxury. Rather than always "rushing ahead," the fashionable stutterer "lags behind" and enjoys the temporal distension as "extra" time to leisure through at will.

Yet the disabled speaker is temporally decentered not only in relation to the lived, bodily time of others, but also in relation to abstracted clock time which standardizes the socio-political temporal parameters of speech. The fashionable stammerer oppositely stands in a privileged relation to the regulating power of objective time, evading its disciplinary force and even reappropriating it as others are forced to wait on him. The analysis of the disabled speaker in relation to intersubjective lived time thus needs to be shored up by a socio-political reading of time that attends to the objective use and *control* of time in disciplining bodies and to the contingency of communicative rules. This move is made by examining clock time as the furthest orbit of decentered time that, I argue, is abstracted from the potentiality of able-bodies.

3.3.2 Commodified, Disciplinary Time

Christina Schues argues that social relations are often structured according to how long someone is required to wait or how much time someone has. "When you consider the question of 'who controls whose time?' you can determine the hierarchy of a relationship."[175] The prisoner and the CEO are the archetypes here. Evidenced by the late Steve Jobs who notoriously occupied disabled parking stalls and waited for no one, the summer intern constantly on call, or the prisoner whose schedule is tightly regulated, the control over time is both an indicator and constituent of power. This disciplinary force maps clearly onto the dynamics of social-economic class, but also configures in more subtle ways the negotiation of body-politics. Gendered, fat, elderly, and disabled bodies are evaluated temporally, and read as "lost" or a "waste" of time for not performing within normative parameters. I accordingly argue that the disabled speaker is disciplined not merely for occupying time, but for embodying time grotesquely—controlling time that does not properly belong to her. The disciplinary and exclusionary *use* of time upon the

[175] Christina Schues, "The Power of Time: Temporal Experiences and A-Temporal Thinking?," Schues, Olkowski, and Fielding, *Time in Feminist Phenomenology*, 68.

disabled body does not primarily trade upon bodily time, but upon the abstracted sense of clock time which requires some elucidation.

Unlike the natural rhythms of day and night, seasons, and birth-cycles, the time-frames generated by hours, minutes and seconds are marked, argues Barbara Adam, by principles of invariance, context independence and precision.[176] For example, fracturing a day into twenty-four equal segments irrespective of daylight or sleep patterns introduced a standardization and rationalization of time otherwise impossible. Adam explains that "clock time, the organizational time-frame and structure of industrial production, is governed by the non-temporal principle of time, a time that tracks and measures motion but is indifferent to change."[177] No longer tied to the invariance and entropy of bodily or seasonal time, clock time inaugurates perfect repeatability, the ideal of Fordism and modernity. In this way, clock time is congruent with what Max Weber terms "instrumental rationality," or rationally calculable action employed in service of productivity. Saturated with economic potentiality, clock time is wound up like kinetic energy to release its potentiality in measurable, calculable increments. It is this construal of time that Benjamin Franklin famously equates with money and which Karl Marx refers to in his determination that the "economy of time, to this all economy ultimately reduces itself."[178]

Only by understanding time as a commodity do expressions like "wasting" time become salient. With clock time in mind, Jezer writes, "So as not to waste my listener's time (and risk their turning away from me impatiently) or my own time, I felt compelled to rush through my counting, breathing, and speaking."[179] The stutterer is continually and arduously aware of the temporal incongruity between her bodily speech and the temporal rhythms of the socio-economic

[176] Barbara Adam, *Timewatch: The Social Analysis of Time* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1995), 24.
[177] Ibid., 52.
[178] Karl Marx, *Grundisse* (London, UK: Allen Lane, New Left Review, 1973), 173.
[179] Jezer, *Stuttering*, 65.

