ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Listening, Thinking, Being

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This article explores a perspective on listening, called listening being, which resides beyond the limitations of language, dualism, and conceptual thought. As a dwelling place for human being, listening being can reveal the ethical possibilities that arise when listening begins not from a speaking, but from the emptiness of awareness itself. This perhaps utopian vision of listening is not an actual state or principle, but a horizon toward which we might travel. Listening being is thus a philosophical challenge that invites us to rethink communication through the lens of listening and engage with/in a form of human communication and consciousness beyond discursive thought, to places of understanding that language cannot, as yet, reach.

This article explores the boundaries of discursive thinking in relation to listening in order to explore the possibilities that arise when listening, rather than speaking, is placed at the conceptual center of communication. Combining the phenomenological traditions of Heidegger (1966, 1971a, 1971b, 1975, 1993) and Levinas (1969, 1998, 1999) with insights from constitutive approaches to communication (Carey, 1988; Craig, 1999; Shotter, 1993, 1996; Stewart, 1978, 1983, 1986, 1996; Stewart & Zediker, 2000) and Eastern religious philosophy, this article explores a perspective on listening, called *listening being*, which resides beyond the limitations of language, dualism, and conceptual thought. As a dwelling place for human being, *listening being* can reveal the ethical possibilities that arise when listening begins not from a speaking, but from the emptiness of awareness itself—a place from which human beings can both *be* and *become*. This perhaps utopian vision of listening is not an actual state or principle, but a horizon toward which we might travel. *Listening being* is thus a philosophical challenge that invites us to rethink communication through the lens of listening and engage with/in a form of human communication and consciousness beyond discursive thought, to places of understanding that language cannot, as yet, reach.

Listening

In the English language, as with the German language, we have two words: hearing and listening. The verb *to hear* derives from the Middle English *heren*, Old High

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German *hOren*, and Latin *cavEre*. Webster (n.d.) defines *to hear* as to perceive or apprehend by ear 2: to gain knowledge of by hearing. Similarly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) (n.d.) defines *to hear* as: "To perceive, or have the sensation of, sound; to possess or exercise the faculty of audition of which the specific organ is the ear." The verb *to listen*, in contrast, is derived from Middle English as *listnen* and is defined by the idea of *attention* to sound. The *OED* defines *listen* as "to hear attentively; to give ear to; to pay attention." The *OED* derives *listen* from the Sanskrit *crusti* (meaning obedience) and relates it to words associated with audition (audit, autitorium, audio, etc.) that derive from the Latin *Audire* (obedience). This etymology illustrates that *listen* and *hear* are not simply synonyms, but are inflected with different meanings that suggest different ways of being in the world. Etymologically *listening* comes from a root that emphasizes *attention* and *giving* to another, while *hearing* comes from a root that emphasizes *perception* and *sensation* of sound. Indeed, the ideas of "gaining" and "possessing" found in *hearing* foreground a focus on the self's experience, while the ideas of attention and obedience found in *listening* focus on the other. Although Gadamer (2003) considers hearing to be "the basis of the hermeneutical phenomenon" (p. 462), he nevertheless fails to distinguish hearing and listening when he writes "when you look at something you can also look away from it by looking in another direction, but you cannot 'hear away'" (p. 462). This distinction is important, however, because it points to the fulcrum upon which the ethical response depends. For just as *looking* cannot occur in the absence of *seeing*, neither can *listening* occur without *hearing*, and both the communication literature and everyday life are filled with examples (ranging from "turning a deaf ear," to "selective listening") that convey the idea of *hearing away*. This difference between hearing and listening is eloquently expressed in the Robert Frost poem "Death of a Hired Man," which serves as an illustration of the ethical response of acknowledgment by Hyde (2006). In Frost's poem, according to Hyde, the character Mary responds ethically through her explicit acknowledgment of the destitute and homeless worker named Silas. Her acknowledgment comes, according to Hyde, in her rhetorical appeal to her husband Warren who, unlike Mary, merely "hears" Silas. To Hyde (2006), Mary's ethical response of acknowledgment is revealed by her act of speaking—her successful appeal to Warren that together they help Silas. Acknowledgment, to Hyde, "transforms time and space to provide a dwelling place for people to gain some understanding of truth and to cultivate moral thought" (p. 101). Yet while Hyde rightly points to the importance of Mary's rhetorical response to hearing the call of Silas, he overlooks the role of listening. Just as the presence of rhetoric presupposes the presence of acknowledgment as Hyde claims, so the presence of acknowledgment presupposes the presence of listening. Everything depends, writes Hyde, on our responding to the call. But to press the point, how does one *listen* for the call? Or, as Heidegger (1975) puts it: *When does hearing succeed*? Heidegger's answer: "We have heard when we *belong to* the matter addressed . . . To belong to speech—this is nothing else than in each case letting whatever a letting-lie-before us lays gathered before us in its entirety" (1975, p. 66). Thus, listening becomes a prior ethical act; we *belong* to

the matter addressed when the ethical call enters us and has become a part of us, when we have made a space for it, a home for it, inside us where we are not. This is the self-transcendence, the gift, of listening. It is where I make a space where I am not—where I have, however, temporarily, renounced my projects, goals, and understandings in order to *listen be* with the other. As Fiumara (1990) writes: "The cognitive dedication to the word of the other demands . . . a kind of inner abnegation. Without this inner renunciation the individual can only hold a dialogue with himself" (p. 125).