world. Yet it is not merely the relative delay of disabled speech that construes it as waste, but its *incalculability* which cuts against the invariance and rationality of clock time. In her failure to comport to the standardization of clock time, the stutterer seemingly wastes time understood as a rationalizing economic tool. This prodigal use of time is constructed within the economic sphere proper—e.g. stuttering in the board room—but is also projected outward insofar as the economy of time subsumes all aspects of social activity. As Marx states, "The less time the society requires to produce wheat, cattle etc., the more time it wins for other production, material or mental. Just as in the case of an individual, the multiplicity of its development, its enjoyment and activity depends on economization of time."[180] The stutterer is in this manner a threat to the economy of time as such; to the economic potential of other's time—"on the clock" or on holiday—as well as to the temporal system itself. That is, the disabled speaking body is punished in the end for not according to calculable, standardized action.

Presented as an unmalleable temporal body, the disabled speaker is therefore disciplined by the dominant time order; either in an attempt to absorb the stuttering body into the dominant communicative choreography or to signify a temporal hierarchy. With regard to the former, the disabled speaker mirrors the child who is initiated through the school system into a temporal order incongruent with her personal, lived time. Regulated schedules discipline the student to conform to a dominant time order marked by efficiency and productivity, forcefully decentering her temporal structuring of the world according to the standardized rhythms of clock time. Time both structures and is used to punish the student; detention and "time-outs," for example, are forceful methods of habituating a temporal order. "Particularly when I am *forced* into an activity or a situation, and hence into an experience," Schues helpfully points out, "I feel even more

[180] Marx, *Grundisse*, 172–3.

strongly the sense of being taken by a time order that is not mine."[181] Controlling time thus not only regulates the activities of bodies, but also disciplines the temporal structuring of lived time.

Dominant choreographies of speech in everyday encounters likewise discipline bodies according to a time order "that is not mine." Passing beyond the orbit of shared bodily time, choreographies of speech are often not structured by *anyone's* time, but by clock time impervious to the inherent flux of lived time. The stutterer feels this time oppressively forced upon her, time which does not flex and has no sense of becoming. Asked to give an oral presentation within the strict parameter of ten minutes, for example, the stutterer is constrained to operate with a finite sum of temporal successions without accommodation for bodily time that expands and contracts, nor any awareness of the temporal openness of dialogue which does not conform to pre-determined parameters. In constraining the stutterer to perform within the finite limits of unchanging succession, she is abandoned to a time that is not in the process of becoming, but is always running out; inhospitable to the specific rhythms of her temporalizing body.

This disciplinary force manifests itself in formalized communicative interaction but also tacitly scripts engagements like ordering in a drive-through, asking for directions, or talking to a co-worker. Even in mundane interactions like these, we check our watches and shift uncomfortably when the implicit temporal allotment is overstepped. The constricting logic of disciplinary, objective time—unchanging, yet always running out—is most dominant over the choreography of speech in the absence of formalized communicative rules. Yes, being forced to juggle schedules and meet hourly quotas patterns the choreography of bodily interaction, but the disciplinary influence of clock time is most pervasive when invisible. It is when the mechanics of

[181] Schues, "The Power of Time," Schues, Olkowski, and Fielding, *Time in Feminist Phenomenology*, 70; emphasis added.

clock times are not obvious, when socialization veneers the instrumentalization of time, that the normative temporal parameters governing human communication have their contingency obscured. Clock time is in this way experienced as claustrophobic for the disabled speaker and it is precisely this isolating violence of disciplinary time that foregrounds the disabled speaking body as deviant and a failure against the rigidity of instrumental rationality.

The displacement of the disabled speaker via the disciplinary economy of time is clearly demonstrated through the foil of the fashionable stammerer. Expecting others to wait at his convenience is a luxury he is afforded since, unlike the authentic stutterer, time is *already* his—both phenomenologically and according to the economy of time. Like the CEO, he already controls his own time and the time of others,[182] and as such the "extra" lived time he is afforded is capitalized to both mark and reinscribe his dominance over clock time and the bodily time of others. In this manner, even though his distended speech remains structured by clock time, the fashionable stammerer redirects its disciplinary force to his listeners in order to exercise control over their temporalized bodies.

Yet the fashionable stammerer is afforded the possibility of reappropriating an otherwise marginalizing act by conforming to constrictive normative parameters. That is, he cannot stutter too wildly, or take up so much time that his speech interrupts communication since his impediment is, after all, a feign. He must stammer *as the elite do*, and not wander beyond the parameters that demarcate his class. Quoted by *The Globe and Mail*, Jonathan Miller warns that the fashionable stammerer must never be disfigured by his speech, as "It's always a subtle syncopation of his eloquence rather than an obstacle to his speech."[183] Stuttering with too much fanfare would threaten upon noise rather than displaying utter confidence and control of the

[182] Note that feigning a speech impediment is a sign of good breeding, taken up exclusively by "the Establishment."
[183] Shenker, "Stammer Becomes Fashionable."

speech situation. Understood as a whole, the feigned stutter is, not surprisingly, overwhelmingly tame—a simulacrum of the hazardous embodied and temporal experience of being out of step with the dominant choreography of communication.

In contrast to the fashionable stammerer, the authentic disabled speaker finds herself marginalized by commodified and disciplinary time she never possessed and never controlled. She occupies time grotesquely, and therefore her inability to conform to the rhythms and tempos of everyday speech is a "waste" rather than a strategic use of time that both marks and constitutes her deviance. Moreover, through the regulated patterns of choreographed speech, her *body* is compelled to move in standardized, efficient motions and therein conform to strict temporal parameters. In Foucault's terms, disciplinary time creates *docile* bodies which are temporally malleable: productive and efficient.[184] In failing to comport to this unyielding tempo and rhythm, played out individually and intersubjectively, her body ceases to exist as a docile, calculable, and invisible medium for communication. Exceeding the violence of the mutual tuning-in relationship, the economy of time defines the stutterer by her aberrant bodily characteristics foregrounded against an objective, instrumentally ordered world. To be given recognition as a speaking subject here requires integration into a dominant logic of temporalized body-politics.

However, in this regard, the disabled speaking body is displaced not only for speaking too slowly, but also for *moving* dys-fluidly. Clock time, as I have argued, is modeled after classical mechanics and characterized by repetition and invariance. Adam reminds us that, "as a

[184] Commenting on the adjacent activity of disciplining bodies to march in time as a "body-weapon," Foucault contends that "a sort of anatomo-chronological schema of behaviour is defined. The act is broken down into its elements; the position of the body, limbs, articulations is defined; to each movement are assigned a direction, an aptitude, a duration; their order of succession is prescribed. *Time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power*" (Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 152; emphasis added).

mechanical model of the universe the clock expresses time as distance travelled in space."[185] Like the clock, speech that accords with the principles of instrumental rationality—being repeatable and calculable—is constituted by fluid *motion*, by invariant movement through space. Disrupting the rationality of clock time is as such not only an interruption of a temporal order, but more primally, the skewing of orderly motility. The disabled speaking body fails to embody rational, calculable, and therefore economically useful movement. The disabled speaker is accordingly outright disciplined for her erratic movement, and compelled (for example, through speech therapy) to speak and use her body fluidly.

3.4 Fluidity and the Failed Choreography of Disabled Speech

Understood through the economy of time, fluid motility emerges as a function of time. By way of conclusion, consider for a moment the analogue of professional ballet as an idealization of communicative choreography. Characterized by flowing dynamic lines, extreme precision, and an effortless grace, ballet is fluid motility *par excellence*. Professional ballet represents, or hyperbolizes, the qualities of movement implicitly valued in everyday life against which disabled speech is presented as a flawed performance. For example, the ballet dancer organizes her body with complete articulacy—shifting her flow of force instantaneously, gathering and dispersing tension with effortless grace—thus projecting or communicating precisely what she intends. The stuttering body, on the other hand, is disciplined for either communicating the *wrong* things with her body, projecting ambivalence or timidity, or disrupting communication altogether. Paterson notes in this regard that, "with the aestheticization of contemporary culture, a person's appearance and embodied action comments upon what it is that they say and thus may detract from and distort it. The aesthetics, sound and comportment of