Listening thus involves an encounter with radical alterity that disrupts our everyday understandings and habits of thought. But to encounter this alterity is not to freeze us into some kind of subject/object relation. Rather, it is to let the "gathered" subject and object lie before us, *as reference points*, relative to a point of view, a position from which we take up in our engagements in the world. To *be listening* is to both diminish the dualism between self and at the same time increase the awareness of emptiness, alterity, and unknowing. To *be listening* is thus to be simultaneously empty and full, to be both unity and plurality wherein "the unity of plurality is peace," (Levinas, 1969, p. 306). Many world religions, from Vedic to Jewish and Christian, worship a divinity of unity and plurality. In Judaism, the daily prayer called the *Schma* not only attends to unity but also it calls us to attend to that unity by way of listening. It goes: "Schma, Israel, adonois elohein, adonois echod." Translated, this prayer means: "Listen, Israel, the lord is God, God is one." This prayer is not simply an assertion of monotheism but, more plainly, is an injunction to listen: Listen listen listen. God is one. We are one. One is what we are. Similarly, the early Greek Heraclitus fragment that Heidegger (1975) explores, in his remarkable study of language, foregrounds not speaking, but listening.[1] In other words, community does not arise just because of *speaking*, but because of *listening*. We become one when we listen together—to the voice of god, to a singer, to a speaker, to the wind blowing through the trees. This is what is meant in Quakerism as the "gathered meeting" (Collier, 2003) and perhaps what Heidegger (1975) means by *gathered hearkening* when he writes:

> Were our hearing primarily and always only this picking up and transmitting of sounds, conjoined by several other processes, the result would be that the reverberation would go in one ear and out the other. That happens in fact where we are not gathered to what is addressed . . . Hearing is primarily gathered hearkening. We hear when we are "all ears". But "ear does not here mean the acoustical sense apparatus." (p. 65)

Thus, in listening, we *become*. Not that we will come to agree, or to see things the same way, or even come to understand in the same way. But we share the experience of *being* listening—and up from the listening bubbles a speaking. "Every word of mortal speech speaks out of such a listening, and as such a listening. Mortals speak insofar as they listen" (Heidegger, 1971b, p. 206). Listening is thus a *dwelling place* from where we offer our ethical response, our hospitality, to the other and the world. Listening being is thus an invitation—a hosting. This hosting of other is as a guest, as a not-me. I don't have to *understand*, although you may feel "understood." I don't

have to translate your words into familiar categories or ideas. I don't have to "feel" what you feel, or "know" what it feels like to be you. What I do need to do is stand in proximity to your pain. To stand with you, right next to you, and to belong to you, fully present to the ongoing expression of you. Letting go of my ideas about who you are, who I am, what "should" be. I let all that go, and stay present, attending, aware. Not indifferent, but in a state of letting go of conceptual thought, what Buddhism calls awareness, what the Tao calls nonwilling, what Levinas calls beyond dialog, and what Heidegger calls releasement. And it begins from a nonconceptual perspective on thinking.