[185] Adam, *Timewatch*, 25.

bodies is relevant to having one's voice heard."[186] The spastic movement of the disabled speaking body is thus both communicatively unpredictable, in disaccord with instrumental rationality, *and* aesthetically unpleasurable, which further detracts from the signifying performance of speech. Foiled with the grace and fluidity of ballet, the stutterer is read as dangerously lacking control of her body.

Moreover, the choreography of the entire ballet company is an accruing and release of tension *between* bodies. This also is an aggrandized performance of the choreography of everyday life, where speaking bodies respond to each other in correct motion and turn, building and resolving tension through the intersubjective act of signification. Here again, the disabled speaker is contrasted, since her intra-bodily spasticity resists the fluid *inter*-bodily choreography of speaking. Within the normalized parameters that the art of conversation is performed, the disabled speaker is incapable of controlling her projection of force and resolving intra- and inter-bodily tension. Read against the precision and effortlessness of movement idealized by ballet and prized in everyday life, the spasticity of the disabled speaking body is thus functionally and aesthetically deviant both in relation to itself and to other speaking bodies.[187]

The temporal parameters within which the disabled speaker fails to perform are as such further tightened by expectations of orderly, effortless, and aesthetically normative motility. The failure to control her body temporally—and as an extension, spatially—is what ultimately differentiates her performance from that of the fashionable stammerer. For in the effort of not appearing "truly" disabled, the fashionable stammerer must constrain himself to normative

[186] Paterson, "It's About Time!," 174.
[187] A fluid performance relies as such upon standardized movement made to *appear* effortless. Similar in this way to female beauty standards that compel women to look a certain way "naturally," as if they just rolled out of bed, dancers discipline their bodies relentlessly and a skilled orator spends countless hours in front of a mirror in order to speak effortlessly on stage. In this manner, the strained attempt of the disabled speaker to match the dominant choreography betrays the fact that she is already displaced.

temporal patterns, as well as not display the wide range of facial tics and uncontrollable bodily movements through which disabled speech is manifest. To do so would betray a lack of mastery undercutting the principles of instrumental rationality. As Petrunik comments, stuttering affectatiously "typically takes the form of a 'slight stammer' characterized by relaxed repetitions and hesitations without any of the facial distortions associated with struggle."[188] The fashionable stammerer can therefore be understood as calculated play at disabled speech that delineates, and deftly avoids, the mechanisms of exclusion regularly experienced by disabled speakers.

[188] Michael Petrunik and Clifford Shearing, "Fragile Facades: Stuttering and the Strategic Manipulation of Awareness," *Social Problems,* Vol. 31, No. 2 (1983): 132.

Conclusion—Communicative Normalcy

As indicated at the outset of this project, the constitution of the disabled speaker is not monolithic, but is a multifarious process. The disabled speaker is made intelligible through theoretical prejudices, but also through socio-political judgments. Rationality is mediated through speech as a bodily performance, but only within normalized parameters. The disabled speaker is excluded for speaking non-syntactically, but also excluded for not performing syntax in the right way. She is located within linguistic systems *and* systems of communication; a disruption to rationality, orderliness, and purity. She is a voice, but also a body. Her body is discordant with idealizations of bodily time, and also standardized rhythms of economic time. She is constructed against normalized temporal choreographies, and also normalized choreographies of motility.