Thinking

The relation between listening and thinking has been explored in both social science and cognitive science literature and has emphasized cognitive processes involving attention, schema, information processing, and memory (e.g., Edwards and McDonald, 1993; Fitch-Hauser and Hughes, 1988; Wolvin and Coakley, 1996). For the most part, this research views communication as the transformation of information from senders to receivers and explores how structures of memory and cognition shape reception, which is understood as listening. In contrast, humanities-based communication scholarship on listening influenced by hermeneutics and phenomenology emphasizes the process of understanding, and sees dialog as a coproduced dialogic process undertaken by speakers and listeners together (Arnett, 1986, 1994, 2005; Hyde, 1994; Purdy, 2001; Shotter, 1993, 1996; Stewart, 1978, 1983, 1986, 1996; Stewart & Zediker, 2000). These scholars undertake a dialogic and constitutive view of communication whereby language and communication are understood to be the very ground upon which humans make worlds. Beginning with what Hyde articulates as the "tantalizing elusiveness that characterizes ontological insight" (Hyde, 1994, p. 191), this article attempts to push the boundaries of thinkability even further, beyond even the boundaries of language itself. Combining the phenomenological traditions of Heidegger (1966, 1971a, 1971b, 1975, 1993) and Levinas (1969, 1998, 1999), with nonconceptual traditions of Eastern philosophy,[2] this article proposes a perspective on listening in relation to consciousness and human experience beyond the limitations of language, dualistic logic, and the principle of noncontradiction. According to D. T. Suzuki (1948), "Zen deals with facts and not with their logical, verbal, prejudiced, and lame representations . . . Zen thinks we are too much slaves to words and logic. So long as we remain thus fettered we are miserable and go through untold suffering" (p. 61). The Catholic monastic and public intellectual Thomas Merton (1995) understood the limitations of language similarly. "The human dilemma of communication is that we cannot communicate ordinarily without words and signs, but even ordinary experience tends to be falsified by our habits of verbalization and rationalization. The convenient tools of language enable us to decided beforehand what we think things mean, and tempt us all too easily to see things only in a way that fits our logical preconceptions and our verbal formulas" (Merton, 1995,

p. 38). The contemporary American Zen teacher Tenzin Roshi (Reb Anderson) puts it even more boldly: ''Language is always already corrupted, it's a way we make a deal with the devil, the price of admission to language is to distance from things, make them and us separate. Dogen says language is dualistic consciousness'' (Anderson, 2005).

But to say that Buddhism disrupts the empire of logic and discursive thought—of duality, binarism, and other modes of categorical thought—is not to say that Buddhism minimizes the intellectual, conceptual, or mental attributes of being human. In contrast, the awareness of mind is central to achieving freedom. According to the Dharmapada (1997), a collection of Buddhist sayings drawn largely from the Pali Canon (the earliest extant Buddhist scriptures), the power of thought to constitute the world is well understood:

> All that we are is the result of our thoughts; it is founded on our thoughts and made up of our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world. If a man speaks or acts with a harmful thought, trouble follows him as the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart. (Dhamapada, 1995, p. 35)

In Buddhism, cognition is thus seen as fundamental to human being. According to the Mahasatipatthana Sutta (Buddha, 1987), a central sutra on the four foundations of mindfulness, the Buddha taught that awareness and contemplation of mind—whether it be deluded or open, distracted or focused—are foundational to liberation. Thus, enlightenment, from a Buddhist perspective, is to be experienced in the mind beyond conceptual, dualistic thinking. Later developments in Buddhism, particularly Nagarjuna's development of Mayahana Buddhism in second-century A.D. India, focused greatly on cultivating an awareness of the mind's emptiness (*sunyata* in Sanskrit) and thereby rejecting the mind's tendency to reduce all experience to antimonies and dualistic categories of is/is not, something/nothing, and so forth. This is the form of rupture of conceptual thought that Zen koan's such as ''Zen mind is no mind,'' and ''the sound of one hand clapping'' are intended to create. The sudden disruption of habitual ways of seeing the world can trigger a range of reactions, from laughter to anxiety. In Buddhist philosophy, the aim is to trigger the flash of insight known as enlightenment. When unexpected, the disruption can be liberating or dangerous. As the philosopher Krishnamurti (1969) asks: ''When we say we see a tree or a flower or a person do we actually see them? Or do we merely see the image that the word has created?'' (pp. 91–92). When those habitual thoughts, categories, and assumptions are disrupted, we then can achieve what Buddhists call enlightenment—a state of being that abides both within the everyday constraints of language and the expansiveness beyond those constraints. American Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron relates a story of a day when her teacher, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, was sitting outside with his teacher, Dilgo Kyentse Rinpoche. The two sage teachers had been sitting in silence for some hours when Trungpa suddenly pointed to a tree in the near distance and said: ''They call that a tree,'' after which both men began to shake with laughter.

As with these Eastern religious traditions, Western philosophers such as Heidegger (1966), Levinas (1998), and Bohm (1983) perceived a danger in the West that mistook logical thinking as the only kind of thinking, and moreover, as a kind of habitual thinking that is in some sense "thoughtless"—the kind of thinking governed by unquestioned assumptions, ossified schema, and blind willfulness. Heidegger considers his work "beyond philosophy," that is, beyond the limits of Western rationality, the rule of reason.[3] In a 1953 speech, Heidegger (1966) distinguished between two kinds of thinking, calculative and meditative. Calculative thinking is understood by Heidegger as a kind of instrumental thought governed by a concern for a telos or goal, and willed by us in pursuit of our agendas. Meditative thinking, in contrast, is a pondering and a questioning that is not attached, a priori, to a direction or goal. As he writes: "Meditative thinking demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea, nor to run down a one-track course of ideas. Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all" (1966, p 53). In his letter of humanism, Heidegger (1993) describes how the dominance of language governed by techne and subjectivity in the public realm leads to a kind of unconditional and insatiable objectification that limits the possibilities of meditative thought. "In this way language comes under the dictatorship of the public realm which decides in advance what is intelligible and what must be rejected as unintelligible" (p. 221). In a similar way, Levinas (1999) describes how persuasive discourse is itself a form of violence and repression, and David Bohm (1983) describes the problems that arise when human beings mistake our categorical thinking as the only form of thinking:

> It is thus quite easy, through inadequate attention to the actual process of one's thought, to "slip into" a form of conditioned response of memory, in which one is not alert to the fact that it is still only a form of thought, a form that aims to give a view of "the whole of reality". So, "by default" one falls into the trap of tacitly treating such a view as originating independently of thought, thus implying that its content *actually* is the whole of reality. (p. 62)

In the book *I and Thou*, Buber's (1958) epic treatise on the philosophy of dialog, Buber describes how our perceptions can be blinded by language and cognition. Using the example of looking at a tree, Buber illustrates the many ways our perception can be captured and frozen in human conceptual systems: aesthetic, numerical, biological, and so forth. Each description may be accurate enough, but it will also be partial and incomplete:

> I consider a tree. I can look on it as a picture: stiff column in a shock of light, or splash of green shot with the delicate blue and silver of the background. I can perceive it as movement: flowing veins on clinging, pressing pith, suck of the roots, breathing of the leaves, ceaseless commerce with earth and air—and the obscure growth itself. I can classify it in a species and study it as a type in its structure and mode of life. I can subdue its actual presence and from so sternly that I recognize it only as an expression of law—of the laws in accordance with

which a constant opposition of forces is continually adjusted, or of those in accordance with which the component substances mingle and separate. I can dissipate it and perpetuate it in number, in pure numerical relation.

In all this the tree remains my object, occupies space and time, and has its nature and constitution. It can, however, also come about, if I have both will and grace, that in considering the tree I become bound up in relation to it. The tree is now no longer *It*. I have been seized by the power of exclusiveness. (p. 7)

Key to Buber here is the idea that in each one of these perceptions and conceptions of the tree, it ultimately remains an object that is both unrelated and out of reach, and thereby forever outside the realm of community and responsibility. This idea thus underscores the ethical dimensions of listening and the relationship between response and responsibility and its connection to the ethical community. As an ethical stance, *listening being* requires a willingness to suspend already familiar conceptions, beliefs, and understandings. As Arnett (1986) writes, ''if people listen just for comments that reinforce their internal images, health within human community is unlikely'' (p. 60). Thus, because language is one of the most powerful means by which our conceptual habits are shaped, *listening being* requires a steady simultaneity of presence, awareness, and emptiness.[4] Otherwise, we become habituated to the familiar and as a result will hear only what we already know, or expect, to hear. The dwelling place of *listening being* thus requires both an awareness of our habitual categories and a willingness to go beyond them.

Listening thinking

As Heidegger (1975) and Fiumara (1990) have argued, the ancient Greek conceptions of logos that undergird most contemporary Western conceptions of language and thought are so dominated by an emphasis on speech and speaking that we have not only forgotten how to listen but also how to connect listening with thought itself. This connection has, however, been made and preserved in Eastern philosophical traditions. A story from the Taoist tradition conveys something of this idea. A second-century B.C.E. story in the Chuang-Tzu (1964) recounts a teaching by Confucius to his student Yen Hui, who is searching for a method with which to engage in a vexed political problem in the human world. Yen Hui reports to Confucius that in the state of Wei, the prince is completely indifferent to the suffering of his people. He describes how dead people ''are lying all over the country like so much overgrowth in the marsh. The people know not where to turn'' (p. 77). Confucius begins by asking Yen Hui what he plans to do, and Yen Hui catalogues a range of things from gravity to dispassion and uprightness, all of which Confucius rejects. He tells Yen Hui to instead to conduct:

a fasting of the mind . . . Do not listen with ears, but with the mind. Do not listen with the mind, but with the spirit. The function of the ear ends with hearing; that of the mind, with symbols or ideas. But the spirit is an emptiness ready to receive

all things. Tao abides in the emptiness; the emptiness is the fast of mind.
(Chuang-Tzu, 1964, p. 79–80)