Yet while communicative practices and communicative space are ordered around normalizing principles that regulate voices and bodies to perform within strict parameters, the recognition of what might be termed "communicative normalcy" is incomplete without appreciating the dialogical nature of communication—identifying that communication occurs between a speaker *and* a hearer. To shift the communicative burden on the speaker without acknowledging the hearer's role in constituting and enforcing communicative normalcy is misguided, an act of bad faith. "Broken" speech results from atypical speech patterns, but also from "disabled" hearers who lose their patience or make assumptions about what the disabled speaker is trying to say. For example, the disabled speaker undoubtedly, in one sense, closes down communicative possibilities. A shared communicative space does not call certain possibilities out of the disabled speaker that it might out of a skilled orator. Yet, it would be wrong to consider this delimiting phenomenon resulting purely from the disabled speaker.

Rather, if the hearer is not open to the disabled speaker, is not a hospitable interlocutor, he is also responsible for what communicative possibilities can be taken up as a shared endeavor.

Unmasking the "disabled hearer" reorientates the question of who is responsible for disabled speech. Throughout this project I have argued that the conditions excluding the disabled speaker are often contingent, relying more on contestable and sedimented valuations than necessary structures. The 'disabled speaker' is only intelligible through given theoretical and socio-political signification. Drawing attention to the "disabled hearer" further highlights the contingency of the normalization of speech *as it occurs* in the lived space between a speaker and a hearer. The seemingly abstract normalization of speech that excludes certain speakers is incarnate in the so-called disabled hearer.

Recognizing the contingency of the disabled speaker alongside an awareness of the dialogical nature of communication reverses the predominant medicalization of disabled speech which locates "disability" as an individual pathology. Within the medical model the disabled speaker bears total responsibility for being heard and taken seriously as a speaker. She is, always, responsible for her speech. Challenging the notion that disability can be located solely (if at all) within the individual speaker diffuses responsibility for communication "breakdown" and enables exclusionary schemas to be confronted and dismantled as a function of ableist valuations and structures.

In many ways, this project raises far more questions than it answers. The construction of the disabled speaker is a complex phenomenon which requires much more attention than can be given within the constraints of this work. Further study may examine the voice as disclosive of human singularity, a function interestingly challenged by the disabled speaker who has a unique, though stigmatized acoustic fingerprint. Work could additionally be undertaken on the pre-

linguistic relationality of the voice through the philosophy of Hannah Arendt and Cavarero. There is promise in theorizing the disabled speaker as challenge to the posited rationality of communicative action as imagined by Jürgen Habermas. Lastly, much study is needed on speech therapy itself, a central participant in creating the world of normalized speech expectations and constructing the disabled speaker within that world.

In this late-capitalist world where the flow of information is increasingly equated with capital and the stakes of mis-performing reason are high, disabled speakers are progressively finding themselves marginalized and pathologized. What disabled speakers need within this hostile theoretical and cultural milieu is not better and more pervasive therapy that reinscribes normalization, but an alternative narrative of the very meaning of 'disabled speech'. In recognizing the contingency of disabled speech as a result of ableist valuation, disabled speakers can stage resistance and demand to be heard on their own terms. I hope that in some small way this project can aid in their emancipation.

Bibliography

Adam, Barbara. *Timewatch: The Social Analysis of Time*. London, UK: Polity, 1995.

Allen, Jennifer & Young, Iris (ed). *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992.

American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed., text rev.). Washington, DC: Author.

Baggs, Amanda. "In My Language." (video) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jny1M1hI2jc.

Barbara, Dominick A. *New Directions in Stuttering: Theory and Practice*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas Publisher, 1965.

Bauby, Jean-Dominique. *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. Translated by Jeremy Leggatt. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

Benjamin, Walter. "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man." In *Selected Writings*, Ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Bergson, Henri. *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Dover Publications, 2010.

Bernet, Rudolf, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach. *Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993.

Blackman, Lucy. *Lucy's Story: Autism and Other Adventures.* London: Jessica Kingsley, 2001.

Burke, Jamie. "Life's a Beach." In *Sharing Our Wisdom,* edited by Gail Gillingham and Sandra McClennen, 109-12. Durham, N.H.: Autism National Committee.