This form of listening as ''a fasting of the mind'' is necessary for a stance of *listening being* and is related to the Buddhist idea of *upekka*, that is, thinking not thinking—which requires a certain degree of inner emptiness, a form of detachment plus heightened awareness. In *listening being*, the listener's emptiness is a form of inner silence that has suspended the noise of inner discursive thought. This form of inner emptiness facilitates a focus and attention that enables one to really absorb the other's words beyond the confines of what has already been thought, believed, or understood. In Buddhism, this awareness of the horizon beyond conceptual thought is understood to be a form emptiness whereby everything abides empty of a separate self or identity. ''To the extent that the freedoms of mind are immeasurable, are of no-things, are signless, of them all unshakable freedom of mind is pointed to as chief, for it is empty of passion, empty of aversion, empty of confusion'' (Conze, 1964, p. 91). This is not unlike the philosophy of dialog explored by Kaplan (1994), who says: ''When I am really talking to you, I *have* nothing to say'' (p. 40). That is, in *listening being* I come to the conversation empty—not empty of my experience or history—but empty of the belief that my experience or history defines the limits of possible meaning and experience. Thereby, in *listening being* I am being empty of possession and of all intentions other than the intention of engagement with you and of the what-will-happen. In this way, listening in dialog is improvisational, it is a make-it-up-as-we-go-along, a recognition of the boundaries of familiar frameworks, and the courage to risk vulnerability, and going beyond. This form of listening is not unlike the listening of improvisational jazz where players begin with a shared context of a ''tune''—a familiar melodic and harmonic structure—and then, one by one, or perhaps in tandem, push beyond the boundaries of rhythmic, harmonic, and/or melodic structure. Truly gifted player/listeners can take the melody and bend it around the key or time signature, lifting it beyond what they already know. When they are *really* playing—really improvising—they ''have'' nothing prepared to ''say.'' Thus, in order to improvise, players have to ''listen''—they have to follow the familiar structure, that is be aware of it at all times, where we are in the song, where the others are, and they have to listen beyond, what might come newly, originally, to them. A jazz trumpet player might sew a quote from the classic ballad ''Motherless Child'' tune into her solo during Miles Davis's ''Sketches of Spain.'' An improvisational pianist might throw a quote from a familiar TV advertisement into his moment of ''My Funny Valentine.'' Each player abides entirely in the present—listening, or as Heidegger would say, meditatively thinking about, for ''things that at first glance don't go together at all'' (1966, p. 53). This kind of listening takes place in linguistic forms as well, such as the improvisational speech of improvisational comedy and spoken word poetry, where the same tango of listening and speaking, of finding the pulse of the familiar structure and pushing beyond it, occur. The listening involved in writing poetry is similar where in order to say the unsayable, a poet must break through cliché,

familiar structures of knowing and naming and this can only be achieved with both
an awareness of the shared structure (the familiar story, image, tune, category, etc.)
and a willingness to go beyond it—that is, both to listen and speak beyond, outside
the confines of the shared familiar structures and the always already "known."

In dialogic and phenomenological philosophy, this play of known and unknown
is echoed in Buber's (1998) understanding of distance and relation whereby we stand
close, but at a distance. In the Theravada tradition of Buddhism, "not thinking" is
related to "upekkha [sic], the even-mindedness where one is unaffected by sense-data
although not unaware of them" (Conze, 1964, p. 108). Upekka is achieved by seeing
impermanence in all things and thereby remaining unattached. Zen monk Thich Nhat
Hanh (1995) describes how the judging conceptual mind interferes with listening to
the sounding of a bell—we hear the bell and then evaluate it as beautiful or strange,
which then may trigger memories or associations, analysis, and comparison. "With
each such judgment the experience of pure hearing becomes fainter and fainter until
one no longer hears the sound but hears only his thoughts about it" (Hanh, 1995,
p. 10). The difficulty of listening without this judgment is well known, but when it
occurs, the impact is powerful. Buddhist teacher Tara Brach (2003) describes such
a moment when Jacob, a 70-year-old meditation student with Alzheimer's disease,
is giving a talk about Buddhism and then, standing before the audience, he goes
absolutely blank. He has no idea where he was or what he was supposed to do.
Drawing on his years of meditation experience, he begins to convey everything he is
aware of, moment by moment:

> "Afraid, embarrassed, confused, feeling like I'm failing, powerless, shaking, sense
> of dying, sinking, lost." For several more minutes he sat, head slightly bowed,
> continuing to name his experience. As his body began to relax and his mind grew
> calmer, he also noted that aloud. At last Jacob lifted his head, looked slowly
> around at those gathered, and apologized. Many of the students were in tears. As
> one put it, "No one has ever offered us teachings like this. Your presence has
> been the deepest dharma teaching." Rather than pushing away his experience
> and deepening his agitation, Jacob had the courage and training simply to name
> what he was aware of, and most significantly, to bow to his experience. In some
> fundamental way, he didn't create an adversary out of feelings of fear and
> confusion. *He didn't make anything wrong.* (Brach, pp. 74–75)

In this passage, Brach recounts what might be described as a state of *listening
being* wherein, rather than resort to familiar structures of judgment, category, and
conception, both Jacob and his listeners made a dwelling place for fully present,
naked, awareness.