Calvin, William H. and Derek Bickerton, *Lingua ex Machina: Reconciling Darwin and Chomsky with the Human Brain.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

Cavarero, Adriana. *For More Than One Voice: Toward A Philosophy Of Vocal Expression*. Standord, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.

Crossley, Nick. *Intersubjectivity: The Fabric of Social Becoming*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996.

Crossley, Rosemary and Anne McDonald. *Annie's Coming Out.* e-published: DEAL books, 2010.

Davidson, Donald. *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation.* New York: OUP, 2001.

Davis, Lennard. *Enforcing Normalcy*. New York: Verso Press USA, 1996.

Devitt, Michael and Kim Sterelny, *Language and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language, second Edition.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.

Dobson, Fefe. "Stuttering," *Joy.* Island Records, 2010.

Dolar, Mladen. *A Voice And Nothing More*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.

Dolmage, Jay. *Disability Rhetoric.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013.

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Routledge, 1966.

Dretske, Fred I. *Knowledge and the Flow of Information*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999.

Ebbinghaus, Hermann. *Psychology: An Elementary Text-book.* New York: Arno Press, 1908.

Eileraas, Karina. "Witches, Bitches & Fluids: Girl Bands Performing Ugliness as Resistance." *TDR* 41, No. 3 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 122-139.

Elliott, Carl. *Better Than Well: American Medicine Meets the American Dream*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004.

Eriksson, K. "Networks and the Philosophy of Noise." *Culture and Organization* 14, no. 3 (2008): 279–292.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994.
Harder, Johan Gottfried. *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschicte der Menschheit.* Leipzig, Johann Hartnock, 1784-91.
Harding, Sandra G. *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking From Woman's Lives.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.
Hass, Lawrence. *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008.
Hegarty, Paul, Michael Goddard, and Benjamin Halligan. *Reverberations: The Philosophy, Aesthetics and Politics of Noise*. Edited by Michael Goddard. New York: Continuum, 2012.
Hegel, G.W.F. *Philosophy of Mind.* 1830.
Husserl, Edmund G. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970.
Irigaray, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Translated by Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993.
Jacobson, John W., James A. Mulick, Allen A. Schwartz. "A History of Facilitated Communication: Science, Pseudoscience, and Antiscience." *American Psychologist*, Vol. 50, No. 9. (September 1995).
Jezer, Marty. *Stuttering: A Life Bound Up in Words*. Toronto, ON: HarperCollins Canada / Basic Books, 1997.
Katz, J.J. *The Philosophy of Language.* New York: Harper & Rox, 1966.
Kittay, Eva Feder. "The Personal is Philosophical is Political: A Philosopher and Mother of a Cognitively Disabled Person Sends Notes from the Battlefield." In *Cognitive Disability and its Challenge to Moral Philosophy*, edited by Eva Feder Kittay and Licia Carlson, 393-413. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
_____. "Thoughts on the Desire For Normalcy." In *Surgically Shaping Children: Technology, Ethics, and the Pursuit of Normality*, edited by Erik Parens. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2006. 90-111.
Kochmeister, Sharissa Joy. "To Have a Voice." In *Sharing Our Wisdom,* edited by Gail Gillingham and Sandra McClennen, 117-32. Durham, N.H.: Autism National Committee.
Leder, Drew. *The Absent Body*. Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1990.
_____., ed. *The Body in Medical Thought and Practice*. Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992.
Levinas, Emmanuel. *Basic Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996.
Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Edited by Peter. H. Nidditch. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995.
Marx, Karl. *Grundisse*. London, UK: Allen Lane, New Left Review, 1973.
McMahan, Jeff. *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*. New York: OUP, 2003.
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2002.
_____. *Phenomenology of Perception*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
Muldoon, Mark. *Tricks of Time: Bergson, Merleau-Ponty And Ricoeur in Search of Time, Self And Meaning*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2006.
Neumark, Norie, Ross Gibson, and Theo van Leeuwen, eds. *VOICE: Vocal Aesthetics in Digital Arts and Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010.