Thinking being

Central to both phenomenology and Buddhist practice is the experience of being's
being. That is, not of being as a noun, object, or agent, but as a verb, of the ontology

of pure experience. Merton describes this state as: "Being's awareness of itself in us" (Merton, 1995, p. 32). For Heidegger: "Being's poem, just begun, is man" (1971b, p. 4). To Heidegger, meditative as opposed to calculative thinking is not only the quintessentially human inheritance and experience but also the very ground of being. "Thinking accomplishes the relation of Being to the essence of man. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation to Being solely as something handed over to it from Being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking Being comes to language. Language is the house Being. In its home man dwells" (Heidegger, 1993, p. 217). But as described above, meditative thinking must work to resist the constraints of language and calculative thought. Something like this form of thinking being is described in Taoism as doing nothing, in Heidegger as nonwilling, and in Buddhism emptiness.

In Buddhist terms, being is best understood as interbeing (Hanh, 1997), that is, being understood as experience empty of a permanent, essential identity. That is, dualistic ideas such as *being* and *nonbeing* belong to the conceptual world and do not reflect the nature of experience. "Why do you harp on 'being,' It is a false view for you. A mere heap of samkaharas,[5] this—here no 'being' is got at" (Conze, 1964, p. 80). In Western philosophy, the principle of negation typically opposes ideas of *being* to *nonbeing*, whereas in Buddhism this seeming paradoxical contradiction is resolved by dissolving the binaries of subject and object, self and not-self. The idea of interbeing is that everything is in everything—every person, like a chariot, is made up of constituent parts such as organs, tissues, bones, cells, atoms, and electrons, and there is no single one identifiable "thing" that can be called a person. This nonconceptual point of view, called in Tibetan Buddhism the *absolute view*, is contrasted with the conceptual or what is called the *relative view*, which sees persons as independently existing separate objects or subjects. Similarly, the binary between action and nonaction is collapsed in Buddhist thought. From the perspective of Dzogchen, a variety of Tibetan (Mahayana) Buddhism, nonaction or not-doing, is a *way of being*, not a description of a passive state or an avoidance of activity. It is the ability to act beyond limited conceptions of cognitive conditioning, what Manjusrimitra's (1987) teaching calls "the accumulation of habituating tendencies"—our habitual ways of seeing, thinking, hearing, and so forth. It is freedom from conceptual constraints in order to experience "ever-fresh awareness," the "primordial state of pure and total presence" (p. 55). The nonaction of Dzogchen, according to Manjushri, is:

> basically the discovery of freedom as something inseparable from our being; it cannot be created. In this respect, freedom is not the opposite of determinism but of compulsion, of having to act . . . a spontaneous, unpremeditated way of acting, in which one does not have to avoid any situations as negative, for example, is only possible having had some experience of "nondoing" as meditation. (Manjusrimitra, 1987, p. 32)

In Taoism, the ground of being is understood as a nonthing, undifferentiated, unclassified, and beyond categories. All things are one; all forms of existence

are one undifferentiated expanse of pure experience. In the Tao tradition of Chuang-Tzu (1964), this pure experience has been described as "the experience in which we have no intellectual knowledge, in which we take simply the immediate presentation" (p. 15). This is the spirit of the Taoist Wu-Wei, or nonaction. Jaspers (1957) describes Tao as the departure from intention and self-striving. He writes: "The original fall from Tao is self-striving, which is identical with intention in action, hence with self-reflection, zeal, and with purposive bustle . . . Thus purposive willing of the essential destroys it . . . If purposelessness denotes the activity that springs from the origin, purposiveness characterizes the activity that is born of particularizing, confining, intentional thinking" (1957, pp. 93–94). Thus, like the nondoing of Dzogchen, the Taoist Wu-Wei points in the direction of being's *being*, the undifferentiated awareness of *being* that is experienced only when freed from the limited conceptions of cognitive conditioning implicit in what Jaspers describes as purposive, intentional thinking and what Heidegger describes as calculative thinking.

This Buddhist view of nondoing and the Taoist conception of Wu-Wei are similar to Heidegger's view of nonwilling. For Heidegger, traditional, calculative thinking is a mode of willing that takes us away from the ground of being. He writes: "Thinking, understood in the traditional way, as re-presenting, is a kind of willing . . . To think is to will, and to will is to think . . . Non-willing means, therefore; willingly to renounce willing. And the term willing means, further, what remains absolutely outside of any kind of will" (1966, pp. 58–59). Heidegger relates nonwilling to the human interaction with technology, which transcends the binary between *yes* and *no*, "beyond the distinction between activity and passivity" (1966, p. 61). He writes, "I would call this comportment toward technology which expresses 'yes' and at the same time 'no', by an old word, releasement toward things . . . A relation to technology which allows us to 'use technical devices' and at the same time also 'keep ourselves so free of them, that we may let go of them at any time'" (1966, p. 54). That is, the state of nonwilling enables us to remain engaged but unattached, involved but not dependent upon, related but separate. "Releasement toward things and openness to the mystery belong together. They grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way" (p. 55). Heidegger cautions that without releasement, the "tide of the technological revolution in the atomic age could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practiced *as the only* way of thinking" (p. 56).

Listening being

So how does one listen *beyond* constraints of categorical schema, memory, and dualistic thought, and how might this listening relate to the ethical call? As described above, *listening being* arises from a space of emptiness and unknowing, from what Heidegger (1971b) describes as listening to the "peal of stillness," which is the ethical call of language speaking. He writes: "Mortals speak insofar as they listen. Speaking that listens and accepts is responding . . . Man speaks in that he responds to language.

This responding is a hearing. It hears because it listens to the command of stillness''
(pp. 206–207). In a similar vein, Levinas (1999) describes an ethical ideal that he
calls ''beyond dialogue,'' which involves not the violence of words and persuasion,
but in contrast, ''the presence of persons who, for once, do not fade away into words,
get lost in technical questions, freeze up into institutions or structures'' (p. 87). But
what might such a listening to Heidegger's ''peal of stillness'' from what Levinas calls
''beyond dialogue'' look and sound like? Perhaps it might be something like *listening
being*, where when I'm listening, really listening as opposed to hearing or interpreting,
I *AM* listening. That is, listening constitutes my being as an ontological experience.
Listening is what I *AM*: Homo Audiens, *listening being*. But this mode of *listening
being* is dangerous because it is otherwise. It resists certainty, closure, categorization,
and the imperatives of narrative flow: chronos, logos, and our insatiable appetites
for the familiar. By interrupting our habitual conceptual systems, *listening being*
enables us to step outside of the quotidian order of things, of knowledge, conviction,
and fundamentalisms of all kinds. In this way, *listening being* involves a dangerous
encounter with alterity, outside of understanding, beyond temporality. It twists free
of the double helix of past and future and travels the mobius plane of unknowing like
a nomad, with no home except the present moment. The nowhere of the here and
now. *Listening being*: A contingent discontinuity of incongruities and faith that opens
a space of being in which we may hear things not otherwise audible: the absent, the
broken, and the radically strange.[6] So in contrast to rhetorical eloquence, which is itself
a form of mastery, to *be listening* is to refuse to control or master. It is to hold lightly, if
to hold at all. Actually, it is not to hold, not to grasp. No grasping, no holding. Being.

What is thus proposed in this article is perhaps a utopian vision of listening
we might call *listening being*. It is not an actual state or principle, but a horizon
toward which we might travel. *Listening being* is a philosophical challenge that invites
communication theorists to rethink communication through the lens of listening.
We might begin this challenge by contemplating what such a rethinking might offer
various perspectives, theories, and questions in the field. For although listening, like
silence, disappears into the background of most communication theories, we can
''hear'' traces of its presence in a range of theories from sense-making to conversation
analysis, and from speech act theory to the coordinated management of meaning.
For example, we might begin by asking how Craig's (1999) constitutive meta-model
framework of communication theory could be reoriented through a listening lens?
Or, perhaps in the area of rhetorical studies, we might explore what theoretical
transformations emerge when listening is conceptualized as *phronesis* itself? Or, what
happens when critical, cultural, and organizational theorists turn their attention to
listening as forms of action and enactments of agency? In the area of communication
ethics, some of this early work has already begun by scholars such as Beard (2009),
Gehrke (2009), Lipari (2004, 2009), Ratcliffe (2005), Shotter (2009), and Tompkins
(2009), who each explore the ethical dimensions of listening and the significance
of alterity as primary to the ethical relation. In a similar vein, this article suggests
that rather than searching for ultimate understanding or common ground, *listening*

being makes possible the impossibilities of freedom. As Levinas (1999) writes, ''I have no idea other than the idea of the idea that one should have ... I have the idea of a possibility in which the impossible may be sleeping'' (p. 89). This idea may be *listening being*, a listening that does not merely tolerate but openly embraces difference, misunderstanding, and uncertainty, and invites entrance to a human communication and consciousness beyond discursive thinking, to dwelling places of understanding that language cannot, as yet, reach.