Newman, John Henry. *The Idea of a University.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959.
Nikulin, Dmitri. *On Dialogue.* New York: Lexington Books, 2006.
Paterson, Kevin. "It's About Time!: Understanding the Experience of Speech Impairment." In Nick Watson, Alan Roulstone, and Carol Thomas, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 165-177.
Pentzell, Nick. "Cultural Commentary: Dissed Ability: Grappling With Stereotypes And The Internalized Oppression Of Babyliss." *Disability Studies Quarterly,* Vol 30, No. 1 (2010). (accessed April 1, 2010) "http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1054/1241.
Petrunik, Michael and Clifford Shearing. "Fragile Facades: Stuttering and the Strategic Manipulation of Awareness." *Social Problems.* Vol. 31, No. 2 (1983). pp. 125-138.
Rasch, William. "Injecting Noise into the System: Hermeneutics and the Necessity of Misunderstanding." *SubStance* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 1992): 61–76. doi:10.2307/3685347.
Rée, Jonathan. *I See a Voice: Deafness, Language and the Senses—A Philosophical History.* New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999.
Richter, David H., ed. *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*. New York: Bedford Books, 2006.
Romdenh-Romluc, Komarine. *Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology of Perception*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
Rubin, Sue. "FC: The Key to Success." In *Sharing our Wisdom,* edited by Gail Gillingham and Sandra McClennen, 133-42. Durham, N.H.: Autism National Committee.
Schues, Christina, Dorothea E. Olkowski, and Helen A. Fielding, eds. *Time in Feminist Phenomenology*. Indiana University Press, 2011.
Schutz, A. *Collected Papers I. The Problem of Social Reality*. Edited by H. L. van Breda and M. A. Natanson. Hingham, MA: Kluwer Boston, Inc., 1974.
_____. *Collected Papers II. Studies in Social Theory.* Hingham, MA: Kluwer Boston, Inc., 1976.
Schweik, Susan M. *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public*. New York: New York University Press, 2010.
Serres, Michel, ed. *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.
Seybert, Jenn. "Inclusion . . . Finally!." In *Sharing Our Wisdom,* edited by Gail Gillingham and Sandra McClennen, 101-8. Durham, N.H.: Autism National Committee.
Shenker, Israel. "Stammer Becomes Fashionable: Essential Mark of the English Gentleman." *The Globe and Mail*. November, 1970, 12:12, Toronto.
Singer, Peter. "Speciesism and Moral Status." In *Cognitive Disability and its Challenge to Moral Philosophy,* edited by Eva Feder Kittay and Licia Carlson, 331-344. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
Sokolowski, Robert. *Phenomenology of the Human Person.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
St. Pierre, Joshua. "The Construction of the Disabled Speaker: Locating Stuttering in Disability Studies." *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 1.3:1-21.
Stubblefield, Anna. "The Entanglement of Race and Cognitive Dis/ability." In *Cognitive Disability and its Challenge to Moral Philosophy,* edited by Eva Feder Kittay and Licia Carlson, 293-313. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

———. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Vesey, Godfrey. *Inner and Outer: Essays on a Philosophical Myth.* London, UK: MacMillan, 1991.

Voegelin, Salome. *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*. New York: Continuum, 2010.

"Waiter Hailed as Hero After Standing up for Boy with Down Syndrome." *Waiter Hailed as Hero After Standing up for Boy with Down Syndrome*. Accessed January 24, 2013. http://www.today.com/moms/waiter-hailed-hero-after-standing-boy-down-syndrome-1B8038223.

Watson, Nick, Alan Roulstone, and Carol Thomas, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Wiener, Norbert. *Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. second edition. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1965.

Weiss, Gail. "Sharing Time Across Unshared Horizons." In Christina Schues, Dorothea E. Olkowski, and Helen A. Fielding, eds., *Time in Feminist Phenomenology*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011. pp. 171-188.