Notes

1   The fragment, B50, is typically translated along the lines of: ''Listening not to me but to the account, it is wise to agree that all things are one'' (Barnes, 1987, p. 50). Heidegger (1995) in contrast, translates it as: ''When you have listened not merely to me, but when you maintain yourself in hearkening attunement, then there is proper hearing'' (1971a, p. 67).
2   There is ample evidence that each of the German contemporaries Buber, Heidegger, and Jaspers were influenced by Eastern philosophy. Buber wrote an essay on Buddha, Heidegger worked extensively with several Japanese students, and Jaspers wrote on Lao Tzu and Nagarjuna.
3   Because of Heidegger's engagement with and endorsement of Nazism during the Third Reich, many scholars have subjected his ideas of the irrational and the mystical to extensive, and trenchant, criticism (see, for example, Caputo, 1986).
4   And perhaps it is not accidental that Buber, Chodron, Krishnamurti, and a host of other thinkers so frequently use trees, perhaps our most ordinary and familiar and yet extraordinarily wholly and unknowably *other*, to exemplify this awareness. Even the Buddha is said to have achieved enlightenment sitting for 6 days in the shade of a Bodhi tree.
5   Samkahara—an illusory mental formation.
6   Some of the poetic phrasings of the above passage spring from a personal dialog with the poet Maureen Seaton.

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倾听，思考，存在

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【摘要：】

本文探讨对"倾听存在"现象的一个观点，它超出语言、二元论和概念思考的局限。作为人类的居所，倾听存在能够展现道德的各种可能，它们从倾听开始的时候出现，但不是从话语中来，而是从意识本身的空虚中来。这种可能是乌托邦的倾听观点，并不是一个实际的状态或原则，而是我们要追求的地平线。因此，倾听存在是一个哲学挑战，它使我们从倾听的视角重新思考传播，以及从事超出话语思考的人类传播和意识的活动，以到达语言迄今所不能及的地方。

Écouter, penser, être

Lisbeth Lipari

Cet article explore une perspective de l'écoute, celle de l'être à l'écoute (*listening being*), qui réside en-dehors des limites du langage, du dualisme et de la pensée conceptuelle. En tant que demeure des êtres humains, l'être à l'écoute peut révéler les possibilités éthiques qui émergent lorsque l'écoute origine non pas d'une parole, mais du vide de la conscience même. Cette vision peut-être utopique de l'écoute n'est pas un état ou un principe concret, mais un horizon vers lequel nous pourrions avancer. L'être à l'écoute est donc un défi philosophique qui nous invite à repenser la communication à travers la lentille de l'écoute et à participer à une forme de communication humaine et de conscience qui dépasse la pensée discursive, vers des lieux de compréhension qui ne peuvent jusqu'à présent pas être atteints par le langage.

Hören, Denken, Sein

Lisbeth Lipari

Dieser Aufsatz untersucht eine Perspektive des Zuhörens, bezeichnet als zuhörendes Sein, welche jenseits der Beschränkungen von Sprache, Dualismus und konzeptuellen Denken existiert. Als eine Heimstätte des Menschseins kann das Zuhören die ethischen Möglichkeiten aufzeigen, die dann zum Vorschein kommen, wenn Zuhören nicht beim Reden anfängt, sondern bei der Leere der Aufmerksamkeit selbst. Diese möglicherweise utopische Vorstellung von Zuhören ist kein Zustand oder Prinzip, sondern ein Horizont, auf den wir uns zubewegen können. Zuhörendes Sein ist demnach eine philosophische Herausforderung, die uns anhält, Kommunikation durch die Linse des Zuhörens zu denken und sich auf eine Art und Weise der menschlichen Kommunikation und des Bewusstseins einzulassen, die über den diskursiven Gedanken hinausgeht, hin zu Orten des Verständnisses, die Sprache noch nicht erreichen kann.

듣기, 생각하기, 그리고 존재

Lisbeth Lipari

요약

본 연구는 들어주기라고 일컬어지는 듣기에 대한 전망을 연구한 것으로, 이는 언어, 이중성, 그리고 개념적 생각의 제한을 넘어서는 것이다. 인간존재를 위한 삶의 장소로서, 들으며 존재하는 것은 듣기는 말하기부터 시작되는 것이 아니라 그 자신을 인식하지 않는것으로부터 출발한다는 윤리적 가능성을 밝힐 수 있다 이러한 유토피안형태의 듣기는 실제적인 원칙이 아니라 우리가 여행하려고 하는데로 향하는 수평선이라고 할 수 있다. 들으며 존재하는 것은 따라서 우리로하여금 듣기라는 렌즈를 통해, 그리고 추론적인 사고를 넘어서는 휴먼 커뮤니케이션과 의식의 형태를 연계함으로써, 커뮤니케이션을 재사고할 수 있도록하는 철학적 도전이다. 이는 또 언어로서는 아직 해결할 수 없는 이해를 불러 일으키는 것이다.